

# Educational materials on the history of the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp<sup>1</sup>

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This package is addressed to students and teachers taking part in the international project entitled ‘Sound in the Silence’, organised by the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity. It aims to prepare young people and their teachers to visit the former Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp (Austria) and actively participate in project activities.

The educational materials are divided into eleven thematic parts (worksheets) presenting various aspects of the history of the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp and the memorial site created on its former site:

- Worksheet 1: The Mauthausen camp complex
- Worksheet 2: Establishment of a subcamp in Gusen
- Worksheet 3: The exterior of Mauthausen-Gusen
- Worksheet 4: Prisoner categories and national groups
- Worksheet 5: Prisoner living conditions
- Worksheet 6: SS camp management and supervision
- Worksheet 7: The extermination of prisoners through labour
- Worksheet 8: Murdering of prisoners
- Worksheet 9: Civil resistance and the prisoners’ struggle for survival
- Worksheet 10: Liberation of the camp
- Worksheet 11: Commemoration of the former camp

Each worksheet consists of a historical introduction and a set of several textual and iconographic sources illustrating the issue being discussed. The introductory text is intended to outline the problems, while the role of photographs, drawings, paintings, maps and excerpts of memoirs of witnesses of history is to stimulate young people and teachers to reflect on the fate of prisoners of Mauthausen-Gusen. The majority of the sources included in the package are artworks by former prisoners designed to inspire students to artistic work. The materials included in the package can also be used by teachers to develop their own original lesson plans and conduct educational classes based on them to prepare students for a visit to the Mauthausen-Gusen Memorial. This can be supported by a practice block organising the work of teachers and students, found at the end of each worksheet.

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<sup>1</sup> This package has been developed on the basis of educational materials entitled ‘Gusen. Former German Nazi concentration camp. Educational materials’, which were created as part of the project entitled ‘In the depths of memory...’. This project was implemented in 2020 by the Fundacja Wiara i Prawda [Faith and Truth Foundation] in cooperation with the Fundacja Rozwoju Systemu Edukacji [Foundation for the Development of the Education System] as part of the Program for Supporting Activities Related to National Remembrance.

The package is complemented by a documentary film entitled *W czerwieniach Gusen* [In the Depths of Gusen], directed by Marek Zajac (2020). In this film, the tragedy of the reality of the Mauthausen-Gusen German Nazi concentration camp is shown from the perspective of women and men who experienced suffering that remains, to this day, beyond the limits of human imagination.

In addition, the Annex contains short informational materials prepared by the Mauthausen Memorial Site, which contain links to websites with information on the history of the Mauthausen camp complex, as well as a questionnaire for participants of the 'Sound in the Silence' project, with a request to complete and deliver it during the visit to the memorial in October 2022.

Prior familiarisation with these materials will allow project participants not only to prepare for touring the former Mauthausen-Gusen camp with more awareness, but also for active participation in various forms of project activities that will take place at the Mauthausen Memorial.

## Worksheet 1

### The Mauthausen camp complex

The Mauthausen-Gusen camp was part of a complex of German Nazi concentration camps operating in the years of 1938–1945 in Austria incorporated into the Reich. Its establishment began with the creation in August 1938 of the Mauthausen concentration camp, which was located near the village of the same name, situated approximately 20 km from Linz, near the largest Austrian granite quarry (Wiener Graben). Mauthausen was managed by the SS and was modelled on the Dachau concentration camp. Its first commandant was Albert Sauer, who was replaced in February 1939 by Franz Ziereis, who held this position until the closure of the camp.

Initially, Mauthausen served as a place of isolation and torture primarily for German and Austrian oppositionists (socialists, communists, anti-fascists), Jehovah's Witnesses, Roma, homosexuals, and various categories of professional criminals. From 1940, prisoners of other nationalities began to be deported to the camp, mainly representatives of the Polish intelligentsia and Spanish Republicans interned in France, whom the authorities of the collaborating Vichy government handed over to Germany. In the second half of 1941, a large number of Soviet prisoners of war arrived at the camp. These prisoners of approximately 40 nationalities included large groups of Italians, French and Yugoslavs. Mauthausen also became an extermination site for Polish, Hungarian and Austrian Jews.

At the turn of 1939/1940, the first branch of the parent camp was established in nearby Gusen, alongside the local quarries. In March 1942, a second subcamp was built in its vicinity, which, in order to distinguish it from the first, began to be referred to as 'Gusen II'. Two years later, a third sub-camp was built in the nearby town of Lungitz and called 'Gusen III'. Until the liberation of the camp, more than 40 branches subordinate to KL Mauthausen were created, which were scattered throughout Austria.

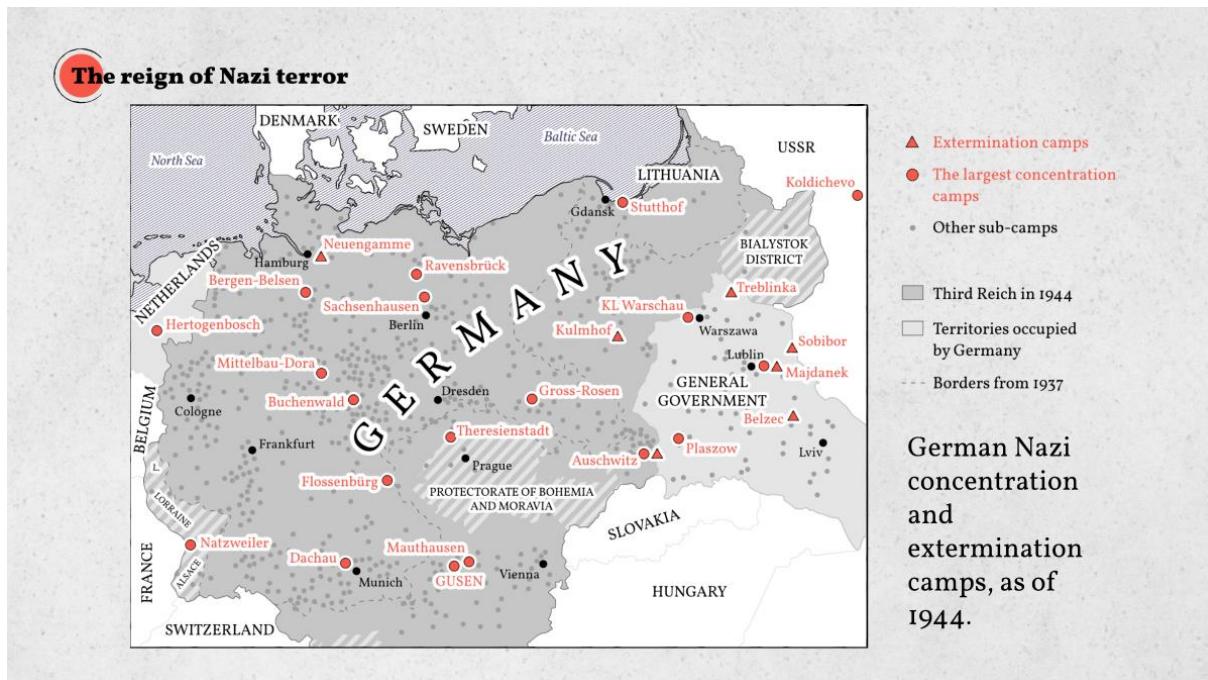
In these camps, prisoners worked slavishly for the benefit of German industry. Initially, they were exploited mainly in construction work and, in the second half of the war, they began to be directed primarily to work in the arms industry. At the end of 1943, thousands of prisoners were deployed in the construction of underground tunnels, where production plants were moved to protect them from Allied air raids. A number of German and Austrian companies, such as Steyr-Daimler-Puch, Messerschmitt GmbH, Bayer, Heinkel, Steyr, Eisenwerke Oberdonau, Österreichische Sauerwerks, were the beneficiaries of the prisoners' slave labour, in addition to the nearby and SS-owned quarries (Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke, DEST).

In September 1944, a women's subcamp was established at Mauthausen, where, over the following months, a total of several thousand female prisoners from other concentration camps were transferred, mainly from Ravensbrück, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald and Groß Rosen. In January 1945, Mauthausen became a centre for the evacuation of prisoners from other liquidated concentration camps. Over the following several months, approximately 35,000 prisoners were sent there as part of the 'death marches', mainly from Auschwitz, Groß Rosen, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück and Mittelbau-Dora. The overcrowding of the home camp and its branches, combined with a growing lack of food, caused a drastic deterioration in the living conditions of the prisoners, resulting in mass death. According to camp data, more than 11,000 cases were recorded in April 1945 alone.

It is estimated that approximately 190,000 male prisoners from over 30 countries passed through the mother camp of Mauthausen and its branches between 1938 and 1945, at least 90,000 of whom died. Among its victims were also several thousand women, adolescents and children. Mauthausen was one of the worst concentration camps located on the territory of the Reich. In SS nomenclature, it was awarded category III, which meant that its main goal was to exterminate prisoners through slave labour.

### Source 1

#### German Nazi concentration and extermination camps, as of 1944.



### Source 2

#### Mauthausen camp prisoners forcibly working at the Wiener Graben quarry located near the camp.



(Photo from the der KZ-Gedenkstaette Mauthausen Archives)

### Source 3

Prisoners of KL Mauthausen in front of the main gate to the camp cheering in honour of the American soldiers entering the camp, 6 May 1945. On the gate, Spanish prisoners hung a banner with the inscription 'LOS ESPAÑOLES ANTIFASCISTAS SALUDAN A LAS FUERZAS LIBERADORAS' ['The Spanish anti-fascists greet the liberating forces']. There scene was a recreation for the purposes of the US army.



(Photo: US National Archives and Records Administration)

### Exercises:

#### Recall (recapitulation):

1. *When and where was Mauthausen founded?*
2. *For what purpose was it created and what role did it play in the system of German Nazi concentration camps?*
3. *Who were the prisoners of Mauthausen? How did the national composition of prisoners change over the subsequent years of its operation?*
4. *When did the camp expand and when were its branches of Gusen I, Gusen II and Gusen III established? How many subcamps did the Mauthausen concentration camp complex consist of?*
5. *Where did the Mauthausen prisoners work? Which German and Austrian companies benefited from their slave labour?*
6. *When was the women's camp established at Mauthausen and where did the prisoners deported to it come from?*
7. *How did the situation of prisoners at the camp change in 1945 and what was the cause of this?*
8. *How many people were deported to Mauthausen and its subcamps during its operation between 1938 and 1945? What are the estimates concerning the victims?*

**Analyse the sources (analysis):**

1. *Analyse the map of the German Nazi concentration camps (source 1) and list the largest of them. State in what regions they were founded. Consider the significance of the location of the camp in their functioning.*
2. *Take a look at the photograph of Mauthausen prisoners cheering in honour of the American soldiers entering the camp (source 3) and describe the mood in the camp on the day of liberation. Explain how you understand the inscription hanging above the gate, ‘Spanish anti-fascists greet the liberating forces’.*

**Learn more (expand):**

1. *List the categories of concentration camps in the Third Reich. What were the differences between them? Why was the Gusen camp awarded category III?*
2. *What function did the Gusen camp play in the concentration camp complex managed by Mauthausen?*

## Worksheet 2

### The establishment of a subcamp in Gusen

The Mauthausen-Gusen camp was created in December 1939 in the village of Gusen, located 4.5 km west of Mauthausen. Like the main camp, it was built near large quarries, for which prisoners formed the base of slave labour. These quarries (Gusen and Kastenhofen), known for their beautiful granite, were a source of high income for the SS, who they belonged to. Initially, prisoners working in the local quarries (approximately 400 Austrian and German prisoners) were forced to march daily from and back to the main camp. With time, however, in order to optimise working time, the Mauthausen management decided to build residential barracks for prisoners and SS quarters in Gusen. Construction work began in the spring of 1940 and was completed in May of the same year. Austrian and Polish prisoners, who were transferred from Mauthausen, where the camp's construction workers.

In the spring of 1940, Poles began to be deported there, arrested in special police campaigns carried out by Germans in occupied Poland. These deportations stemmed from the decision of the SS authorities to allocate Mauthausen-Gusen as the site for the extermination of the Polish intelligentsia, which was to be annihilated as the leading layer of Polish society. The first transport of 1082 Poles – prisoners of KL Dachau – arrived in Gusen already on the day of its official opening, i.e. 25 May 1940. In addition to Poles, there were also several hundred Austrian prisoners in the camp at the time.

#### Source 1

##### View of the Mauthausen-Gusen camp after liberation, 1945.



(Photo from the collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Eugene S. Cohen, Public domain)

## Source 2

Transport list with the names of prisoners who were transferred from Buchenwald to the Gusen camp on 8 March 1940.

(Photo from the collection of the Institute of National Remembrance)

## Source 3

Excerpt from the account of Stefan Józefowicz, a Polish prisoner:

*In March 1940 I was transferred to Mauthausen for the construction of the Gusen camp. It was necessary to accelerate the pace [...], because the so-called AKTION GEGEN DIE POLNISCHE INTELLIGENZ\* was set for the month of April [1940]. [...] By beating us, the SS men announced to us that we were building a camp for our dirty brothers from Poland, who are today still spending Easter peacefully, not sensing what awaits them.*

\* Aktion gegen die Polnische Intelligenz (German) – campaigns directed against the Polish intelligentsia.

(Cited from: *Człowiek człowiekowi..., Niszczenie polskiej inteligencji w latach 1939-1945. KL Mauthausen/Gusen [Man to man..., Destruction of Polish intelligentsia in the years 1939–1945. Mauthausen/Gusen]*, Warszawa 2009, p. 30)

## Source 4

Excerpt from the memoirs of Władysław Gębik, a Polish prisoner:

*Gusen belonged to the hardest, that is, the third category of concentration camps. The prisoner was deprived of all personal belongings, even a handkerchief or cloth to wipe his nose, he only had a number attached to the wire on his left hand.*

(Cited from: *Człowiek człowiekowi..., Niszczenie polskiej inteligencji w latach 1939-1945. KL Mauthausen/Gusen [Man to man..., Destruction of Polish intelligentsia in the years 1939–1945. Mauthausen/Gusen]*, Warszawa 2009, p. 46)

## Exercises:

### Recall (recapitulation):

1. When was the Mauthausen-Gusen subcamp created and how was the nearby quarry of significance for its location?
2. Who were the prisoners who built the Gusen camp and where did they come from?
3. For whom was the subcamp in Gusen created and what was its purpose?

### Analyse the sources (analysis):

1. Expand the German abbreviations on the transport list (source 2) and state which of the prisoners' personal data it contains? Identify Polish prisoners and characterise them in terms of age, place of birth and profession.
2. On the basis of the fragment of the memoirs of former prisoner Władysław Gębik (source 4), state what category the camp in Gusen had been awarded and why it was considered one of the hardest concentration camps?

### Learn more (expand):

1. What was 'Inteligenzaktion'? What was its purpose? When was it carried out and who fell victim to it?
2. Why did the German Nazis want to destroy the Polish intelligentsia?

## Worksheet 3

### The external appearance of the Mauthausen-Gusen camp

The camp site was unevenly shaped, which is why the prisoners' barracks, SS quarters and production halls were located on various levels, partly supported by brick barriers, protecting them from landslides.

Initially, the prisoners' part of the camp consisted of 34 wooden barracks, 24 of which were designated for living quarters for over 7,000 prisoners. The remaining barracks constituted warehouses, kitchens, barracks for guards, stonemasonry halls, auxiliary workshops and a hospital. In 1941, two large, two-storey brick buildings were built on the site of three wooden barracks, in which prisoners who were qualified employees of the Steyr-Daimler-Puch and Messerschmitt armaments factories were accommodated in the spring of 1943. At the turn of 1943/1944, another four barracks were added on the *Appellplatz* ('roll call' square). A stationary crematorium was also opened in January of 1941, where the corpses of prisoners were burned.

The prisoners' part of the camp was hermetically separated from the outside world. First, it was surrounded by a wooden barbed wire fence with a high-voltage current. Then, a three-metre wall was added, made of granite from the surrounding quarries. The wall was crowned by guard towers, on which loopholes with machine guns, as well as searchlights and alarm devices were installed.

The camp administration buildings, SS barracks and production halls were located outside of the walls. A road led to this part of the camp through a large gate located in the middle of the building called *Jourhaus*. The camp commandant had his headquarters in this building, and there was a camp prison in its basement, the so-called bunker, in which prisoners were tortured and murdered. This part of the camp also housed buildings intended for the SS crew, such as a bathhouse, kitchen and casino.

#### Source 1

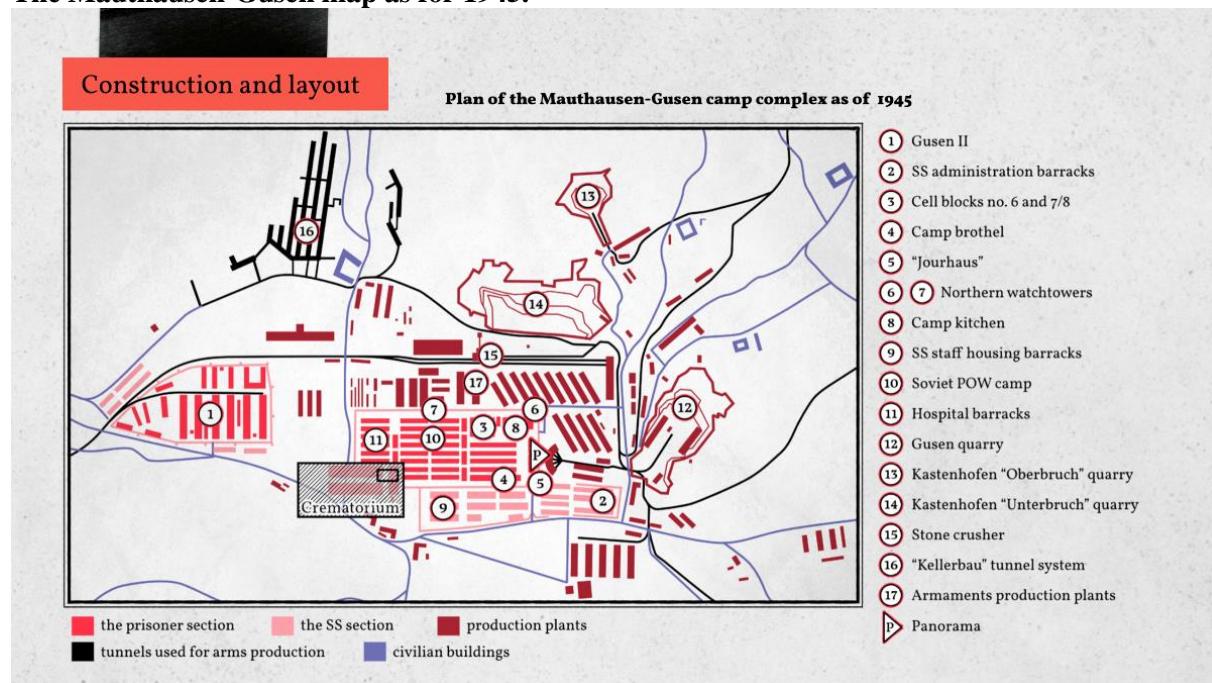
**Excerpt from the memoirs of Janusz Gajewski, a Polish prisoner:**

*It's probably worst when you reach such a concentration camp under construction. We were gathered on the roll call square. We saw only a few barracks, and a lot of building materials lying all around: boards, bricks. The roll call square was not yet paved, and covered with sand. Our block was a wooden barrack, with boards nailed so that there were gaps between them. We wondered what would happen when winter came. The inside was empty, there were straw beds on the floor.*

(Cited from: *Ocaleni z Mauthausen. Relacje polskich więźniów obozów nazistowskich systemu Mauthausen-Gusen* [Survivors of Mauthausen. Accounts of Polish prisoners of Nazi camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen system], edited by K. Madoń-Mitzner, Warszawa 2010, p. 126)

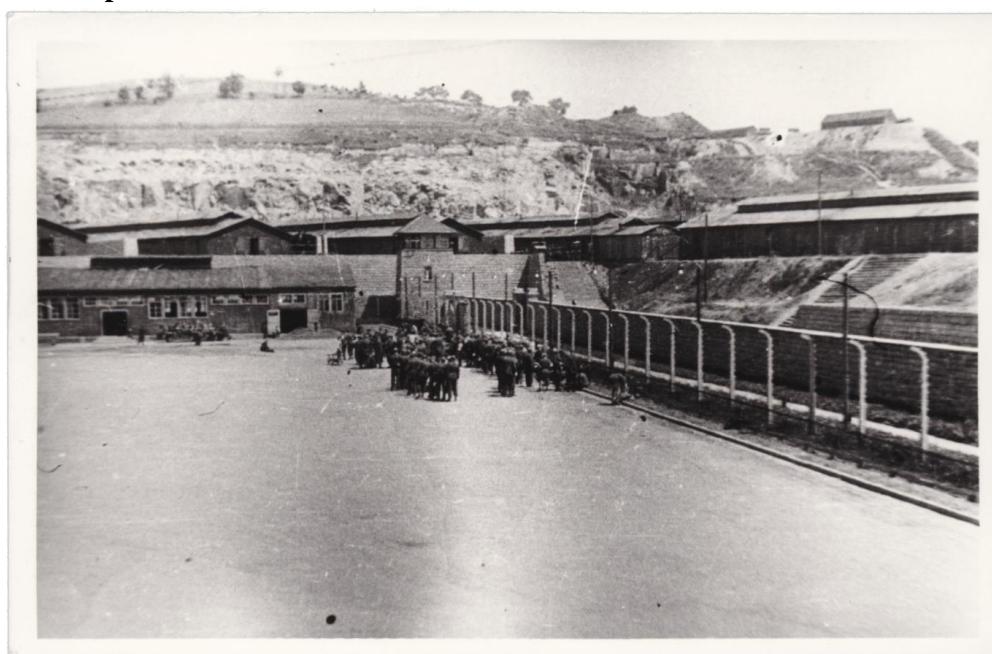
## Source 2

The Mauthausen-Gusen map as for 1945.



## Source 3

View of the interior of the Gusen camp, towards the quarry. Roll call square; in the depths of the camp kitchen; a fence line with a wall surrounding the camp, the culmination of which were watchtowers. Outside the camp wall was the part inhabited by the SS crew and prisoners' workshops.



(Photo from the collection of the Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation – Stanisław Dobosiewicz's Archive)

## Exercises:

### Recall (recapitulation):

1. *What was the terrain on which the Gusen camp was built?*
2. *What parts did Mauthausen-Gusen consist of?*
3. *What were its most important buildings and what purpose did they serve?*
4. *How was the Gusen camp secured?*

### Analyse the sources (analysis):

1. *How do you understand the words of former prisoner Janusz Gajewski (source 1), who said that it is probably worst when you reach a concentration camp under construction?*
2. *Indicate on the Mauthausen-Gusen map (source 2) the prisoners' part of the camp with its main buildings, the part belonging to the SS crew, and the industrial workshops.*

### Learn more (expand):

1. *Compare the exterior of the Gusen camp with that of other German Nazi concentration camps. What similarities and differences do you see?*
2. *What does the exterior of the Gusen camp tell us about the living conditions of its prisoners?*

## Worksheet 4

### Categories and national groups of prisoners

In Gusen, mainly political prisoners were detained, who in 1945 constituted 65–70% of the total number of inmates in the camp. Among these, most were sentenced to so-called ‘protective detention’ (*Schutzhaft*), which was applied to people suspected of a hostile attitude towards the German Reich. The most numerous of the group of political prisoners were Poles, Yugoslavs, French, Belgians, and Italians. Spanish and Soviet prisoners of war and Polish and Hungarian Jews also constituted a large group. At the end of the war, every fourth prisoner of Gusen belonged to the category of ‘civilian workers’, which were mainly Soviet citizens, staying in the Reich on forced labour. Gusen also housed approximately 7,000 prisoners who were held there ‘protectively’ (*Sicherungsverwarte*). These prisoners were sent to camps on the basis of sentences handed down by German courts. They included both Germans and citizens of occupied countries, mainly Poland and the Soviet Union.

The total number of prisoners deported to Gusen during its period of operation (1939–1945) was at least 71,000. It is estimated that half of them died or were murdered there. According to the categories used by the Germans, these prisoners represented circa 30 different nationalities, the most numerous groups of which were: Poles, Soviet citizens of various nationalities, Jews, Spaniards, Germans and Austrians, Yugoslavs, Italians and French.

#### Source 1

##### Excerpt from the memoirs of Wiktor Kielich, a Polish prisoner:

*There were also prisoners from Greece, Romania, Italy, France, Bulgaria and other countries. [...] It was a veritable tower of Babel of the peoples of Europe.*

(Cited from: Wiktor Kielich, *Schodami śmierci [Stairs of Death]*, Warszawa 2011, p. 113)

#### Source 2

##### Excerpt from the memoirs of Zdzisław Kudasiewicz, a Polish prisoner:

*A man could communicate with Yugoslavs, Czechs and Russians in Polish, and with Italians, French, Spaniards – I don't remember how, but somehow through mime. When we were to settle business among ourselves, we always managed to communicate, although we did not know their language at all.*

(Cited from: *Ocaleni z Mauthausen. Relacje polskich więźniów obozów nazistowskich systemu Mauthausen-Gusen [Survivors of Mauthausen. Accounts of Polish prisoners of Nazi camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen system]*, edited by K. Madoń-Mitzner, Warszawa 2010, p. 223)

## National groups of prisoners

### Poles

Poles were the biggest national group of Mauthausen-Gusen camp prisoners. Their large number was related to the purpose of the camp as an extermination site for Polish intelligentsia within the framework of the '*Intelligenzaktion*' campaign being carried out by the Germans. Therefore, the SS men supervising the construction of the camp in Gusen called it an extermination camp for Polish intelligentsia ('*Vernichtungslager fur die polnische Intelligenz*'). The arrests of Poles in the occupied Polish lands included mainly teachers, Catholic priests, representatives of landed gentry, liberal professions, social and political activists, scout instructors and retired military men who were suspected of anti-German activities. Poles arrested at the turn of 1939/1940 came to Gusen via other concentration camps, such as Buchenwald, Dachau or Sachsenhausen.

The first Polish prisoners arrived in Gusen from Buchenwald in March of 1940. Together with Austrian and German prisoners from Mauthausen, they worked on the camp's construction. On the other hand, a large transport of Polish prisoners, numbering over a thousand, arrived on the opening day of the camp, i.e. 25 May 1940. Over the first three months of the camp's operation, a total of approximately 7,500 Polish prisoners were sent there from Dachau and Sachsenhausen. From the beginning of 1943, the transport of Poles to Gusen began directly from prisons located in the occupied Polish territories. In 1944, a large group of Warsaw insurgents was also sent to Gusen. Poles, in the first year of the camp's operation, constituted over 90% of all prisoners. And, although over the following years, as a result of the influx of prisoners of other nationalities, this percentage decreased significantly, they were still the largest national group. Therefore, this camp was commonly referred to as the 'Polish camp'. It is assumed that a total of at least 25,000 Poles were deported to Gusen. On the eve of the liberation, there were almost 8,300 Poles at all three Gusen camps. The losses of Polish prisoners in Gusen are estimated to be at least 13,000, some of whom were murdered at the euthanasia centre in Hartheim.

### Soviet citizens

At the end of 1941, transports of Soviet prisoners of war began arriving at Gusen, the number of which is estimated at approximately 4,400. They were imprisoned at the Waffen-SS POW camp, which was located in a separate part of the camp. Soviet prisoners of war were decimated within two years as a result of hard labour, hunger and brutal treatment. In addition to Soviet prisoners, approximately 9,000 Soviet civilians were also deported to Gusen, forced to work in quarries and the arms industry. It is estimated that at least 2,700 of them died.

### Jews

Individual Jews arrived at Gusen from the beginning of 1940 in transports of Polish political prisoners. On the other hand, the first large transports of approximately 2,000 Jews took place in the summer of 1944. At that time prisoners from camps in Płaszów, Auschwitz and Flossenbürg came to Gusen. Jews deported from Auschwitz originated mainly from Hungary. Upon arrival at Gusen, they were directed to build tunnels in St Georgen. In August and

September of 1944, further transports of Hungarian Jews arrived at Gusen. Jewish prisoners also accounted for a large percentage of those evacuated from Auschwitz in early 1945. The chances of their survival in the camp were very small. It is estimated that the number of Jews deported to Gusen from various countries was approximately 10,000. Almost half of them died or were murdered at the camp.

### Spaniards

Another large group of prisoners deported to Gusen were Spanish Republicans. In 1941, they were transported from German-occupied France, where they had been interned since the end of the civil war. During the year, 4,000 Spanish prisoners were sent to the camp, which accounted for almost half of all newly arrived prisoners at that time. In total, over 5,000 Spaniards were deported to Gusen, more than 4,000 of which were murdered.

### Germans and Austrians

Austrians and Germans were at Gusen since its inception. Among them were so-called antisocial, homosexuals, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Most of them, however, were criminals, transferred to the concentration camp from prisons for the duration of their sentences for various crimes. Large groups of German prisoners of various categories began being sent to Gusen from the end of 1942. Their total number is estimated at over 5,000. And in general, these prisoners – due to their origin – had a better chance of survival; it is estimated that the camp was survived by only about 1,200.

#### Source 4

**List of prisoners as of 25 May 1940, i.e. on the day of the official establishment of the Gusen concentration camp (extract). The prisoners on this list, mostly German prison officers, formed the 'core of the camp's workforce'.**

Nr.	Name	Militär. H.t.	Geburtsjahr	Geb. Ort
1	Herrn			
2	Adolf			
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deported from Italian-occupied territories were released from the camp. A total of 854 Yugoslavs lived to see the liberation of the camp.

### Italians

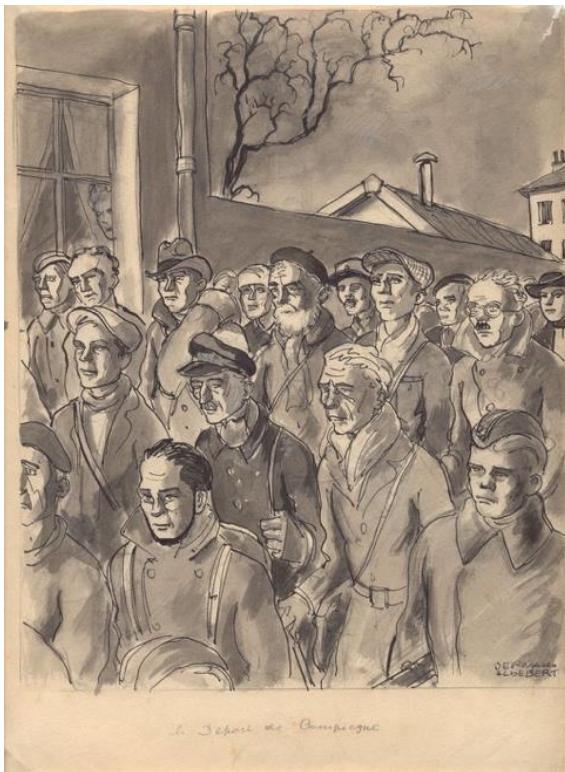
In the autumn of 1943, after the occupation of Italy by German troops, and the establishment of a fascist vassal state, mass repressions began, the victims of which were Jews and political opponents. As a result, many of them ended up in German concentration camps. A similar fate befell the interned Italian soldiers who were sent to forced labour in Germany. Mass deportations of Italian citizens to Gusen began in February 1944, and in the middle of the year smaller groups of Italian prisoners also came to Gusen from other concentration camps located in the Reich. The situation of the Italian prisoners in the camp was difficult because they were considered ‘traitors’ by the SS and ‘fascists’ by their fellow prisoners. It is estimated that, of over 3,000 Italian prisoners, at least 1,700 died.

### French

Individual French prisoners were sent to Gusen in the spring of 1942. However, the first large transport took place in March 1943. Further groups of French arrived in the first half of 1944, and a total of approximately 3,000 French citizens was deported to Gusen, at least 1,000 of which died. Most of the French deportees to this camp were sent for political reasons, mainly as part of the ‘Night and Fog’ campaign, which was aimed at the growing resistance movement in Western Europe. The Germans aimed to terrorise French society by deporting resistance activists to concentration camps. In April 1945, as the result of an initiative of the International Red Cross, more than 500 French people were released from Gusen. As part of the ‘Night and Fog’ campaign, groups of resistance activists from Belgium and the Netherlands were also deported to Gusen.

### **Source 5**

**Deportation from ‘Compiègne’, drawing by French survivor Bernard Aldebert, 1945/1946.**



(Photo: Mauthausen Memorial/Collections)

### Exercises:

#### Recall (recapitulation):

1. *What were the main reasons for deporting prisoners to Mauthausen-Gusen? Which category of prisoners was most represented at this camp?*
2. *How many countries did the prisoners of the Gusen camp originate from? Which national groups were the most highly represented?*
3. *How many prisoners were deported to Mauthausen-Gusen, and how many of them survived the war?*

#### Analyse the sources (analysis):

1. *Why do you think the former prisoner Victor Chalice (source 1) used the term 'Babel of the peoples of Europe' to describe the Gusen camp?*
2. *On the basis of the fragment of the memoirs by former prisoner Zdzisław Kudasiewicz (source 2), explain what communication problems the prisoners of the Gusen camp had and how they were resolved?*

#### Learn more (expand):

1. *Characterise the individual national groups of Mauthausen-Gusen prisoners by completing the table below:*

<i>National group</i>	<i>reason for deportation (imprisonment)</i>	<i>year of deportation</i>	<i>Number of deportees</i>
<i>Poles</i>			
<i>Soviet citizens</i>			
<i>Jews</i>			
<i>Spaniards</i>			
<i>Germans and Austrians</i>			
<i>Yugoslavs</i>			
<i>Italians</i>			
<i>Others</i>			

## Worksheet 5

### Prisoners' conditions of existence

Initially, the living conditions of the prisoners at the Gusen camp were difficult, because at the time of its opening only part of the barracks were ready to receive them. They were not even equipped with bunks, so prisoners were forced to sleep on straw. The barracks were equipped with primitive sanitary facilities, and taps with running water were located on the streets between the blocks. With time, the housing and sanitary situation improved, but food shortages began causing trouble. Food was reduced gradually. In theory, it was supposed to amount to about 1275–1750 calories per day, which was not even half of the amount necessary for the regeneration of a worker's strength. In reality, however, prisoners received much less food because food assignments were stolen by SS officers and functional prisoners at all stages of the supply. Prisoners were saved to a small degree from starvation by food parcels, which they were able to receive from their families from 1943. However, this privilege was reserved only for selected groups of prisoners.

Hunger, terror and hard work in quarries and armaments factories caused the rapid exhaustion of prisoners' strength. As a result of general weakness, accidents at work were more and more frequent, often ending in injuries that were increasingly difficult to treat. In addition, the climate was conducive to the prisoners falling ill with various diseases. Prisoners who were unwell and unable to work were treated as useless and liquidated *en masse*. Severe malnutrition, combined with hard physical work and lack of proper medical care, especially in the last months of the war, became the leading cause of death.

#### Source 1

**Excerpt from the memoirs of Vassily Kononenko, a Soviet prisoner:**

*We came and looked around: dirt, everything black, ragged people, lice everywhere. [...] it was a true hell.*

(Cited from: *Errinnerungen an Gusen. Das Konzentrationslager in den Erzählungen von Überlebenden*, directed by Christian Dürr, prod.: Republic of Austria/Ministry of the Interior, 2005)

#### Source 2

**Interior of a residential barrack at Gusen.**



(Photo from the collection of the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation – Stanisław Dobosiewicz's Archive)

### Source 3

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Janusz Gajewski, a Polish prisoner:

*Over time, more barracks appeared, they began to be framed, sealed, cupboards were built inside. Quadruple bunk beds were also built. There was a stove, but it was located in the block officer's room and only he had warmth, while the wind howled among us. They said we needed fresh air, so we were told to open the windows for the night. That was alright when it was autumn, but when winter began, snow, frosts, the air was fresh to such an extent that one night my nearest neighbour froze. We woke up in the morning and found him stiff.*

(Cited from: *Ocaleni z Mauthausen. Relacje polskich więźniów obozów nazistowskich systemu Mauthausen-Gusen* [Survivors of Mauthausen. Accounts of Polish prisoners of Nazi camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen system], edited by K. Madoń-Mitzner, Warszawa 2010, p. 126)

### Source 4

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Dušan Stefančič, a Slovenian prisoner:

*[...] I was transferred to Gusen II camp, a few hundred metres from Gusen I camp. We had heard only terrible things about Gusen II. What we didn't know was that the prisoner was able to survive there for three or four months. We had to work in the neighbouring town of St Georgen, where there were large, underground factories producing Messerchmitt 262. The hygienic conditions at Gusen II were terrible. In the whole camp there was one latrine and one washroom for 12,000 prisoners.*

(Cited from *Errinnerungen an Gusen. Das Konzentrationslager in den Erzählungen von Überlebenden*, directed by Christian Dürr, prod.: Republic of Austria/Ministry of the Interior, 2005)

### Source 5

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Alojzy Frelich, a Polish prisoner:

*[...] there was no bathhouse [at Gusen II] where you could bathe, only a trough with cold water. There was no change of underwear, when you put on you stripes, they took them off a man when he was already dead.*

(Cited from: *Ocaleni z Mauthausen. Relacje polskich więźniów obozów nazistowskich systemu Mauthausen-Gusen* [Survivors of Mauthausen. Accounts of Polish prisoners of Nazi camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen system], edited by K. Madoń-Mitzner, Warszawa 2010, p. 145)

### Source 6

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Czesław Oparcik, a Polish prisoner:

*[...] I got to the raw cabbage. The Germans kicked me, but I thought that if I ate this cabbage, even if they kicked me, I would live. Hunger forces you to put all your eggs in one basket: either you will succeed – or not.*

(Cited from: *Ocaleni z Mauthausen. Relacje polskich więźniów obozów nazistowskich systemu Mauthausen-Gusen*, [Survivors of Mauthausen. Accounts of Polish prisoners of Nazi camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen system], edited by K. Madoń-Mitzner, Warszawa 2010, p. 165)

### Source 7

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Erwin Rinker, a German prisoner:

*Many prisoners had a can attached by string to the backs of their trousers. During earthworks, they collected earthworms or beetles, whatever they could, and then ate them.*

(Cited from: *Errinnerungen an Gusen. Das Konzentrationslager in den Erzählungen von Überlebenden*, directed by Christian Dürr, prod.: Republic of Austria/Ministry of the Interior, 2005)

### **Source 8**

#### **Excerpt from the memoirs of Louis Deblé, a French prisoner:**

*Imagine people who, after 15 or 16 hours of work, are beaten with batons, surrounded by bandits; their bodies covered with vermin, boils and wounds that do not want to heal; in dirty rags, in the constant stench from the crematorium – then you will understand what it means to spend one day at the Gusen camp.*

(Cited from: Thomas Schlager-Weidinger, Dr Johann Gruber. *Christ und Märtyrer*, Linz 2009, p. 29; fragment translated by Marek Zajac)

### **Source 9**

#### **Excerpt from the memoirs of Rabbi Yechezkel Harfenes, a Jewish prisoner:**

*As a prisoner of many camps, I can say that Gusen was the worst. This does not mean that the conditions of others were not terrible, but compared to Gusen, those camps were paradise. As evidence, Gusen was the least known camp – not because it was smaller, but because so few of its tens of thousands of prisoners survived to tell the story of their nightmare.*

(Cited from: Thomas Schlager-Weidinger, Dr Johann Gruber. *Christ und Märtyrer*, Linz 2009, p. 29; fragment translated by Marek Zajac)

### **Exercises:**

#### **Recall (recapitulation):**

1. *How did the housing and sanitary conditions at the Mauthausen-Gusen camp change over the years?*
2. *What were the prisoners' rations and were they sufficient for survival? How did the prisoners save themselves from starvation?*
3. *What other factors hindered the living conditions of the prisoners at the camp?*
4. *What fate awaited prisoners who were sick and exhausted by hard work?*

#### **Analyse the sources (analysis):**

1. *What do sources 1-3 tell us about the housing conditions at Camp Gusen I?*
2. *How do former prisoners Dušan Stefančič (source 4) and Alojzy Frelich (source 5) describe the living conditions of the prisoners at Gusen II?*

3. *Why does former prisoner Rabbi Yechezkel Harfenes (source 10) claim that the Gusen camp was the worst?*

**Learn more (expand):**

1. *How do you assess the housing conditions of prisoners at Mauthausen-Gusen camp?*
2. *Why were they differentiated according to the type of work of the prisoner? Who could count on better treatment and why?*
3. *What impact did the housing conditions in the camp have on the lives of the prisoners?*
4. *How did hunger affect the body and psyche of the prisoners? What impact did malnutrition have on the behaviour of prisoners in the camp?*

## Worksheet 6

### SS camp management and supervision

The first commandant of the camp was Karl Chmielewski, who at the beginning of 1940 was transferred from Sachsenhausen to Mauthausen, where he was given the task of supervising the construction of the concentration camp in Gusen. Chmielewski was known for his cruelty to prisoners, which is why he received the nickname ‘the devil of Gusen’. Not only did he order their killing and torture, he also personally participated in executions. He was the mastermind behind the notorious ‘*Totbadeaktionen*’, which consisted in the mass murder of prisoners through the use of ‘death baths’. He abused Polish and Spanish prisoners in particular. At the end of 1942 he was transferred to another camp and, soon after, accused of embezzlement and large-scale looting of property. Therefore, in the summer of 1944, the SS court sentenced him to 15 years in prison. The second commandant of Gusen was Fritz Seidler, who sparred this position from October 1942 until the camp’s closure. He was also infamous at the camp for his cruel treatment of prisoners. He took an active part in the murder of prisoners and sentenced them to cruel punishments. He was responsible, among others, for gassing sick prisoners at Gusen I and the massacres of prisoners at Gusen II, which took place in April of 1945.

Initially, camp supervision at Gusen was conducted only by SS members, later, due to the armaments production carried out there, it was also performed by Wehrmacht soldiers. During the period of the camp’s operation, the number of camp crew ranged from 600 to 3,000 officers. Members of guard companies were not permitted to enter the camp and maintained contact with prisoners through functional prisoners, who were mainly German and Austrian nationals. Owing to their origin and criminal past in the Gusen camp hierarchy, these prisoners held the positions of block officers and managers of working commandos (*Kapo* and *Oberkapo*).

A dozen or so SS doctors practiced in Gusen, but instead of treating prisoners, they used them to test drugs or conduct trial surgical operations. The camp SS doctors were responsible for selecting sick prisoners, murdering them with phenol injections ,and directing them to death in the Hartheim gas chambers. The last doctor of the SS camp in Gusen was Helmuth Vetter. In Gusen, he continued the testing of various drugs on prisoners commenced at Auschwitz. At Gusen camp hospital, at the so-called anatomical ward, there was a collection of curiosities, presenting fragments of prepared bodies of prisoners, which were considered peculiar by SS doctors. Samples obtained from the murdered prisoners were transferred to the SS Medical Academy in Graz and other German universities, where they were used for scientific purposes.

### Source 1

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Eugeniusz Śliwiński, a Polish prisoner:

*We were placed on the roll call square and a Rapportführer [...], a fat officer, accompanied by many SS men, all with submachine guns, came. [...] 'You nasty dogs, this camp is your last station. Das ist ein Vernichtungslager Gusen\*'. He pointed his hand at the smoke exiting the crematorium: 'This is your release'.*

\* *Das ist ein Vernichtungslager Gusen* (German) – this is the Gusen extermination camp.

(Cited from: *Ocaleni z Mauthausen. Relacje polskich więźniów obozów nazistowskich systemu Mauthausen-Gusen* [Survivors of Mauthausen. Accounts of Polish prisoners of Nazi camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen system], edited by K. Madoń-Mitzner, Warszawa 2010, p. 124)

### Source 2

**Punishment by flogging. Drawing by Piotr Abraszewski, 1939–1945. Prisoners of Gusen camp were punished with it under any pretext. Punishment often ended with the severe beating of the prisoner, frequently leading to his death.**



(Drawing from the publication entitled. *Człowiek człowiekowi..., Niszczenie polskiej inteligencji w latach 1939–1945. KL Mauthausen/Gusen* [Man to man..., Destruction of the Polish intelligentsia in the years 1939–1945. Mauthausen/Gusen], published by the Council for the Protection of the Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom, Warszawa 2009)

### Source 3

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Stanisław Nogaj, a Polish prisoner:

*Malinowski fell ill one day with diarrhea [...] he was lying limp in a fever on a contaminated mattress. This fact reached the block officer. With a shard of a board in his hand, he ran [...] up to Malinowski: 'What have you done here, you pig!' he screamed, banging on the head of the unfortunate with the piece of board [...] I couldn't stand it: [...] I grabbed the block officer's hand the moment he was about to hit the sick man for the second time:*

*'Do you really have no conscience? Are you beating a seriously ill man? After all, it can kill him!' He looked at me for a moment in amazement, then as if he had come to his senses, smiled [...] with pity: '[...] you do not yet understand what a concentration camp is. What do you imagine I am going to do with this man? He has to die anyway.'*

(Cited from: Stanisław Nogaj, *Gusen. Pamiętnik dziennikarza* [Gusen. Diary of a journalist], Katowice – Chorzów 1945, p. 32)

**Source 4**

**Excerpt from the memoirs of Zbigniew Włazłowski, a Polish prisoner:**

*Passing [...] near the infirmary, I heard screaming and scrambling. After a while, the Polish national anthem sounded. I opened the door. On the surgical table [...] Jan emaciated young boy was singing, tied to the table. Köfferbeck attempted to block his mouth, and next to him with a large liquid-filled syringe stood sanitary non-commissioned officer SS Heschel, preparing to puncture the needle into the heart of the prostrate man.*

(Cited from: *Człowiek człowiekowi..., Niszczenie polskiej inteligencji w latach 1939-1945. KL Mauthausen/Gusen [Man to man..., Destruction of the Polish intelligentsia in the years 1939–1945. Mauthausen/Gusen]*, published by the Council for the Protection of the Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom, Warszawa 2009, p. 72)

**Exercises:****Recall (recapitulation):**

1. Name the commanders of the Mauthausen-Gusen camp?
2. Why was Karl Chmielewski called 'the devil of Gusen' by prisoners?
3. Who supervised the prisoners of Gusen camp?
4. Who were the functional prisoners and what did they do?
5. What crimes were committed against prisoners by camp doctors?

**Analyse the sources (analysis):**

1. Read an excerpt from the memoirs of former prisoner Eugeniusz Śliwiński (source 2) and consider why an SS officer, in a speech addressed to newly arrived prisoners, pointed to smoke rising from the chimney of the crematorium and said: 'This your way out to freedom'? What did he want to achieve in this way?
2. Based on sources 3 and 4, tell us what dangers the prisoners were exposed to from SS men and kapos during the day and at night? Could they have somehow been avoided?

**Learn more (expand):**

1. Do you agree with the statement that terror was a planned and permanent element of the camp regime at Mauthausen-Gusen?
2. How did the prisoners endure a system of severe punishment and torture? What helped them endure daily degradation, humiliation and suffering?
3. How do you understand the words of Leon Ceglarz: 'If you did not get hit with a baton, it was a lucky day, irrespective of hunger'?



## Worksheet 7

### The extermination of prisoners through work

According to the assumptions of the German authorities, the extermination of prisoners in the camp was to be carried out through work, which initially focused on the Gusen quarries. The prisoners also worked in the nearby quarries of Kastenhofen and Westerplatte. The granite extracted there was processed by them in stone halls and later transported to other German cities, where it was used to erect large state buildings, i.e. the Stadium of the German Reich in Nuremberg. Granite cubes were used to build roads, and waste was processed into aggregate. Working conditions in the quarries were very harsh. Prisoners were forced to work up to 13 hours a day. The high rate of work-related accidents resulted in high mortality of prisoners. Victims of work in the quarries are estimated at more than 3,000.

Over time, the number of prisoners employed in the quarries was gradually reduced, transferring them to work in armaments factories. At the beginning of 1943, the large armaments companies Steyr-Daimler-Puch and Messerschmitt moved part of their production to the Gusen concentration camps. As a result, thousands of prisoners were forced to work in the production of weapons and fighter aircraft parts. Over the following months, the production of the armaments plant in Gusen was systematically increased. At the turn of 1944/1945, more than half of the prisoners were already working in the Steyr and Messerschmitt armaments factories. Due to intensifying Allied air raids on armaments factories in Germany, the Nazi authorities decided to build large-scale tunnels in the hills surrounding Gusen and move their production there. In 1944, similar tunnels began to be built also in the vicinity of nearby Sankt Georgen, where prisoners were transported by an especially built railway line. As a result, by the end of the war, prisoners drilled several adits and several kilometres of tunnels in Gusen and Sankt Georgen, which were developed by armaments factories. Construction works in the tunnels caused numerous accidents and led to the death of a significant number of prisoners working there.

The growing needs of arms companies for the slave labour of prisoners made it necessary to expand the camp. Therefore, in March 1944, Gusen II was opened in March 1944 and, at the end of the year, Gusen III was founded in nearby Lungitz. The Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp, expanded in this way, became the largest concentration camp in Austria, employing the largest number of prisoners in the production of military equipment.

#### Source 1

**Excerpt from the document on estimating the profitability of the work of concentration camp prisoners:**

*Assuming that the average life expectancy of a prisoner was 9 months and the daily payment for rent 6 RM [REICHSMAREK] and, after deducting the cost of food (60 pfennigs) and depreciation of the cost of clothing (10 pfennigs) and the cost of incineration in the crematorium (2 RM), it is established that pure income from the prisoner's work is 1431 RM, to which 200 RM should be added for the remaining dental gold after the deceased, clothing, valuables and money. A total 1631 RM for each prisoner.*

(Cited from: Stanisław Dobosiewicz, *Mauthausen-Gusen. Obóz zagłady [Mauthausen-Gusen. Extermination camp]*, Warszawa 1977, p. 245)

## Source 2

The ‘stairs of death’ in Gusen numbering about 200 steps, on which prisoners climbed to work in a quarry



(Post-war photo, from the collection of the Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation – Stanisław Dobosiewicz’s Archive)

## Source 3

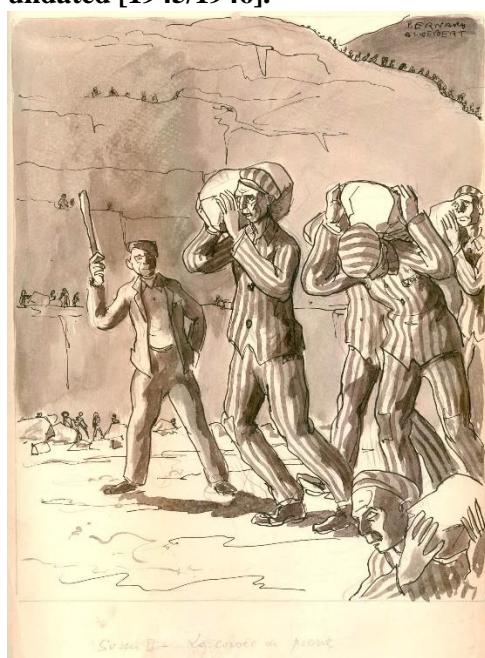
Excerpt from the memoirs of Alojzy Waluś, a Polish prisoner:

*Some had [...] their heads and faces completely massacred. [...] those unable to walk on their own were dragged down the stairs, held by their legs, allowing [...] the head to shatter against the stone staircase.*

(Cited from: *Człowiek człowiekowi..., Niszczenie polskiej inteligencji w latach 1939-1945. KL Mauthausen/Gusen [Man to man..., Destruction of the Polish intelligentsia in the years 1939–1945. Mauthausen/Gusen]*, Warszawa 2009, p. 43.)

## Source 4

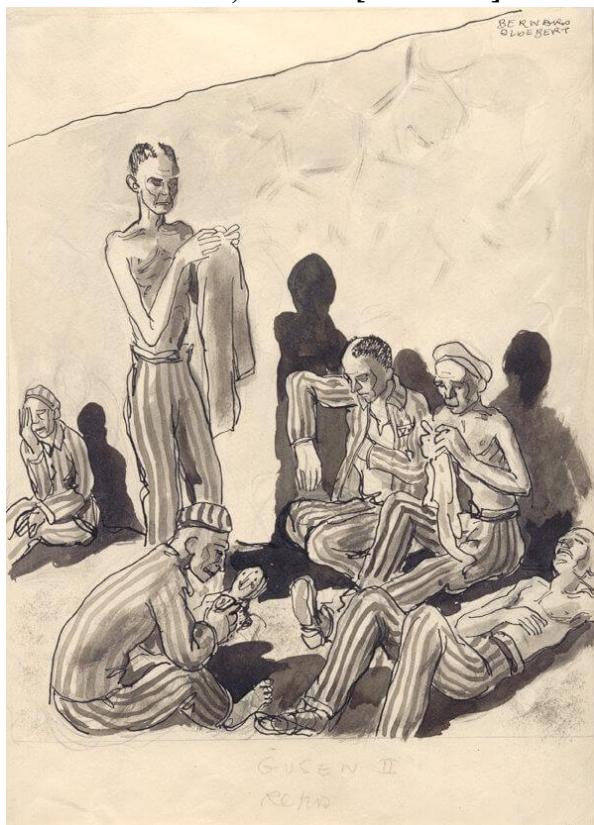
The work of Gusen II prisoners in the quarry. Drawing by French prisoner Bernard Aldebert, undated [1945/1946].



(Photo from the collection of the KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen)

**Source 5**

Prisoners of Gusen II during a break from work in the quarry. Drawing by French prisoner Bernard Aldebert, undated [1945/1946].



(Photo from the collection of the KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen)

**Source 6**

Return of the commando from work, 1939–1945.



(Drawing by Adam Grochowski from the publication entitled. *Człowiek człowiekowi..., Niszczenie polskiej inteligencji w latach 1939–1945. KL Mauthausen/Gusen [Man to man..., Destruction of the Polish intelligentsia in the years 1939–1945. Mauthausen/Gusen]*, published by the Council for the Protection of the Memory of Struggle and Martyrdom, Warszawa 2009)

### Source 7

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Stanisław Dobosiewicz, a Polish prisoner:

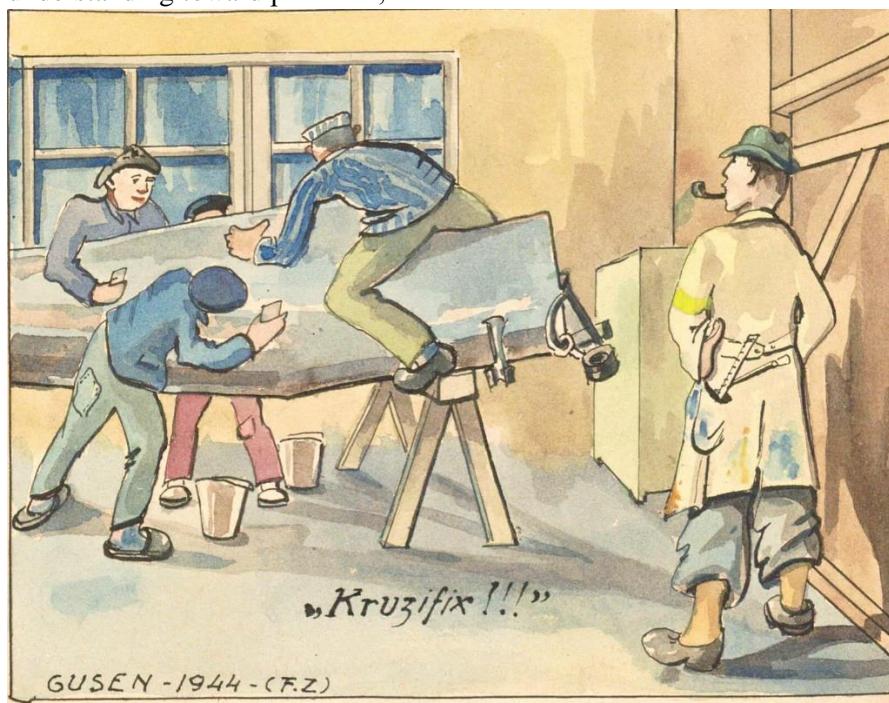
*During the Battle of Stalingrad, Albert Speer, the Minister of Armaments, came to Gusen, and was surprised that the manpower in the camp was so wasted. And he decided that the camp would be transformed into a large armaments plant. Soon [...] the excavation of [...] large adits began. Branches of the Steyr plant, a large Austrian factory, were installed there, where parts for machine guns were made [...], as well as parts for various military vehicles. [...] then new tunnels began to be drilled, and Messerchmitt's plant was relocated there, which produced fuselages for aircraft.*

(Cited from: *Ocaleni z Mauthausen. Relacje polskich więźniów obozów nazistowskich systemu Mauthausen-Gusen* [Survivors of Mauthausen. Accounts of Polish prisoners of Nazi camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen system], edited by K. Madoń-Mitzner, Warszawa 2010, p. 141)

### Source 8

#### Crucifix!!!

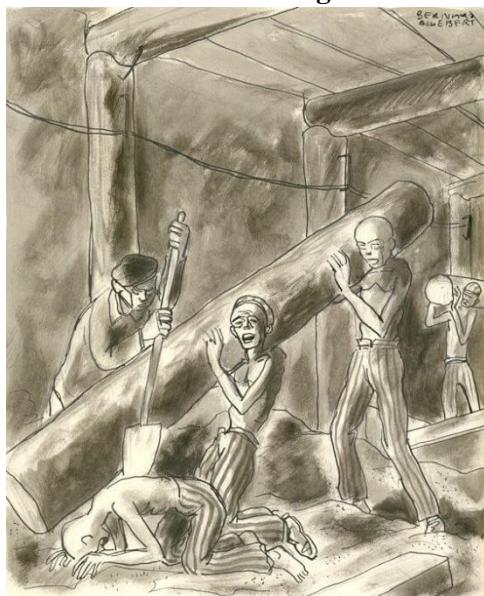
A watercolour depicting prisoners cleaning the fuselages of Me 262 jet aircraft produced in Gusen before they were painted. The author is a former prisoner of Gusen camp, Feliks Julian Znamirowski, who painted it for *obermeister* Karol Seider (in the drawing on the right). Seider was considered a man of understanding toward prisoners, who sometimes cursed 'Crucifix !!!'.



(Watercolour by Franciszek Znamirowski, from the collection of the Staatliche Bibliothek Regensburg, 999 Gr/4Rat. civ. 388, S. 3.)

### Source 9

**'Gusen II: tunnel'. Drawing by French prisoner Bernard Aldebert, depicting prisoners in the construction of an underground tunnel, undated [1945/1946].**



(Drawing from the collection of KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen)

### Exercises:

#### Recall (recapitulation):

1. *How was the extermination of the prisoners of Gusen camp carried out? What role did slave labour play in this?*
2. *When and why did the Germans start employing prisoners of Mauthausen-Gusen in armaments factories?*
3. *What was the reason for the expansion of the Mauthausen-Gusen home camp and the creation of the Gusen II and Gusen III subcamps?*
4. *Which German and Austrian arms companies exploited the slave labour of prisoners of the Mauthausen-Gusen camp?*
5. *Why did the Germans decide to move arms production to underground adits and tunnels?*

#### Analyse the sources (analysis):

1. *Based on source 1, how did the SS benefit from the slave labour of prisoners?*
2. *Based on sources 2-6, explain what the hard work of prisoners in quarries and armaments factories consisted of. Think about what was the most difficult for the prisoners to bear.*

3. *What does the fragment of the memoirs of former prisoner Stanisław Dobosiewicz (source 7) say about the reasons for the transformation of the Gusen camp into a large armaments factory? Which arms factories moved their production there?*

**Learn more (expand):**

1. *Using the example of the slave labour of prisoners from Mauthausen-Gusen, explain what the Nazi policy of extermination by work was?*
2. *Justify the thesis that the concentration camp was a large enterprise based on the slave labour of prisoners.*
3. *What was the significance of the slave labour of prisoners in the development of the construction and armaments industry of Nazi Germany?*
4. *Why did SS men and functional prisoners abuse prisoners working in the quarries and armaments factories?*

## Worksheet 8

### The murder of prisoners

The mass extermination of prisoners at Mauthausen-Gusen was conducted all throughout the camp's operation. However, its intensity varied depending on many factors, chiefly including the category of prisoners, the demand for slave labour in the arms industry and, of course, the progress of the war.

Until 1942, Gusen prisoners were murdered mainly for political and racist reasons. Initially, representatives of the Polish intelligentsia and Spanish Republicans had the least chance of survival, and from 1941 these were Soviet prisoners of war and Jewish prisoners.

At the turn of 1941/1942, sick and incapacitated prisoners were liquidated *en masse* as part of what was referred to as the 'ice baths' campaign. This consisted in herding prisoners into baths, where they were treated with icy water under pressure. After about half an hour of the 'death bath' ('Totbadeaktionen'), the prisoners lost strength and consciousness. Those who managed to survive died of pneumonia within a short time. The exact number of victims of this unusual form of mass murder is not known. However, it is estimated that it could have ranged from 700 to 2,000 prisoners. Sick prisoners were disposed of in a similar way at Gusen II, where, in the winter of 1945, thousands of naked prisoners were forced to stand in the cold during a snowstorm.

Gusen did not have a stationary gas chamber, but Zyklon B was most likely used several times at the hospital barracks. From 1941, sick Gusen prisoners, as part of the campaign code-named 'Action 14f13', were murdered with poison gas at the nearby euthanasia centre at Hartheim Castle. The gassing of prisoners at Hartheim continued intermittently until 1944. It is estimated that approximately 2,000 people were murdered there. At the end of 1942, a car was also used to kill sick and incapacitated prisoners, in which prisoners were exterminated with the use of exhaust gases. Circa 1,200 prisoners fell victim to these practices.

In the weeks preceding the end of the war, at Gusen II, camp officials killed those prisoners selected for liquidation with a baton or drowned them in barrels of water. The planned extermination by work carried out at Gusen was therefore supported by the criminal activity of members of the camp management and functional prisoners who organised these unusual forms of prisoner extermination.

#### Source 1

##### Excerpt from the memoirs of Ramir Santístebar Castillo, a Spanish prisoner:

*When the camp [Mauthausen] was overcrowded and new prisoners arrived, the place had to be emptied. How did they do this? They chose a transport to send to Gusen. Gusen was a slaughterhouse. You went there to die.*

(Cited from: *The Concentration Camp Mauthausen 1938–1945*, Vienna 2013, p. 161; fragment translated by Marek Zajac)

### Source 2

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Władysław Gębik, a Polish prisoner:

*One with a red triangle jumped out. I ask who he is. A Czech. He says: Whoever came here will never leave.*

(Cited from: *Człowiek człowiekowi..., Niszczenie polskiej inteligencji w latach 1939-1945. KL Mauthausen/Gusen [Man to man..., Destruction of the Polish intelligentsia in the years 1939–1945. Mauthausen/Gusen]*, Warszawa 2009, p. 46)

### Source 3

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Zbigniew Włazłowski, a Polish prisoner:

*During one of the appeals, it was announced that the weakest would be sent to a sanatorium in Hartheim [...] Many reported to the camp writers their desire to go [...] After a few days, the clothes of the deportees were sent back to the camp. It turned out that the invalids did not reach [...] the sanatorium, they were choked to death by exhaust fumes from exhaust pipes, directed inside the closed carriages [...]*

(Cited from: *Człowiek człowiekowi..., Niszczenie polskiej inteligencji w latach 1939-1945. KL Mauthausen/Gusen [Man to man..., Destruction of the Polish intelligentsia in the years 1939–1945. Mauthausen/Gusen]*, Warszawa 2009, p. 65)

### Source 4

**Hartheim Castle, one of the euthanasia centres where, as part of the campaign code-named '14f13', concentration camp prisoners, mainly from Mauthausen-Gusen, were murdered.**



(Photo from the collection of KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen, photo: KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen/Sammlugen)

### Source 5

#### Excerpt from the memoirs of Telesfor Matuszak, a Polish prisoner:

*Five people could be inserted into one crematorium furnace at one time [...] The time for incinerating the corpses was about two hours, except that after an hour the kapo, a German, with a three-metre hook, would scatter the corpses into smaller pieces, so that everything would burn better [...]*

*On the first day of work at the crematorium, I incinerated a friend – the first one I remember. I know that I incinerated more, but I do not remember under what circumstances, I was already immune. It was simply an object.*

(Cited from: *Ocaleni z Mauthausen. Relacje polskich więźniów obozów nazistowskich systemu Mauthausen-Gusen [Survivors of Mauthausen. Accounts of Polish prisoners of Nazi camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen system]*, edited by K. Madoń-Mitzner, Warszawa 2010, p. 139)

#### Source 6

**Combustion chambers of the crematorium furnace at Gusen. The photograph was taken in May 1945 after the liberation of the camp.**



(Photo from the collection of the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation – Stanisław Dobosiewicz's Archive)

#### Source 7

**Excerpt from a book by Stanisław Dobosiewicz, a Polish prisoner:**

*The amounts of ash were considerable. The commandant began to transfer them – likely for a fee – to local farms for fertilising gardens and fields, and when there were few willing buyers, they poured them over the surrounding roads leading to the Danube.*

(Cited from: Stanisław Dobosiewicz, *Mauthausen-Gusen. Obóz zagłady [Mauthausen-Gusen. Extermination camp]*, Warszawa 1977, p. 190)

#### Exercises:

##### **Recall (recapitulation):**

1. *What was the significance of the murder of people at the Gusen camp?*
2. *What groups of prisoners were most exposed to extermination at Mauthausen-Gusen and when?*
3. *When did the sick prisoners of Mauthausen-Gusen begin to be murdered in the gas chambers? How and where were these crimes committed?*

**Analyse the sources (analysis):**

1. *Based on the fragment of the memoirs of former prisoner Zbigniew Włazłowski (source 3), consider why the Germans hid from the prisoners the real purpose of transferring them to the euthanasia centre in Hartheim.*
1. *Read the excerpt from the memoirs of former prisoner Telesfor Matuszak (source 5) and consider how the work of prisoners at the crematorium affected their psyche?*
2. *Based on the excerpt from Stanisław Dobosiewicz's book (source 7), tell us what was done with the ashes of the murdered prisoners? How do you assess the attitude of the local residents of Gusen, who used the ashes of the deceased prisoners as fertiliser for their gardens and fields?*

**Learn more (expand):**

1. *Explain what 'Action 14f13' was. Present its assumptions and course.*
2. *Find biographical information about Aldo Capri and tell us how you perceive his artistic work on the subject of the camp. What do his drawings (tell us about the author and how do they show the camp reality of Mauthausen-Gusen?*

## Worksheet 9

### Civilian resistance and the prisoners' struggle for survival

The rules at Gusen camp were very strict. In the years 1940–1942, for example, prisoners were forbidden to enter other blocks. Every day, the level of cleanliness in the residential barracks was checked, as was the condition of clothes and footwear. The slightest negligence in this regard was punished by block gym exercises or standing still. Severe punishments awaited prisoners who attempted to escape. In the event of violation of camp regulations, the principle of collective responsibility was very often applied.

The camp regime eased at the beginning of 1943 after the Steyr and Messerschmitt factories launched their armaments production. Since these companies demanded that camp authorities provide production workers, the use of punishments was reduced and the arbitrariness of functional prisoners was limited. During breaks from work, prisoners were permitted to leave the barracks and visit friends. Supervision of prisoners in the camp weakened and some groups of prisoners were allowed to receive food parcels.

The easing of the camp regime had a positive impact on the increase in the social activity of prisoners. The possibilities of self-defense against destruction and terror also grew. Initially, a way to survive in the camp was to avoid conflicts with the functionaries, save strength at work and make rational use of rest. With time, various self-help groups began to be created, which dealt with feeding prisoners, for example. For this purpose, food was smuggled from the camp kitchen and warehouses and food from family packages was shared. This was extremely important because Gusen was the only concentration camp in the Reich that the International Red Cross could not send food parcels to.

In order to maintain full physical strength and health, efforts were made to avoid injuries at work. On the other hand, in order to raise the morale of the prisoners, talks and discussions, literary and musical evenings, chess games and football matches were organised. Various religious practices were also taught and performed. The Polish prisoners demonstrated the greatest social and cultural activity.

#### Source 1

**Excerpt from the memoirs of Waclaw Pilarski, a Polish prisoner:**

*You always had to get out of the bunk in the morning, even on all fours. Something in a person said: you have to, you have to survive...*

*There was an internal struggle for survival. I remember lying on the block with a broken leg, I had a very high temperature and I thought it was probably the end. Friends came to visit me in the evening, they are standing over me and I hear them speak: 'Wacek is passing.' And I said, 'Shit, I'm passing!'*

(Cited from: *Ocaleni z Mauthausen. Relacje polskich więźniów obozów nazistowskich systemu Mauthausen-Gusen* [Survivors of Mauthausen. Accounts of Polish prisoners of Nazi camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen system], edited by K. Madoń-Mitzner, Warszawa 2010, p. 256)

### Source 2

‘Christmas greetings from the Gusen camp, 1945’ – greeting card.



(Watercolour by Franciszek Znamirowski, from the collection of the Seweryn Udziela Regional Museum in Stary Sącz/Towarzystwo Miłośników Starego Sącza [Association of Enthusiasts of Stary Sącz])

### Source 3

**Excerpt from the memoirs of Henri Maître, a French prisoner:**

*It was possible to practice sabotage, but only with extreme caution [...] Some of them were caught for it, they were hanged – they cut off the insulation from the cables in the planes being built, so that there would be a dangerous short-circuit. But the best method of resistance was to maintain one's dignity, to remain oneself, to endure another day – with composure, strength, hope.*

(Cited from: *Errinnerungen an Gusen. Das Konzentrationslager in den Erzählungen von Überlebenden*, directed by Christian Dürr, prod.: Republic of Austria/Ministry of the Interior, 2005; fragment translated by Marek Zająć)

### Source 4

**Excerpt from the memoirs of Stanisław Zalewski, a Polish prisoner:**

*There was one priest among the prisoners, with whom the German found a rosary. He tortured him a lot and told him to eat this rosary one bead at a time. And the priest ate it. Soon after, the priest died, and then the idea of praying the rosary was born. We agreed that, at a certain hour, after roll call, everyone would pray a part of the rosary. There was also the idea to make a real rosary. Granite cubes had already been prepared, in which holes were to be drilled. So that the Germans would not realise what was happening., the rosary cubes resembled dice for a game.*

(Cited from: *Świadkowie Historii. Materiały Warsztatów Dziennikarskich marzec-czerwiec 2009 roku* [Witnesses of History. Materials of the Journalism Workshop March-June 2009], Warszawa 2009, p. 48)

### Source 5

**Granite cubes from which the rosary of Gusen was made.**



(From the collection of the Archive of the Stutthof Museum in Sztutowo)

#### Source 6

##### Excerpt from the memoirs of Waclaw Milke, a Polish prisoner:

*A Christmas Eve I will never forget. Representatives of different nationalities gathered secretly at one of the blocks [...] We prepared various carols, a piece of black bread lay on the table. And it began. First STILLE NACHT, HEILIGE NACHT. Then BOG PRIEDWIECZNYJ NARODIŁSIA. Friends formed a choir and began to sing GOD IS BORN, GREAT POWER TREMBLE... We began sharing bread.*

(Cited from: *Ocaleni z Mauthausen. Relacje polskich więźniów obozów nazistowskich systemu Mauthausen-Gusen* [Survivors of Mauthausen. Accounts of Polish prisoners of Nazi camps of the Mauthausen-Gusen system], edited by K. Madoń-Mitzner, Warszawa 2010, p. 245)

#### Source 7

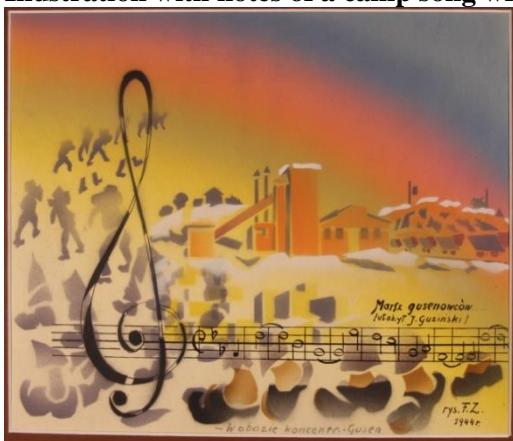
##### Excerpt from the memoirs of Zbigniew Wlazłowski, a Polish prisoner:

*Art and culture in Gusen coexisted alongside crime and developed against logic; [...] saved prisoners from complete animalisation [...]*

(Cited from: *Człowiek człowiekowi..., Niszczenie polskiej inteligencji w latach 1939-1945. KL Mauthausen/Gusen* [Man to Man..., The Destruction of the Polish Intelligentsia in the Years 1939–1945. Mauthausen/Gusen], Warszawa 2009, p. 81)

#### Source 8

##### Illustration with notes of a camp song written at the camp, entitled 'March of the Gusenists'.



(Watercolour by Franciszek Znamirowski, from the collection of the Seweryn Udziela Regional Museum in Stary Sącz/ Towarzystwo Miłośników Starego Sącza [Association of Enthusiasts of Stary Sącz])

### Source 9

Excerpt from the memoirs of Grzegorz Timofeyev, a Polish prisoner:

*In their memory and on scraps of paper, exposing themselves to revision and inevitable death, the prisoners kept both talented and inept [...] camp poems...*

(Cited from: *Człowiek człowiekowi..., Niszczenie polskiej inteligencji w latach 1939-1945. KL Mauthausen/Gusen [Man to Man..., The Destruction of the Polish Intelligentsia in the Years 1939–1945. Mauthausen/Gusen]*, Warszawa 2009, p. 81)

### Source 10

In a Dream..., Gusen – 1944.



(Watercolour by Franciszek Znamirowski, from the collection of the Seweryn Udziela Regional Museum in Stary Sącz/ Starego Sącza [Association of Enthusiasts of Stary Sącz])

### Exercises:

#### Recall (recapitulation):

1. *What were the camp regulations at Mauthausen-Gusen and what was the threat for prisoners for breaking them?*
2. *When did the camp regime at Gusen ease and what was the reason for this?*
3. *How did the weakening of the camp regime affect the increase in the activity of prisoners, including the increase in the possibility of self-defense against extermination and terror?*

4. *What did the prisoners do to maintain their full physical strength and mental health, and how did they try to raise morale?*

**Analyse the sources (analysis):**

1. *Read the excerpt from the memoirs of former prisoner Waclaw Pilarski (source 1) and explain on what the internal struggle of the Gusen prisoner for survival was based?*
2. *According to former prisoner Henri Maître (source 3), what was the best form of resistance at the camp? Do you agree with his opinion?*
3. *How do you understand the words of former prisoner Zbigniew Włazłowski (source 7), who stated that ‘Art and culture at Gusen [...] saved prisoners from complete animalisation [...]’?*
4. *Based on sources 2-5, 7, 8, 10 and others included in this package, tell us what the motifs of camp art were and what did they result from?*

**Learn more (expand):**

1. *What was the nature of the resistance movement at Mauthausen-Gusen and what resulted in its limitations?*
2. *Why were religious practices forbidden at the camp? Why was the opportunity to practice religion and celebrate holidays of significance to prisoners?*
3. *How do you understand the words of former prisoner Waclaw Pilarski, who stated that the conspiracy at Gusen ‘consisted in helping another, saving his life’?*

## Worksheet 10

### Liberation of the camp

On the night of 2 to 3 May 1945, the majority of the SS personnel left the camp, including its commandant Fritz Seidler, who, fearing capture by the Allies, committed suicide, having previously killed his wife and children. At that time, the Vienna fire police took over the supervision of the camp, which most likely saved the prisoners from their planned liquidation.

On 5 May 1945, American troops entered the camp, discovering approximately 21,000 exhausted and ill prisoners, mainly Polish and Soviet citizens. Immediately after the liberation, acts of self-judgment took place in the camp on functional prisoners, many of whom were killed by an angry crowd of prisoners. Several days later, the Americans established the military commandant of the camp and organised a field hospital in the former SS barracks, where the prisoners gradually recovered. Despite the medical care that was arranged, mortality in the camp remained at a high level. At the end of August, after most of the prisoners had left, the camp was finally liquidated. However, some Polish prisoners, owing to the uncertain political situation, delayed returning to the country. Therefore, the mass repatriation of former Gusen prisoners ended only in 1946.

After liberation, the Allies often forced the local population to clean up the Gusen area and take care of the surviving prisoners. These activities were part of their policy of re-educating Austrians. Immediately after the liberation of the camp, the Americans also initiated an information campaign about the crimes committed at Mauthausen-Gusen, which was addressed to world public opinion, as well as to citizens of Austria and Germany. Evidence of the crime was collected and published in the mass media. A significant contribution to this campaign was made by a special unit of the US Army called Signal Corps, which took a series of photographs of Gusen immediately after its liberation. These were the first – and in some cases the only – photographic documentation from the camps.

Due to the enormity of the crimes committed at Gusen, it became of paramount importance to prosecute the perpetrators and bring them before Allied military tribunals. In order to gather evidence, the Americans established a special commission chaired by Maj. Eugene S. Cohen. The commission's report was later used as evidence at the main Nuremberg Trials, and also served as a basis for prosecution in the first trial of the Mauthausen crew, which took place in the spring of 1946 before the American military tribunal in Dachau. At that time, 61 people sat in the dock, including many guards from Gusen. After a few days of trial, all the defendants were found guilty of war crimes, and the overwhelming majority of them sentenced to death.

**Source 1**

Satirical drawing depicting SS men fleeing from Gusen in panic.



(Drawing by Zbigniew Filarski, *Przed wolnością* [Before Freedom], Gusen 1945, from the collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim)

**Source 2**

American soldier standing in front of the gallows located at Gusen, May 1945.



(A still from the film entitled *Mauthausen Concentration Camp*, 1945, directed by E. R. Kellogg, George C. Stevens, James B. Donovan, prod. United States. Army. Signal Corps; Accessed at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of the National Archives & Records Administration)

**Source 3**

Gusen prisoners survived among corpses left in the camp by SS men, May 1945.



(Photo from the collection of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Joseph Gottlieb)

**Source 4**

**A cart filled with corpses of prisoners in front of the entrance gate to the camp. After liberation, American soldiers forced the local Austrian population to collect and bury the dead, May 1945.**



(A still from the film titled *Mauthausen Concentration Camp*, 1945, directed by E. R. Kellogg, George C. Stevens, James B. Donovan, prod. United States Army. Signal Corps; Accessed at United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives & Records Administration)

**Source 5**

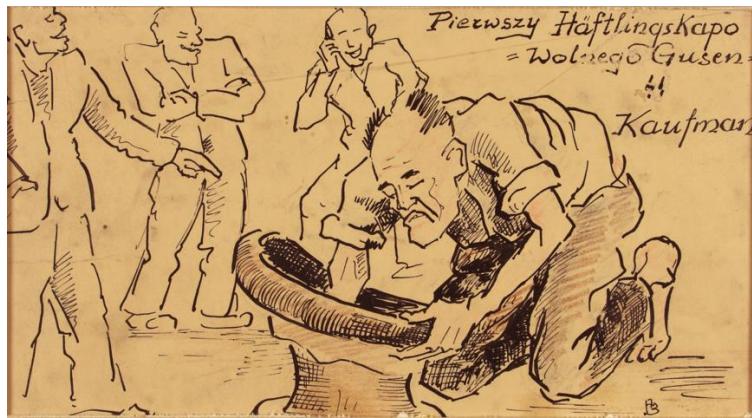
**Hospital room at the camp in Gusen. Polish prisoners sit at the bedside of an Italian prisoner who attempted to commit suicide on the day of the liberation of the camp, May 1945.**



(Photo from the collection of the Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation – Stanisław Dobosiewicz's Archive)

### Source 6

A satirical drawing depicting a former functional prisoner forced to work, who is ridiculed by other prisoners. After the liberation of the camp, acts of revenge took place in Gusen.



(Drawing by Zbigniew Filarski, Po odzyskaniu wolności [After regaining freedom], Gusen 1945, from the collection of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oświęcim)

### Source 7

**Excerpt from the memoirs of Stanisław Nogaj, a Polish prisoner:**

*After regaining my freedom, I walked on foot towards Vienna. My first stop was in the town of Schwertberg, located just 11 kilometres from [...] Gusen. At the local blacksmith I asked for water. A frightened Austrian offered me dinner:*

*'I see that you are from a concentration camp, probably from this slaughter house Mauthausen [...]'*

*'I am not coming from Mauthausen, but from the most terrible death trap in the world... from Gusen, where I spent 5 years. I am one of the few who survived.'*

*'From Gusen?' my kind host was surprised. 'And where is that located? [...]'*

*It was difficult for me to comprehend that there are people only 11 kilometres from the Gusen camp who know nothing about it [...] And what do my esteemed companions of misery say? What will those who spread the news that Gusen was on the lips of the whole world have to say about this? That the governments of all countries are informed about the crimes in Gusen? Gusen is a hole, not marked on any map, not listed on any list. And during these five years of captivity, it seemed to us that Gusen was at least as famous as Dachau! What is Gusen?*

(Cited from: Stanisław Nogaj, Gusen. *Pamiętnik dziennikarza* [Diary of a journalist], Katowice – Chorzów 1945, p. 18)

## Exercises:

### Recall (recapitulation):

1. When did the SS crew leave the Mauthausen-Gusen camp and what happened to its last commandant? Who supervised the camp until its liberation by American troops?
2. When did American troops enter the camp and how many prisoners did they find there (and in what condition)?
3. What was the situation at the former Gusen camp in the first years after its liberation?
4. What was the policy for the re-education of Austrians conducted immediately after the liberation by the Americans, and the information campaign on the Nazi crimes committed at Mauthausen-Gusen?
5. For what purpose was the special commission appointed under the chairmanship of Maj. Eugene S. Cohen, and what were the results of its activities?

### Analyse the sources (analysis):

1. Look at the photographs (sources 2-5) and state what they tell us about the situation at the Gusen camp at the time of liberation? What was the physical and mental state of the liberated prisoners? How did the Americans and former prisoners seek to improve sanitary conditions in the camp?
2. Look at the satirical drawings (sources 1 and 6) and think about what the author wanted to convey with their help? How were the SS men and functional prisoners portrayed on them? Explain the inscription on one of the drawings: 'The first prisoner-kapo of Free Gusen'.
3. Read the excerpt from the memoirs of former prisoner Stanisław Nogaj (source 7) and tell us how he was received by the Austrian host? Why was he surprised that the inhabitants of nearby Schwertberg had not heard of the concentration camp in Gusen?

### Learn more (expand):

1. How do you assess the behaviour of former prisoners who, after liberation, took revenge on their tormentors for the harm suffered in the camp?
2. Why did the Americans decide to force the local population to clean up the area of the former camp and bury the bodies of the dead prisoners?

## Worksheet 11

### Commemoration of the area of the former camp

Shortly after liberation, the material remnants of the Mauthausen-Gusen camp began to quickly disappear. The Americans allowed the local authorities to sell the building material left behind. This material was also partially looted by the local population, who used wood and rocks from the camp as building material. Subsequently the area of the former camp and the tunnels hollowed out by the prisoners found themselves under the management of the occupying Soviet authorities, who requisitioned the machines left there, blew up underground tunnels, and took over the quarries for their own use.

Following the withdrawal of the Soviet troops in 1955, the area of the former camp was divided into small plots, on which it was decided to build a housing estate. The crematorium furnace was to be dismantled, and the commemorative plaque and memorial stone, unveiled there by Polish and French prisoners, were to be moved to Mauthausen. At the end of 1960, however, former Italian prisoners launched negotiations on the purchase of the site of the former camp, where the remains of the crematorium were located. In 1961, they managed to buy this plot of land and gift it to the municipality, and in return obtain permission to erect a monument there.

In 2001, on the initiative of the Austrian and Polish authorities, a joint committee commemorating the camp in Gusen was established. As a result of joint activities, in 2004, it was possible to open the KZ Gusen Visitors Center. Today, most of the land of the former Mauthausen-Gusen camp is in private hands. The site of the former barracks now contains single-family houses and the entrance gate (*Jourhaus*) has been turned into a private villa.

Following the intervention of the Polish government, which attaches great importance to commemorating this special place in the history of Polish martyrdom, the Austrian authorities decided to take the former roll call square under conservatory protection. The question of the manner and shape of commemorating this area remains open.

#### Source 1

**Wreaths and flowers laid out by former prisoners on the ruins of the former crematorium furnace, which formed part of the commemoration site of the victims of the Gusen camp created in 1965.**



(Photo: Dobosiewicz's Archive, Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation)

**Source 2**

Former Polish prisoners of Gusen standing in front of the building of the former camp administration (*Jourhaus*), which was sold in 1965 to the municipality of Langenstein for the purpose of housing a kindergarten there.



(Photo from the collection of the Polish-German Reconciliation Foundation – Stanisław Dobosiewicz's Archive)

**Source 3**

**Contemporary appearance of the camp administration (*Jourhaus*), which has been converted into a private villa.**



(Photo: 2002 – from the collection of the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation – Stanisław Dobosiewicz's Archive; 2019 – a still from the film entitled *W czerwieniach Gusen* [In the Depths of Gusen])

**Source 4**

**The KL Gusen Memorial surrounded by a number of single-family houses that were built on the site of the former camp, 2019.**



(A still from the film entitled *W czeluściach Gusen [In the Depths of Gusen]*)

**Source 5**

**Contemporary view of the mill for crushing stones, 2019.**



(A still from the film entitled *W czeluściach Gusen [In the Depths of Gusen]*)

**Source 6**

**Contemporary view of the former roll call square with the wall surrounding the camp, 2019.**



(A still from the film entitled *W czerwieniach Gusen [In the Depths of Gusen]*)

**Exercises:**

**Recall (recapitulation):**

1. *Why did the material remains of the Mauthausen-Gusen camp begin to disappear quickly after the war?*
2. *What changes took place in the camp after the Soviet occupation authorities took control over it? What changed after the Soviets left in 1955?*
3. *When and thanks to whom did the first forms of commemoration begin to be created in the former Gusen camp?*
4. *On whose initiative and when was the international committee for the commemoration of Gusen established, and what are the effects of its actions?*

**Analyse the sources (analysis):**

1. *Take a look at the photographs (sources 1-6) and tell us what parts of the former Mauthausen-Gusen camp's infrastructure have survived to*

*this day? In what condition are they and what function do they currently fulfil?*

**Learn more (expand):**

1. *Discuss the problem of caring for the site of the former Gusen concentration camp. Who should be responsible for this and why? What type of memorial site should be created in this area?*

## ANNEX

### Materials and questionnaire for participants of the ‘Sound in the Silence’ project prepared by the Mauthausen Memorial

The Mauthausen Memorial preserves the memory of the victims, researches and documents the history of the Mauthausen concentration camp, including its subcamps and, through exhibitions and educational programs, enables visitors to engage with the history of the camp. The aim of the educational work is to raise awareness, in particular surrounding issues such as re-engagement with National Socialist ideology, anti-Semitism, racism, minority discrimination and hostility towards democracy.

On 12 March 1938 the ‘Anschluss’ (‘Annexation’) of Austro-fascist Austria to the German Reich took place. Two weeks later, the National Socialist Gauleiter (political leader) of Upper Austria, August Eigruber, announced to an enthusiastic audience that his Gau (county, district, province) would have the ‘honour’ of constructing a concentration camp. The location chosen for this was the town of Mauthausen on the Danube. Political opponents and groups labelled as ‘criminal’ or ‘antisocial’ would be imprisoned here and forced to work in the granite quarries.

On 8 August 1938 the SS transferred the first prisoners from the Dachau concentration camp. During this phase, the prisoners, almost all of them male Germans and Austrians, had to construct their own camp and set up operations in the quarry. Their daily lives were shaped by hunger, arbitrariness and violence. In December 1939 the SS ordered the construction of a second concentration camp just a few kilometres from Mauthausen. The Gusen branch camp officially went into operation in May 1940.

**You will find a good summary of the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration system via the following links:**

- <https://www.mauthausen-memorial.org/en/History/The-Mauthausen-Concentration-Camp19381945>
- <https://www.mm-tours.org/en/1/>
- <https://www.mm-tours.org/en/20>
- <https://www.mauthausen-memorial.org/en/History/The-Subcamps#map||>
- <https://www.mauthausen-memorial.org/en/History/Witness-Testimonies>
- <https://raumdernamen.mauthausen-memorial.org/index.php?L=1>
- <https://youtu.be/6fIZOlq9Pis>

**Please answer the following questions and take the answers with you to the Memorial in October:**

1. What questions do you have in particular based on the information that you have collected so far?
  2. What expectations do you have in general regarding the program at the Mauthausen Memorial?
  3. What do you know about the history of your own country/place of origin in relation to National Socialism?
  4. Write a fictional letter to a friend. Tell them what you are going to do in October and how you feel about it...

## GLOSSARY – BASIC TERMS

Prepared by Beata Tomczyk, co-coordinator of the Sound in the Silence Project, based on the materials prepared for 2022 and previous editions of the project.

**Antisemitism** – (definition prepared by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance): Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. In the III Reich the antisemitic racist policy of the state was summed up in the so called Nuremberg Laws, which defined who was considered a Jew, and made Jews legally different from non-Jewish citizens.

**Concentration camps** - (Konzentrationslager, shortcut KL/KZ) Sites of isolation and slave labour set up by the Nazis in Germany in the 1930s initially to eliminate political opponents. As time went on different groups of people were arrested, including so called "habitual criminals", people with mental disorders, and after the entry into force of the Nuremberg Laws also people with Jewish ancestors . After the beginning of World War II, people from German-occupied Europe (Jews, Roma and Sinti, Poles, Czechoslovaks, French, Spanish, Dutch, Hungarian and many more nationalities) were imprisoned in the concentration camps as well. Concentration camp inmates were weakened by hard physical work, beatings and negligible food rations, which led to high mortality rates.

**Deportation** - Deportation means that people are brought to another site against their will. The Nazis deported the people they persecuted to concentration - and extermination camps.

**Extermination camps** – the term extermination camp (Vernichtungslager) refers to the Nazi camps whose primary function was genocide. Six camps, set by the Nazis in occupied Poland, met this definition: Chełmno, Belzec, Sobibór, Treblinka, Majdanek and Auschwitz – Birkenau. Though extermination of people happened at every sort of concentration camps or transit camps; the very purpose of the extermination camps was immediate annihilation of the inmates. The camps were established to kill Jews, as well as Roma and Sinti.

**Holocaust** - premeditated mass murder of European Jews. The Nazis - driven by a racist ideology that regarded the Jews as "subhumans" initiated genocide on an unprecedented scale.

**Kapo** - was a prisoner in a camp, assigned by the SS guards, to supervise forced labor or carry out administrative tasks. They were responsible for the discipline and maintenance of the work. Kapo had virtually unlimited power and could therefore punish other prisoners at will, hit them with a stick and even kill them. Many kapos were characterized by particular cruelty, aimed at intimidating and terrorizing prisoners.

**Nazism** - totalitarian movement led by Adolf Hitler as head of the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in Germany.

Nazism was extreme variant of fascism, based on racism (and especially anti-Semitism) combined with the cult of the German nation (as the “superior” race), ruthless dictatorship and a vision of the military conquest of the world. The spread of this ideology led to the outbreak of the Second World War.

**NSDAP**- National Socialist German Workers' Party, a far-right political party in Germany, that created and supported the ideology of Nazism. The party was active between 1920 and 1945. The party was built up by its party leader A. Hitler (since 1921) as an anti-democratic, anti-republican and anti-Semitic party, initially active mainly in the south of Germany. In 1923 an internal Putsch led by Hitler failed, the NSDAP disintegrated. Due to the effects of the world economic crisis, the permanent crisis of the political parties of the Weimar Republic and by means of a propaganda apparatus, the party was gaining more and more power (increase in membership, electoral gains among broader sections of the population), which made the NSDAP the strongest parliamentary group in the Reichstag in July 1932.

**Racism, racist** - the belief that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called “races”, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to dominate others. In the III Reich the racist policy of the state was summed up in the so called Nuremberg Laws, which defined who was considered a Jew, and made Jews legally different from non-Jewish citizens.

**SS** - SS is an abbreviation for the „Schutzstaffel“ (Protection Squad) of the NSDAP. The SS was founded in 1925 and was a paramilitary organization. They persecuted, abused and murdered people whom the Nazis have declared their enemies. The SS was also involved in commercial enterprises and exploited concentration camp inmates as slave labor. After the war, the SS is banned and declared a criminal organization by the Allies.

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Prepared as part of the : “Sound in the Silence“ project, co-funded by the European Union

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