

# Auschwitz 1270 to the Present

Critical Notes by CARLO MATTOGNO

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POB 2145 PVP CA 90274 USA

<http://www.russgranata.com/>

[e-mail: info@russgranata.com](mailto:info@russgranata.com)

**R**obert Jan van Pelt and Deborah Dwork wrote a large book appearing in 1996 entitled *Auschwitz 1270 to the Present*.<sup>[1]</sup> The second part of that book is aimed at the Auschwitz camp but presents nothing original, consisting of merely an expansion of the article by Robert Jan van Pelt entitled *A Site in Search of a Mission*.<sup>[2]</sup>

The book is however lavishly illustrated with a 24 glossy-paged un-numbered dossier labeled *Plates: Blueprints of Genocide*, in which 20 maps are reproduced,<sup>[3]</sup> and this is the book's only merit; however its defects are many and quite serious.

## I. The Methodology

**1. First of all**, the methodology adopted by the authors is unscientific; they try to follow an inductive method which wants to trace back from documents - drawings/designs of the Zentralbauleitung - to presumed intention.

"Every decision Himmler took with regard to Auschwitz, or Höss took about the camp over which he reigned had implications for the physical site. If prisoners were to be shipped in, barracks were needed; if the deportees' goods were to be claimed for the Reich, storehouses were required. If masses of people were to be murdered, incinerators to burn their bodies were essential. The documents of the Building Office archive retrace the course in reverse from the structure back to the decision, the thinking, the idea. These materials illuminate the possibilities the Germans considered and the options they chose, their ambition as well as its outcome."<sup>[4]</sup>

But this method is flawed from its very inception due to the fact that it is not based upon written documents, but on witnesses.

The authors show an ignorance of the organization and the tasks of the Auschwitz Zentralbauleitung, and of the technical and administrative procedures which regulated the construction of the various Bauvorhaben, Bauwerke, and Bauabschnitte .<sup>[5]</sup>

From this nothing can originate except big mistakes and misunderstandings. The authors reveal an ignorance of the enormous quantity of Zentralbauleitung documents which concern the camp's planning and construction. Documents of this type which are referenced in their book are few and misinterpreted, therefore we are not surprised to see that the results of the van Pelt/Dwork methodology are misleading attempts without verification in reality, and furthermore the authors are rebuked for their shameless use of the Jean-Claude Pressac thesis without the least indication to its source as if it was their own; in their entire volume, that French writer is mentioned only once! In comparison to a certain Pressac book [\[6\]](#) which represents a regression from one of his previous works [\[7\]](#), *Auschwitz 1270 to the Present* constitutes a drastic regression to that aberrant historiography glaringly stigmatized by Pressac himself as being

"based for the most part on testimonies, assembled according to the mood of the moment, truncated to fit an arbitrary truth, and sprinkled with a few German documents of uneven value and without any connection with one another." [\[8\]](#)

In fact van Pelt/Dwork candidly admit:

"Our first and greatest debt is to the survivors, whose oral histories were the vital source of information" (p. 379).

That statement is literally true: van Pelt/Dwork "demonstrate" reality of mass extermination at Auschwitz by resorting exclusively to witnesses with the constant assistance of the *Kalendarium of Auschwitz*, thus offering a simple summary of what was already known in a new historical arrangement and with many supplementary blunders. In what follows I shall expose the most egregious of the van Pelt/Dwork blunders which will clearly reveal the incompetence, the lack of critical judgment, and the bad faith on the part of Robert Jan van Pelt and Deborah Dwork.

## **II. Planning, financing, construction of the camp.**

### **2. According to the authors, the plan of KGL dated 07 October 1941, was scheduled to house 97,000 inmates.**

"This plan was modified at a mid-October meeting and the second version became the basis for the fourteen-page accompanying document explaining the design. The single most important change was an expansion of the camp capacity from 97,000 to 125,000 inmates. One drawing, illustrating a section of the standard hut to be built, makes it absolutely clear that this increase was achieved simply by cramming more inmates into the same space. The original drawing signed by Bischoff, crossed out "550" and replaced that with "744". Nothing else had changed."(p.263).

The reason for this change which is given by the authors is quite surprising. They write:

"Perhaps Bischoff's decision was inspired by the arrival of the first prisoners of war. Like so many other Germans, he perceived the starved, ill and emaciated men as subhumans entitled to even less living space than he originally had allotted them." (p. 263).

The authors affirm even more explicitly:

"The design illustrate the ideology reflected in Bischoff's stroke of the pen through the number 550 and insertion of 744. The German identification of the Soviet soldier as an Untermensch [sub-human] was translated into architectural terms." (p. 265).

But actually, in the two plans referenced above, there is no indication regarding capacity, and there is no document by which it can result that for KGL an initial capacity of 97,000 inmates was scheduled. The order to build the KGL was issued by SS-Oberführer Kammler who was at that time chief of Amt II of Hauptamt Haushalt und Bauten. That order was retroactively effective as of 01 November 1941, and it states explicitly:

"Der Baubefehl für die Errichtung eines Kriegsgefangenenlagers in Auschwitz zur Unterbringung von 125.000 Kriegsgefangenen wird hiermit erteilt." [\[9\]](#)

Therefore the population increase published by the authors is pure fantasy. Contrary to what they maintain, the 15 October 1941 KGL plan presents at least two relevant differences which justify the necessity of a new design: the sector "Unterkünfte für Wachtruppe" inserted east of the future Bauabschnitt III and the elimination of the "Kommandanturgebäude" previously placed at the camp's entrance. [\[10\]](#) There is no doubt that a planned "Unterkünftbarake für ein Gefanenenlager" was scheduled for a capacity of 550 persons and that this number was pencil-erased and substituted with 744; nevertheless, ignored is the **when** and **why** this modification took place, and in any case this bears no relationship to the camp's total capacity. Finally, it remains to be shown from where the authors got the capacity figure of 97,000 inmates. In their dossier "Blueprints of Genocide", this is what the authors write regarding the KGL plan of 17 October 1941:

"To the left is the quarantine camp for 17,000 men. Built as drawn, it became the women's camp in late 1942. To the right, centered on an enormous Appelplatz (roll call place), is the camp proper, designed to hold 80,000 men."

As already pointed out, these figures are **not** on the map and it is clear that the authors got them by simply multiplying the figure of the "Unterkünftbaracke" and using totals in round figures. That is:

$(30 \times 550) = 16,500$ , rounded off by the authors to 17,000;  $(144 \times 550) = 79,200$ ,

rounded off by the authors to 80,000;  $(17,000 + 80,000) = 97,000$  !!

**3. As to the estimated initial cost of the KGL**, the authors write that "the total budget was to be 8.9 million marks" (p. 264), and then they add:

"The SS head office reduced the total cost from 8.9 million marks to 7.7 million, as the standard rate for labor costs did not apply; the prisoners were to build the camp themselves, free of charge" (p. 265).

Now this assertion by van Pelt/Dwork is grossly misleading. The "Kostenvoranschlag für den Vorentwurf über den Neubau des Kriegsgefangenenlagers der Waffen SS Auschwitz O./s." drawn up on 30 October 1941, scheduled a total cost of 8,900,000 RM [\[11\]](#) which after a special technical survey by the right office [\[12\]](#) was lowered to 8,553,700 RM which was reduced by 10% "für Häftlingsarbeit" rounded off to 853,700 RM, therefore the final amount was 7,700,000 RM. [\[13\]](#)

**4. Then van Pelt/Dwork write as follows:**

"Bischoff arrived in Auschwitz on 01 October. Within a few weeks he had compiled a budget: He would need 13.6 million marks for the first phase of the project, and another 7 million to complete building the whole camp. Significantly, the budget stated that 'a license number will be given by the chemical industry through IG Farben', which meant that the camp would receive material allocations from the resources at the disposal of Krauch, the plenipotentiary general for special questions of chemical production. Kammler approved the budget and forwarded a copy to Krauch, who was taken aback by the proposal. [...] "

In response to IG Farben's unwillingness to support a 20.6 million operation, Bischoff proposed two plans. The first plan budgeted at 2.02 million marks, was called "Provisional Expansion of the Concentration Camp Auschwitz O/S [Oberschliesien, or Upper Silesia]," which was to be built with construction material supplied through IG Farben. Its main purpose was to demonstrate responsibility to the corporation. The second plan, "Building Project Auschwitz", budgeted at 20.6 million marks, was Bischoff's real agenda." (pp. 214-218).

Here is where van Pelt/Dwork make a **huge** blunder:

According to Speer's instructions as Generalbevollmächtigte für die Regelung der Bauwirtschaft (short form: G.B.-Bau), the realization of a Bauvorhaben required as a preliminary administrative act, its classification [Einstufung] into the priority lists of the related district [Wehrkreisrangfolgelisten]. By putting it into this list, the Bauvorhaben received an identification number [G.B.-Bau Kennnummer] which represented, so to say, its administrative birth certificate and which started off all procedures needed to construct,

beginning with the allotment of building materials. For the chemical installations, the procedure was the same, but in this case they depended upon Generalbevollmächtigte für Sonderfragen der chemischen Erzeugung Carl Krauch.

The Bauvorhaben of the up-coming camp of Monowitz belonged to the chemical plant IG Farben and thus received the Bau-Kennnummer "O. Wo-E ( Chem) Katt. 3009". This is to what the term "license number" mentioned by van Pelt/Dwork refers. According to Bischoff's letter to the WVHA dated 17 March 1942, for the above-referenced Bauvorhaben there were scheduled 4,660,000 RM for the remaining Bauvorhaben, which, according to Speer, 19, 594,300 RM were allotted as follows:

- SS-Unterkunft und K.L. Auschwitz: 7,057,400 RM.
- Kriegsgefangenenlager der Waffen-SS: 9,663,900 RM.
- Landwirtschaftliche Bauten: 2,442,000 RM.
- Sonstiges: 193,000 RM.
- Hauptwirtschaftslager der Waffen-SS: 238,000 RM. [\[14\]](#)

It is thus necessary to assert that the Bauvorhaben, according to Speer, were to "receive material allocations from resources at the disposal of Krauch" and that IG Farben was to finance them.

**5. In interpreting the two plans of Bischoff,** van Pelt/Dwork give further evidence of ignorance: The fact is that Erläuterungsbericht zum prov. Ausbau des Konzentrationslager Auschwitz o/s of 15 July 1942, with an estimate of 2,026,000 RM, has nothing to do with IG Farben, but simply refers to the works relating to the Auschwitz camp carried out during the first and second financial year of the war, as it is clearly explained on page 9 of that document, [\[15\]](#) whereas the Erläuterungsbericht zum Bauvorhaben Konzentrationslager Auschwitz O/S, likewise dated 15 July 1942, refers to the works to be carried out during the third financial year of the war, as it states on page 15 of that document. [\[16\]](#)

**6. Van Pelt/Dwork also assert** that alleged homicidal Bunkers "physically, were located outside Birkenau", but "administratively belonged to the main camp." (p. 321).

But then why is there no trace of such Bunkers - neither in the Erläuterungsbericht zum prov. Ausbau des Konzentrationslager Auschwitz O/S nor in the Erläuterungsbericht zum Bauvorhaben Konzentrationslager Auschwitz O/S - two documents dated 15 July 1942 (a date which was during the time-frame when it is alleged homicidal Bunkers were supposed to be operating) and both of these documents refer "administratively" to the "main camp" of Auschwitz - so we repeat: then why is there no trace of such alleged homicidal Bunkers?

Van Pelt/Dwork do not even consider that question.

### III. Fantastic Deductions

The two examples which follow show how much wild imagination van Pelt/Dwork employ in interpreting documents:

**7. In the annual report for 1941** written by Kammler in his capacity as chief of Amt II - Bauten of the Hauptamt Haushalt und Bauten, van Pelt/Dwork have found the following phrase:

"Model designs have been drawn for permanent and provisional delousing installations for the Waffen SS, the police, and concentration camps, and for provisional and permanent crematoria, incinerating sites, and execution grounds of various kinds" (p.218).

The German text reads:

"Für Entlausungsanstalten der Waffen-SS, Polizei und KL in fester und behelfsmässiger Bauweise wurden Richtzeichnungen bearbeitet, desgleichen für die behelfsmässigen und festen Krematorien, Verbrennungsstätten und Exekutionsanlagen verschiedener Art." [\[17\]](#)

The two authors then place this document in the context of the alleged convocation of Höss to Berlin by Himmler (p.280) then, by using the notorious *Mein Kampf* passage in which Hitler augurs that "at the beginning of the War and during the War twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas" (p.281), come to this surprising conclusion:

"Himmler's instruction to Höss was, we believe, a result of Hitler's instruction to Himmler. Hitler had made it clear that, if revolution was attempted during this war as it had been at the close of the last war, the participants and the camp inmates were to be killed in extermination installations in the concentration camps" (p.282).

Incredibly, from the simple term "Exekutionsanlagen" (furthermore ill-translated as "execution grounds"), the two authors infer a plan to kill all the concentration camps inmates!

**8. Moreover, van Pelt/Dwork write :**

"Eichmann telephoned Kammler to ask him when the crematoria would be ready. Informed only by Bischoff, who was loath to admit that construction had fallen two

months behind schedule, Kammler reported the current official prognosis: crematorium II would be operational on 31 January, Crematorium IV on 28 February, and crematorium III on 31 March" (p.329).

Eichmann's phone call is not proved by any document and is a mere fabrication of the two authors who, to complete the deception, let it be understood that "Kammler reported" the above mentioned data to Eichmann - which is another fabrication. The document to which the two authors refer, is the letter of Bischoff to Kammler of 18 September 1942 [\[18\]](#), by which only a prodigious fantasy could deduce the inventions of van Pelt/Dwork.

#### **IV. The alleged Himmler visit to Auschwitz in 1943**

##### **9. Van Pelt/Dwork declare:**

"Crematorium III was transferred to the camp authorities on 24 June [1943], after Salonika had become Jew free. The camp now had an official daily incineration capacity of 4,756 corpses and, according to Vrba and Höss's aide Franz Hössler, Himmler came to see what he had wrought. All four crematoria in Birkenau had been completed, but the precise date is unknown. Höss himself never mentioned this visit. Himmler arrived at Auschwitz at eight o'clock and was expected to attend a gassing after breakfast at nine, Vrba has reported".

Other thirteen lines follow in which the two authors describe the alleged gassing basing this on the Rudolf Vrba testimony (pp.332-333).

The reference to Franz Hössler is taken from *Kalendarium of Auschwitz*, by Danuta Czech (note 64 p.418). In this work D.Czech writes in an introductory note to the year 1943:

"Die Gründe für diese Dreiteilung teilt der Reichsführer SS Höss persönlich mit, höchstwahrscheinlich während seines dritten Besuchs in Auschwitz im Sommer 1943, den Höss wegen der für ihn unangenehmen Folgen nicht mehr erinnert bzw. in seiner Autobiographie nicht erwähnt. Wie Franz Hössler, in seiner Aussage während des Bergen-Belsen-Prozesses, mitteilt, hat Himmler während seines Besuchs im Sommer 1943 das Lager Birkenau besucht" [\[19\]](#).

During the Belsen trial, former SS-Obersturmführer Franz Hössler stated:

"Whilst I was there the place was inspected by Obergruppenführer Glücks from Berlin in summer, 1943. [...]. The camp at Birkenau was also inspected by Himmler whilst I was there in summer, 1943, who said the same - that conditions would be altered - but again nothing was done." [\[20\]](#)

The reliability of this statement results from the fact that Hössler mistakes Pohl for Glücks. In fact, SS-Brigadeführer Glücks visited Auschwitz in winter 1943 and not in summer (precisely, on January 7). [\[21\]](#) In summer 1943 - on September 17, was the visit of SS-Obergruppenführer Pohl. [\[22\]](#)

Both Himmler's visits to Auschwitz, on 01 March 1941 and on 17-18 July 1942 are unmistakably proven by documents. The alleged third visit on the contrary, is so unclear that we even ignore the precise month! D. Czech, in the above mentioned passage just mentions " summer 1943", however in the chronological records concerning 1943, a visit by Himmler is not at all indicated. D.Czech had not known on what date to place it! Rudolf Höss, finally, is categoric on this matter:

"Die nächste Begegnung war im Sommer 1942 als Himmler zum zweiten und letzten Mal Auschwitz besuchte." [\[23\]](#)

Therefore it is clear that Himmler's visit to Auschwitz in 1943 has no historic foundation, and this is an example of D.Czech's superficiality. Van Pelt/Dwork go from bad to worse: they not only accept this baseless story, showing a lack of critical sense, but they even try to back it up using a clearly specious method:

They mention Vrba and Hössler together as the two witnesses agreeing with each other. Actually, while Hössler, as we have seen, places Himmler's alleged visit to Auschwitz in May 1943, Vrba places it in January 1943.

Vrba writes:

"Heinrich Himmler visited Auschwitz Camp again in January, 1943." [\[24\]](#)

And the alleged homicidal gassing which Vrba describes in the upcoming pages - and which van Pelt/Dwork cite as though it were an ordinary gassing - was the alleged **first** homicidal gassing in Crematorium II, which one could not place at all in summer 1943. Therefore, according to the two witnesses, Himmler's alleged visit dated back to January or summer 1943. Van Pelt/Dwork, not being able to mention these contradictory dates, prefer to fool their readers by saying that "the precise date is unknown"!

## **V. The crematoria of Auschwitz-Birkenau**

### **10. The Position of the crematorium in the main camp**

Van Pelt/Dwork publish two plans for Auschwitz in their insert they call "Blueprints of Genocide." These are "the first master plan for Auschwitz, June 1941" (Plate 6) and "the

second master plan for Auschwitz, February 1942" (Plate 7) and this is their commentary:

"Scrutiny of the master plan under review reveals a curious design decision. The architects had chosen a far corner of the compound, behind the camp prison with its execution yard in the center, and relatively close to the hospital, for the site of a new crematorium. If everyone who died in the camp had been an inmate, this arrangement would have made sense. But Auschwitz also served the Kattowitz Gestapo as an execution ground and, according to the plan, the condemned would have had to traverse the whole camp. Someone disapproved of this arrangement: in the next master plan the new crematorium is right next to the old one, conveniently close to the back gate of the camp. That "someone" "may have been Himmler" (p.280).

This commentary is clearly specious because the first plan for the new crematorium (the future Crematorium II of Birkenau) dates from 24 October 1941 [\[25\]](#) while in the month of June the idea of a new crematorium had not yet been conceived, so this crematorium cannot appear in the "first master plan for Auschwitz" of June 1941. The graphic symbol which they call a crematorium appears as such only in their elaboration of the "first master plan for Auschwitz," appearing on pp. 212-213, while in the original plan (Plate 6) the relative symbol is indecipherable. Were this a crematorium it would have been the old crematorium (the crematorium of the Stammlager) which existed as such since the end of June 1940 [\[26\]](#) but which does not appear in the "first master plan for Auschwitz." Therefore, what could be sensibly deduced from the "first master plan" is that the SS were planning to move the crematorium from its existing position on the periphery to a central position, so that, in order for the detainees to reach it, "the condemned would have had to traverse the whole camp," exactly the opposite of what van Pelt/Dwork hypothesize!

## 11. The "criminal" transformation of the crematoria of Birkenau

Regarding this, van Pelt/Dwork write as follows:

"This procedure could be repeated in crematoria II and III. Dejacó changed the basement plan. He drew in an outside staircase descending from the yard next to the railway spur into a basement entrance to crematorium. This is where a vestibule, a new undressing room, and the new gas chamber were located. He canceled the planned corpse chute, which in the earlier plans had been the main access to the basement morgues. Live human beings descend staircases. Dead bodies are dropped through a chute. The victims would walk to their death" (p.324).

Here the authors appropriate an argument of Jean-Claude Pressac without even naming him. In fact, pointing out that the corpse-slide ("Rutsche") is missing from Bauleitung plan 2003 of 19 December 1942, the French historian explained that:

"l'escalier nord devient le seul accès possible aux morgues, ce qui implique que les morts devront descendre l'escalier en marchant."<sup>[27]</sup>

As I have shown elsewhere,<sup>[28]</sup> the subject of the plan is simply a project to transfer the basement access to the street side (*Verlegung des Kellerzuganges an die Strassenseite*)<sup>[29]</sup> and not a proposal to eliminate the slide, which in fact exists in all successive plans, viz.

- Plan 2136 of the *Zentralbauleitung* of 22 February 1943 for Crematorium III<sup>[30]</sup>;
- Plan 2197 of the *Zentralbauleitung* of 18 March 1943 for Crematorium II<sup>[31]</sup>;
- Plan 109/15 of the firm Huta of 24 September 1943 for Crematoria II and III<sup>[32]</sup>;
- Plan 109/16A of the firm Huta of 9 October 1943 for Crematoria II and III<sup>[33]</sup>.

Moreover, the "Rutsch" is mentioned as existing in ordinances 200 and 204 of the *Zentralbauleitung* to the *Häftlingsschlosserei* of 18 March 1943 respecting Crematorium II<sup>[34]</sup>

How can one believe that Robert Jan van Pelt, who is "Assistant Professor of Architecture in the Architecture School at the University of Waterloo, Canada" and who "worked closely with Mr. Pressac,"<sup>[35]</sup> is unaware of these blatant facts? Thus here we are confronted by another case of deliberate bad faith.

## 12. The capacity of the cremations

According to van Pelt/Dwork, one 2 muffled oven of Crematorium I (Stammlager)

"had the capacity to incinerate seventy corpses in twenty-four hours" (p.177).

They then add that:

"A body was burned in each of the six muffles (three double-muffle ovens) every twenty minutes. In 1940, two bodies were incinerated in the double-muffle oven every twenty minutes; some months later, the rate had doubled with the addition of the reduced-price second two-muffle oven. In 1941, Crematorium I had reached its maximum capacity of eighteen bodies per hour" (p.180).

### Regarding Crematoria IV and V,

"each was to have an anticipated incineration capacity of 576 corpses per day" (p.321).

Van Pelt/Dwork blindly accept as the "official daily incineration capacity" the figure of "4,756 corpses"<sup>[36]</sup> which is in the *Zentralbauleitung* letter dated 28 June 1943 (p.332).

So seriously do they take this absurd number as to write:

"In May and June [1944] the number of people murdered exceeded the official incineration capacity of 132,000 [\[37\]](#) corpses per month." (p.342).

In reality, as I demonstrate in chapter VIII of the second part of my work currently being published, "*I forni crematori di Auschwitz*" ("The Crematory Ovens of Auschwitz") (Edizioni di Ar), the average duration of a cremation in the coke-heated Topf ovens of Auschwitz-Birkenau was **not less than one hour**.

For a discussion of the letter of the *Zentralbauleitung* dated 28 June 1943, which presents a technically impossible cremation capacity, whether it be in regard to the duration of the cremation process (4 corpses in one muffle in 60 minutes or one corpse in one muffle in 15 minutes) [\[38\]](#) or to the consumption of coke (3,64 kg per corpse), [\[39\]](#) I refer the reader to my article *The Auschwitz Central Construction Headquarters letter Dated 28 June 1943: An Alternative Interpretation*. [\[40\]](#)

### 13. A definitely stupid decision

Van Pelt/Dwork state that the architects and engineers of Berlin

"built two larger crematoria to service a camp of 200,000 prisoners and two smaller crematoria for the gas chambers" (p.324) and stipulate that Crematoria II and III "had no extra incineration capacity to handle the corpses of those gassed in the Bunkers" (p.321).

Because Auschwitz took on its new role "as destination for Europe's Jews" during Himmler's second visit (16-17 July 1942) (p.320), and since Crematoria IV and V in their homicidal capacity were designed a month later, [\[41\]](#) according to the authors, the authorities in Berlin would have assigned 30 muffles, with an alleged cremation capacity of 2,880 corpses per 24 hours for the **natural** mortality rate of 200,000 detainees and, 16 muffles with an alleged cremation capacity of (576 x 2 = ) 1,152 corpses per 24 hours for the extermination of the Jews! Therefore such authorities would have expected a **natural** mortality rate of (2,880 x 30 =) 86,400 detainees per month, and an **extermination** rate of 1,152 x 30 = 34,560 Jews per month!

### 14. *Sonderbehandlung* and Cremation

Regarding the electrical installation for Crematorium II one reads in the *Aktenvermerk* of 29 January 1943:

"The start of the process can only be based on limited use of the existing machine

(whereby a cremation with special treatment is made possible at the same time) because the [electrical] lines leading to the crematory are too weak for its energy consumption." [\[42\]](#)

*"Diese Inbetriebsetzung kann sich jedoch nur auf beschränkten Gebrauch der vorhandenen Maschinen erstrecken (wobei eine Verbrennung mit gleichzeitiger Sonderbehandlung möglich gemacht wird), da die zum Krematorium führende Zuleitung für dessen Leistungsverbrauch zu schwach ist"* [\[42\]](#)

What can the expression "cremation simultaneously with special treatment" mean? Van Pelt/Dwork answer as follows:

"When Bischoff and Dejaco had modified the basement plan of Crematoria II and III to include a gas chamber, they had increased the anticipated electricity consumption of the building. The ventilation system was now simultaneously to extract the Zyklon B [*sic*] from the gas chamber and fan the flames of the incinerators. They had contacted AEG, the contractor for the electrical systems, but because of rationing AEG had been unable to get the heavy-duty wiring and circuit breakers the system required. As a result, Crematorium II was to be supplied with a temporary electrical system; nothing at all was available for use in Crematorium III. Furthermore, the AEG representative in Kattowitz, Engineer Tomitschek, warned the Auschwitz building office, the capacity of the temporary system would not allow for simultaneous "special treatment" and incineration" (p.330).

In other words, the capacity of the electric line to the crematory was insufficient for simultaneous cremation and homicidal gassing.

Actually, the text states exactly the opposite: also a limited use of the "existing machines" allowed for "cremation simultaneously with special treatment."

To understand the meaning of the aforementioned phrase, it is necessary to place this document in its historical context.

On 29 January 1943, Topf engineer Kurt Prüfer inspected the building sites of the four crematoria in Birkenau and compiled a *Prüfbericht* in which he wrote the following about Crematorium II:

"This building complex is structural except for smaller aspects (the roof of Leichenkeller 2 cannot yet be completed due to frost)."

"The five three-muffled crematory ovens are ready and are presently being heat-dried. The delivery of the air intake and exhaust ventilation system for the underground

mortuary is delayed because of railroad blockages, therefore the installation cannot be done until 10 days from now. So the starting of Crematory II on 15.2.43 is certainly possible."

*"Dieser Gebäudekomplex ist baulich bis auf kleinere Nebenarbeiten fertiggestellt (Decke des Leichenkellers 2 kann wegen Frost noch nicht ausgeschalt werden).*

*Die 5 Stück Dreimuffel-Einäscherungsöfen sind fertig und werden z. Zt. trockengeheizt. Die Anlieferung der Be- und Entlüftungsanlage für die Leichenkeller verzögerte sich im Folge der Waggon Sperre, sodass der Einbau voraussichtlich erst in 10 Tagen erfolgen kann. Somit ist die Inbetriebnahme des Krematoriums II bestimmt am 15.2.43 möglich"*<sup>[43]</sup>

Referring to this report, the *Aktenvermerk* specifies

(1) that the deadline pointed out by Prüfer for the crematory to come into service (15 February 1943) could be respected only with a "limited use of the existing machines," and

(2) that in any case this would have guaranteed "cremation simultaneously with special treatment"

What were the existing machines? The answer to this question is found in two important documents. In the *Aktenvermerk* of Kirschnek dated 29 January 1943 one reads in connection with Crematorium II:

"The electrical connection for the crematory motors of the compressed air blowers are being transferred/relocated. The three big intake/suction installations which are located at the smokestacks/chimneys are installed and ready to function. Here also the electrical connections for the motors are being presently transferred/relocated. The cadaver elevator is being provisionally installed (as a plateau-lift/hoist). The intake and exhaust air ventilation equipment for the mortuary basement has not arrived because the railroad blockage was only lifted a few days ago. The [train] wagons are rolling and we are daily expecting the arrival of these materials.

The installation can proceed in approximately 10 DAYS." <sup>[44]</sup>

*"Die elektrischen Anschlüsse für die zum Ofen gehörenden Motore für die Druckluftgebläse werden z. Zt. verlegt. Die 3 grossen Saugzuganlagen, an den Schornsteinen befindlich, sind eingebaut und betriebsfertig erstellt. Auch hier werden zur Zeit die elektrischen Anschlüsse für die Motoren verlegt. Der Leichenaufzug wird z. Zt. Provisorisch eingebaut (als Plateauaufzug). Die Be- und Entlüftungsanlage für*

*die Leichenkeller ist infolge der Waggon Sperre, die vor einigen Tagen erst aufgehoben wurde, noch nicht eingetroffen, die Waggon rollen und es wird täglich mit dem Eintreffen dieser Materialien gerechnet. Der Einbau kann in ca. 10 Tagen erfolgen."* [\[44\]](#)

This report is fully confirmed by the forms which were filled out by Topf installer Heinrich Messing in January 1943 describing the following tasks he performed on Crematorium II:

"04/05.01: Travel.

05/10.01: Installation of the air-intake facility in crematory.

11/17.01: Transport and installation of the 3 air-intake facilities in Crematory I. (II)

18/24.01: Air-intake facility installed in Crematory I. Prisoner of war camp. (Crematory II)

25/31.01: Air-intake and exhaust installations. 5 secondary blowers for the 5 three-muffled ovens installed. Transport of the material.

01/07.02: Secondary blowers for the five three-muffled ovens installed." [\[45\]](#)

"04/05.01: Reise.

05/10.01: Montagen d. Saugzug-Anlagen in Krematorium. 1 11/17.01: Transport und Montage der 3 Saugzug-Anlagen im Krematorium I.(II)

18/24.01: Saugzug-Anlagen im Krematorium I. K.G.L. montiert. (Kr II)

25/31.01: Saugzug u. Be u. Entlüftungsanlagen. 5 Stück Sekundargebläse für die 5 Dreimuffelöfen montiert. Transport des Materials.

01/07.02 Sekundargebläse für die fünf dreimuffelöfen montiert." [\[45\]](#)

The provisional elevator was still not installed; it was ordered by the Zentralbauleitung with the *Häftlingsschlosserei* on 26 January 1943 (Auftrag Nr. 2563/146), but its manufacture ceased on 13 March. [\[46\]](#)

To recapitulate, the "existing machines" on 29 January 1943 were:

- The three draught/intake installations (*Saugzug-Anlagen*) for the chimney, equipped with a blower 625 D (Gebläse 625 D) with a three-phase 380-volt motor of 15 hp. [\[47\]](#)
- The five compressed air devices (*Druckluft-Anlagen*) for the ovens, equipped with a blower 290 M (Gebläse Nr. 275 M) with a three-phase 380-volt motor of 3 hp at 1420 rpm (*Drehstrommotor* 3 PS, n =1420/Min. 380 volt).

On the other hand, machines *scheduled but not yet existing*, were:

- The air intake and exhaust installations for the "B-Raum" [Leichenkeller 1] (2 three-

- phase 380-volt motors of 2 hp),
- The *Entlüftungsanlage* for the oven room (1 three-phase 380-volt motor of 5.5 hp),
  - The *Entlüftungsanlage* for Sezier-Aufbahrungs- u. Waschraum (one three-phase 380-volt motor of 1 hp),
  - The *Entlüftungsanlage* for the "L-Raum" [Leichenkeller 2] (one three-phase 380-volt motor of 5.5 hp) [\[48\]](#)

Now we can answer the second question: If a limited use of the *existing* machines with blowers and intake equipment for the ovens would have guaranteed "cremation simultaneously with *Sonderbehandlung*," it is clear that this "*Sonderbehandlung*" *could not have had* any relationship to an alleged homicidal gas chamber of *Leichenkeller 1*, however, *Sonderbehandlung* has a generally narrow connection to these installations, and particularly with cremation itself: it refers to a treatment of dead bodies and not to a treatment of living people.

By considering the historical context - a typhus epidemic increase so dangerous in 1942 as to induce the chief of *Amtsgruppe D* of the SS-WVHA, *SS-Brigadeführer und Generalmajor der Waffen-SS* Glücks to command on 8 February 1943 the "*vollständige Lagersperre*" of the camp [the complete quarantine of the camp] [\[49\]](#) - the meaning of the term "*Sonderbehandlung*" in the *Aktenvermerk* of 29 January 1943 could only be an extension of its hygienic-sanitary meaning which emerges from other documents. [\[50\]](#) That is, from the hygienic-sanitary point of view, the "existing machines" would have guaranteed unexceptionable cremation even with limited use.

This is confirmed by a document going back a few weeks. On 13 January 1943, Bischoff wrote a letter to the *Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke* in Auschwitz with the subject, "Fulfillment of carpentry jobs for the *Bauvorhaben* room." In this document, Bischoff complained about the delay in receiving doors "for Crematorium I in the KGL", explaining in detail:

"Above all, the ordered doors of Bftgb. Nr. 17010/42/Ky/Pa of order letter dated 26.10.42 for Crematory I of the concentration camp is urgently needed for carrying out special precautions."

"So sind vor allem die mit Auftragsschreiben vom 26.10.42 Bftgb.Nr.17010/42/Ky/Pa bestellten Türen für das Krematorium I im KGL, welches zur Durchführung der Sondermassnahmen dringend benötigt wird." [\[51\]](#)

The expression "*Durchführung der Sondermassnahmen*" **had no criminal significance at all**. On the contrary, it denoted the construction of hygienic-sanitary installations, including the hospital for the prisoners (*Häftlingslazarett*) projected for the BIII sector of Birkenau.

Therefore, if the crematorium was made for the "*Durchführung der Sondermassnahmen*", it means that it was a part of these installations and its hygienic-sanitary function was exclusively the cremation of dead bodies of deceased camp prisoners.

15. In the explanation given by van Pelt/Dwork, which I cited earlier, there is another point which shows clearly their extraordinary historical incompetence. Let us reread the relevant passage:

"When Bischoff and Dejaco had modified the basement plan of Crematoria II and III to include a gas chamber, they had increased the anticipated electricity consumption of the building. The ventilation system was now simultaneously to extract the Zyklon B [*sic*] from the gas chamber and fan the flames of the incinerators".

In reality, the ventilation system actually installed in Crematoria II and III fully conform to the estimate in the "Kostenanschlag über Be- und entlüftungs-Anlagen" of Topf dated 4 November 1941. In this document provision was made for two Gebläse operating with Drehstrommotor of 380 volts and power 2 PS and with a volume capacity of 4,800 m<sup>3</sup> of air per hour [\[52\]](#) for the "*B*"-Raum [= *Belüfteter Raum*] exactly as it appears in the *Rechnung "über die Lieferung von Be- und Entlüftungsanlagen"* for Crematorium II [\[53\]](#) and for Crematorium III. [\[54\]](#) Because this provision for the *Be- und Entlüftung* system for Leichenkeller 1 - allegedly transformed into a gas chamber - was already made before the transformation, this transformation could not in any way have allowed for an augmentation of the electricity consumption, so that the explanation of van Pelt/Dwork is an unfounded conjecture.

## 16. Damage done to Crematorium II

Van Pelt/Dwork draw another unfounded conclusion from the *Aktenvermerk* of 29 January 1943 when they write:

"Killing was easy, but as the Germans began to work the ovens at full capacity (officially 1,440 bodies per day - that is, 96 per muffle, or an average of 4 bodies per muffle per hour), they ignored the advice of the AEG engineer Tomitschek, and the electrical system caught fire. Both the forced-draft system that fanned the incinerator flames and the ventilation system to extract the Zyklon B from the gas chamber were damaged" (p.331).

The first sign of damage to Crematorium II is to be found in the *Aktenvermerk* of Kirschnek of 25 March 1942, in which we read:

"Before the 3 intake/draught installations were tested out, damage occurred because of **too high temperatures**, and had to be dismantled and returned by the Topf

company." [\[55\]](#)

*"Nachdem sich die drei Saugzuanlagen in keiner Weise bewährt haben, ja sogar nach der ersten Vollbenützung durch zu hohe Temperaturen Schaden litten, werden diese zu Lasten der Firma Topf u. Söhne ausgebaut und von dieser Firma zurückgenommen."* [\[55\]](#)

As it turned out from a subsequent inspection, the damage was still more serious: the refractory coating of the chimney had collapsed or was damaged and the internal parts of the vaults (*ganze Gewölbeteile*) of the smoke-conduits had collapsed. [\[56\]](#)

These damages, however, were not caused by the electrical system, but by the excessive temperature of the fumes in the ovens. Since the three installations for drawing air (Saugzuanlagen) just served to draw smoke by increasing the draught force of the ovens, it is clear that these also remained damaged.

On the other hand, no known document mentions damage to the electrical installation of Leichenkeller 1 ("the ventilation system to extract the Zyklon B from the gas chamber") nor to the muffle-blowers (*Druckluftanlagen*). These installations did not serve to fan the flames ("fanned the incinerator flames"), but to bring air for combustion into the muffles. An improper or excessive use of these installations would in fact have had as a consequence the cooling of the muffles.

This is another example of the historical incompetence of van Pelt/Dwork and of their inability to interpret documents correctly.

On the other hand, what was to be expected from writers who affirm in all seriousness that the tens and tens of thousands of documents of the *Zentralbauleitung of Auschwitz* were preserved only because "the Germans forgot to destroy them"? [\[57\]](#)

Everything is explained by just an ordinary oversight! [\[58\]](#)

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Abbreviations:

APMO = Archiwum Panstwowego Muzeum Oswiecim

TCIDK = Tsentr Chranenija Istoriko-dokumental'nich Kolleksii, Moscow.

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NOTES

- [1] W.W. Norton & Company, New York London 1996.
- [2] In: Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Editors), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1994, pp. 93-156.
- [3] This insert, which has an introduction of 4 pages, comes after page 320. In the citations I refer to it as *Blueprints* followed by the number of the page affixed by myself. But for citations from the text I indicate only the relative page of the book.
- [4] *Blueprints*, p.1.
- [5] Concerning this, see my study *La "Zentralbauleitung der Waffen-SS und Polizei Auschwitz"*. Edizioni di Ar, 1998.
- [6] *Les crématoires d'Auschwitz. La machinerie du meurtre de masse*. CNSR Editions, Paris 1993. An adequate summary of this work appeared in the book already cited, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* with the heading *The Machinery of Mass Murder at Auschwitz* (pp.183-245). The names "Jean-Claude Pressac with Robert-Jan van Pelt" figure as authors. I have not succeeded in understanding what the contribution of Robert-Jan van Pelt was.
- [7] *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers*. The Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, New York 1989.
- [8] *Ibidem*, p.264.
- [9] TCIDK, 502-1-233, p.11.
- [10] In the plan dated 7 October 1941 this *Kommandanturgebäude* has already been deleted by pencil.
- [11] TCIDK, 502-1-233, p.29.
- [12] The *Prüfungskommission* of *Wehrkreis VIII*, which was an organ of the *Gebietsbeauftragter für die Regelung der Bauwirtschaft im Wehrkreis VIII*.
- [13] TCIDK, 502-1-233, p.29. The *Kostenvoranschlag* was examined (geprüft) on 26 November 1941, as can be seen from an annotation at the foot of the page. The figures were corrected by hand.

- [14] TCIDK, 502-1-319, pp.202-206.
- [15] TCIDK, 502-1-223, p.9.
- [16] TCIDK, 502-1-220, p.19.
- [17] TCIDK, 502-1-13, p.4.
- [18] APMO, BW 30/27, p.17. *Fernschreiben* by Bischoff with subject-matter the "Fertigstellung der Krematorien".
- [19] Danuta Czech, *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau 1939-1945*. Rowohlt Verlag, Reinbeck bei Hamburg 1898, p. 374.
- [20] *Trial of Josef Kramer and Forty-Four Others (The Belsen Trial)*. Edited by Raymond Phillips. William Hodge and Company, Limited. London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, 1949, p.714.
- [21] D. Czech, *Kalendarium*, *op. cit.*, p. 380.
- [22] TCIDK, 502-2-105, p. 60.
- [23] *Kommandant in Auschwitz. Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen des Rudolf Höss*. Herausgegeben von Martin Broszat. DTV Verlag, München 1981, p.181.
- [24] Rudolf Vrba and Alan Bestic, *I Cannot Forgive*. Sidgwick and Jackson and Anthony Gibbs and Phillips, 1963, p.15.
- [25] The two plans for the new crematorium designed by da Dajaco on 24 October 1941 have been published by J.C. Pressac (*Les crématoires d'Auschwitz. La machinerie du meurtre de masse*, CNSR Editions, Paris 1995, *document 9* out of context).
- [26] The reconstruction work began in the week 28 June - 4 July 1940, as emerges from the *Tätigkeitsbericht* of Schlachter of 5 July 1940. TCIDK, 502-1-214, p.98.
- [27] J.C., *Les crématoires d'Auschwitz. La machinerie du meurtre de masse*, *op. cit.*, pp.64-65.
- [28] *Auschwitz: The End of a Legend. A Critique of J.C. Pressac*. Institute for Historical Review, 1994, pp. 55-56.

[29] D. Dwork, R.J. van Pelt, *Auschwitz 1270 to the Present*, *op. cit.*, Plate 17. See also: J.C. Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-303.

[30] J.C. Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers*, *op. cit.*, p.305.

[31] *Ibidem*, p.307.

[32] *Ibidem*, p.327.

[33] *Ibidem*, p. 328.

[34] *The Trial of Höss*, volume 11a, p.88

[35] Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum Editors, *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, *op. cit.*, p.XIV and XV.

[36] The original document says most clearly "Personen" instead of "Leichen". TCIDK, 502-1-314, p. 14a.

[37] That is 4,416 (the presumed capacity of the 4 crematoria of Birkenau) x 30 days = 132,480, rounded to 132,000.

[38] According to the cremation list of the Crematorium of Westerbork equipped with coke-heated Kori oven, the average cremation time for one cadaver was around 50 minutes.

[39] According to the surviving lists, the average consumption of coke for a coke-heated Topf oven with two muffles at Gusen (a sub-camp of Mauthausen) was 30.6 kg of coke for each corpse.

[40] Published by Russ Granata <http://www.russgranata.com/lalett.html>

[41] "Crematorium IV (Plate 18), by contrast with Crematorium II, was designed after Himmler's second visit to Auschwitz in July 1942. Birkenau had become a site for mass murder" (*Blueprints*, p. 4).

[42] Cited from the article by D. Irving, *Holocaust-Historiker graben ihr eigenes Grab*, in "Vierteljahreshefte für freie Geschichtsforschung", December 1997, p.277.

- [43] *Prüfbericht des Ing. Prüfers* of 29 January 1943. APMO, BW 30/34, p. 101.
- [44] *Aktenvermerk* of Kirschnek of 29 January 1943. APMO, BW 30/34, p. 105.
- [45] J.C. Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers*, *op. cit.*, p.370.
- [46] Trial of Höss, volume 11a, p., p. 83.
- [47] *Schluss-Rechnung* of the Topf firm to ZBL concerning "BW 30 - Krematorium II". TCIDK, 502-2-26, p.230.
- [48] Topf, *Rechnung* Nr. 171 of 22 February 1943 concerning the installations for ventilation of Crematorium II. TCIDK, 502-1-327, pp. 25-25a. I have already published a photo copy of this document in my above-cited study *Auschwitz.The End of a Legend. A Critique of J.C. Pressac*, pp.112-113.
- [49] APMO, *Standort-Befehl*, D-AuI-1, p. 46.
- [50] I will publish these documents in my study in preparation, "*Sonderbehandlung ad Auschwitz. Genesi e significato*".
- [51] APMO, BW 30/34, p.78.
- [52] TCIDK, 502-1-327, p.152.
- [53] *Rechnung* of Topf Nr. 171 of 22 February 1943. TCIDK, 502-1-327, p.25.
- [54] *Rechnung* of Topf Nr. 729 of 27 March 1943. TCIDK, 502-1-327, p.16.
- [55] APMO, BW 30/25, p.8.
- [56] APMO, BW 30/34, p.17.
- [57] *Blueprints*, p.1.
- [58] In this regard, see my observations to be published in *Russ Granata Reports on Carlo Mattogno* <http://www.russgranata.com/>