

# Comments On Mattogno's Critique Of The Bomb Shelter Thesis

by Samuel Crowell

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In this order, dated March 31, 1943, there is also a reference to the filling of another order, placed on March 6, 1943, for a "gas door 100 x 192 cm for corpse cellar I of crematorium III . . . of exactly the same type and size as the cellar door of the crematorium opposite it, crematorium II, with a peep-hole made of double-strength 8-mm glass, with rubber gasket and [metal?] cap" ("Gastür 100/192 für Leichenkeller I des Krematoriums II. . . genau nach Art und Maß der Kellertürdes gegenüberliegenden Krematoriums II mit Guckloch aus doppeltem 8-mm-Glas mit Gummidichtung und Beschlag").

Could this be the famous peep-hole through which the SS physicians who allegedly supervised the "gassing" of inmates are said to have observed the death-throes of the victims? Probably not. Like the other documents of its kind, this order really proves nothing. At that time, gas-tight doors were not uncommon, **since every cellar had to double as an air raid shelter**. The peep-holes in these doors were a source of light and a means of observing the outside. Through such a peep-hole it would have been quite impossible to view the whole interior of a "gas chamber," especially if it were as large as these rooms are usually claimed to have been (i.e., had a capacity of 3,000 or more people). Air raid shelters had to be secure not only against explosives, but against gas as well. Considering that Birkenau had no other fortified places, **it would only have been common sense to make the cellars of the crematoria into air raid shelters....**

*Auschwitz: A Judge Looks At The Evidence*  
by Dr. Wilhelm Stäglich, Retired German Judge

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Recently, Carlo Mattogno has unveiled an article entitled "Morgue Cellars of Birkenau: Gas Shelters or Disinfecting Chambers?" and subtitled "The Samuel Crowell hypotheses in the light of history and technology". The article is at the following URL:

<http://www.codoh.com/granata/leichen.html>

The article reveals two documents that are extremely valuable in extending our knowledge of what went on these crematoria, but at the same time I believe that Signor Mattogno has overstated his case; his conclusion is that the crematoria could never have functioned as air raid shelters.

In my present remarks I propose to do two things: to respond to Signor Mattogno's arguments, giving credit where it is due, and second, to show that his documents, or even his refutation, are totally inadequate to their aim. In short, I will argue that the entire concept of his article is flawed: the morgues were not *either* air raid shelters *or* disinfection chambers, but rather, *both*.

## BACKGROUND

Jean Claude Pressac's *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers* was meant to be the final refutation of the revisionists when it was published in 1989. The core of Pressac's demonstration consisted of one single half-proof and some 39 "criminal traces."

The "half-proof" on which Pressac depended was the fact that, while the Leichenkeller #1 (Morgue #1) in the basement of Crematorium II was to be equipped with showerheads (by

inference with the 14 showerheads for Crematorium III), it was also equipped with a gas-tight door with peephole.

Pressac made great play of the incompatibility of a gastight door with a peephole and showers. To foreshadow our conclusions, I point out that while the Bomb Shelter Thesis has a ready explanation for this juxtaposition, Mattogno's thesis, alone, provides no explanation at all.

At this point it might be worthwhile to enumerate the "Criminal Traces" of Pressac:

(umlauts omitted)

#1 The word "Vergasungskeller" #2 Gas Detectors #3 Handle for "Gastur" #4 Auskleideraum (Undressing Room) #5 Auskleidekeller #6 Gastur 100/192 #7 Gasdichtetur #8 Drahtnetzeinschiebvorrichtung (4) #9 Holzblenden (4) #10 Auskleideraum #11 Gastur #12 Auskleidekeller #13 Flacheisen fur Gasturbeschlage #14 Beschlage fur 1 Stuck Gastur #15 Gasdichtetur #16 14 Brausen #17 12 Stuck gasdichten Tur #18 Gassdichtenfenster #19 betonieren in Gasskammer #20 Gassdichtenfenster #21 betonieren in Gasskammer #22 3 Gasdichte Tur #23 Gasturen verankerungen 230 stueck #24 4 dichte Turen, mit Turfutter #25 drei gasdichte Turme #26 flacheisen fur 5 Gasturbeschlage #27 fur 4 gasdichte Turen #28 24 Ankerschrauben fur gasdichte Turen #29 Gasturen einsetzen #30 Pre-heating the morgue #31 Hot air supply to LK 1 #32 Beschlage fur gasdichte Tur #33 1 Schlusssel for Gaskammer #34 Die Beschlage zu 1 Tur mit Rahmen luftdicht mit Spion fur Gaskammer

By this counting, there are **34** criminal traces (actually, #17 consists of a number of references).

Of these 34 "criminal traces" *one half*, or 17, concern "gastight doors", and the number of doors being discussed is clearly considerable, insofar as trace #28 discusses 24 bolt-fixtures while trace #23 discusses *two hundred and thirty* of the same.

But here's the remarkable thing. There is not *one word* about gastight doors in Signor Mattogno's article. Not one word. Even more remarkable, in his praiseworthy book on KL Majdanek, home to the notorious "Auert" air raid shelter door, a casting of which sits on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, neither Jurgen Graf nor Signor Mattogno chose to say one word about the gas-tight doors at that camp. In a book that painstakingly provides copies of several original documents, they unaccountably forgot to include any copies of the delivery bills concerning these gastight doors, nor to even comment on them in the text.

Of the remaining 17 traces that Mattogno does not ignore,

4 refer to undressing rooms,

- 2 refer to "Gassdichtenfenstern"
- 2 refer to "Gasskammer"
- 2 refer to heating

and then there are seven singletons:

1. Vergasungskeller
2. Gas Detectors
3. Drahtnetz...
4. Holzblenden
5. 14 Brausen (Showers)
6. 3 gasdichte "Turme" (sic!)
7. Flacheisen

I will now discuss the majority of these seventeen points in the order that Mattogno addresses them.

## Summary Of Mattogno's Arguments With Comments

ARGUMENT #1. Mattogno argues that the argument for air raid shelters is historically flawed, because there are no documents about air raid shelters prior to 16, November, 1943. He further asserts his authority by referring to the absence of any prior or any other meaningful documents.

COMMENT: Signor Mattogno is in error, both in fact and by inference. For over a year, there have been three documents pertaining to air raid shelter construction at Birkenau posted on the Internet, at <http://www.fpp.co.uk> and <http://www.codoh.com>. Two of these documents antedate the letter Mattogno cites, and both them make it clear that plans for constructing air raid shelters at Birkenau were so far advanced by August of 1943 as to involve the chief architect Walter Dejaco of the *Zentralbauleitung* and involved t>

## Transfer interrupted!

raid shelters.

As for the inference of large scale air raid shelter construction, in addition to the above, we have:

Second, the basement of Block 11, one of the older Stammlager buildings, is explicitly referred to as an air raid shelter in a Nuremberg Document. [2223-PS]

Third, RFSS Himmler issued a directive to all concentration camp commandants about air raid protective measures (I have seen this quoted only in terms of protecting against escapes: I have not yet seen the document) dated February 2, 1943. [Himmler to Glucks, Himmler Files, Folder 67, National Archives]

Fourth, it is well known that Majdanek received shipments of air raid shelter doors the previous fall, at the same time as the German authorities prioritized supplies to the Jewish inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto for the purpose of constructing -- air raid shelters. [For Majdanek, consult Kohon, u.a., "Nazi Massenmorder durch Giftgas", p. 319, 4n, 5n; for

Warsaw, 1061-PS "The Stroop Report", *passim*, testimony of Buehler at the IMT, 23 April 1946, vol. XII., pp. 74-77]

Fifth, it is known that the "Arrest-Bunker" at Neuengamme was fitted out with ventilation and wooden shutters at the same time. [Remarks of Fritz Bringmann, former prisoner, of his time in Neuengamme (remembered in 1996), quoted in "Die Haendler des Zyklon B" Juergen Kalthoff & Martin Werner, VSA Verlag, Hamburg, 1998, p. 202]

Sixth, the concentration camps are routinely referred to in KZ correspondence as being vital to the war industry, and the "Air Raid Shelter Guidelines" from 1941 *specify that all new constructions especially in the war related industries must have air raid shelters.*

The conclusion I draw on the basis of these inferences is that there was an ongoing attempt to construct air raid shelters in the concentration camps and ghettos at least from the Fall of 1942, or to adapt existing structures with air raid shelters as a matter of course. Mattogno can disagree with my conclusion, but it is meaningless to do so without confronting the inferences.

Finally, the assertion that there were no air raid provisions made before November, 1943, is refuted by documents that have long been available on the Internet.

ARGUMENT #2 Parenthetically, Mattogno refers to a visit to Auschwitz by Oswald Pohl where a number of construction projects were approved, including the construction of 15 1-man "Splitterbunker". Mattogno claims that it does not appear that these projects were ever carried out. COMMENT: One can see pictures of the 1 man "Splitterbunker" on the Nizkor site, where they have resided for over a year.

ARGUMENT #3 Mattogno calls the claim that there were numerous "Splitterbunker" for the prisoners "shaky". COMMENT: This ignores the fact that the anonymous individual who forwarded the three documents cited above assured VffG that his elder relative constructed these, meanwhile, the Allied air raid of August, 1944, killed 50 workers in one of these "trench shelters" so it is clear that they were built.

ARGUMENT #4 Mattogno argues that the basement morgues in the crematoria would never have been designed as air raid shelters because otherwise there would exist many documents about this, and he hasn't seen any. COMMENT: There are two problems with this argument, the first being that Mattogno's authority to speak of the existence or non-existence of relevant documents was exploded in Argument #1. The second, more fundamental, argument, is that he doesn't seem to appreciate that the adaption of any given space -- and particularly basements -- to serve in a supplemental capacity as air raid shelters does not require much in the way of adaptation, except some rudimentary modifications, modifications such as gastight doors with peepholes.

ARGUMENT #5 Mattogno argues that air raid shelter provisions must have figured in the transfer documents for the crematoria. COMMENT: Once again, Mattogno presumes that the fitting out of a space as an air raid shelter is going to follow fixed, and rigid, guidelines. Yet as the literature which I have quoted extensively in my articles makes clear, this is by no means the case. The only way in which air raid shelter provisions HAD to be described in terms of the transfer documents would be if their inclusion was essential to the operation of the crematoria. But no one has ever made that argument. Furthermore, many of the "criminal traces" refer to dates subsequent to the transfer documents.

ARGUMENT #6 Mattogno argues that the "undressing rooms" were not equipped with gastight doors. COMMENT: Since an undressing rooms function is for the shedding of contaminated clothing it is not clear why such a room would require gas-tightness in any case.

ARGUMENT #7 Mattogno argues that the morgue's ventilation capacity was inadequate for an air raid shelter. COMMENT: Once again, Mattogno ignores the data in the literature, that discusses provisions for air raid shelter use *with and without* ventilation systems. This leads to

ARGUMENT #8 Mattogno corrects the calculation of the capacity of the morgue at 4,800 cbm per hour, as opposed to twice that capacity that I cited from Pressac. COMMENT: Assuming that this is true, that still would not invalidate the use of the space as an air raid shelter, it simply means that fewer people could use it and for a shorter period of time. This leads to

ARGUMENT #9 Mattogno corrects my calculation of the morgue's volume, it was 499 cubic meters versus 525 as I roughly calculated. COMMENT: To be sure, forgetting to account for the volume occupied by the concrete columns in the morgue was a serious omission, insofar as it allowed for an error of 5% in my calculations. This might be profitably compared to the 50% error in Mattogno's remarks by forgetting to address the issue of gastight doors with peepholes.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS #7, #8, #9: The volume of the morgue was 499 cubic meters. The rule of thumb is 1.5 meters per person per hour. This means that this morgue would still offer 2.5 hours of air raid and gas protection *even with no operating ventilation system* for 200 people.

ARGUMENT #10 Mattogno makes three points about the ventilation system: (a) a filtration system places a load on the air conditioning system, (b) two separate systems are required, (c) the need to install the ventilation system in the bunker itself. COMMENT: These are good points and I tip my hat to Signor Mattogno here. However, they are not decisive. First, point (a) rests on an Italian configuration for ventilation systems, which has nothing to do with German "*Schutzraumblufter*". Second, two separate systems are required, *only under ideal conditions*, otherwise greater or lesser levels of "*Behelfsmassigkeit*" (Do it yourself-ness) are called for, as is noted continually in the literature quoted in my article. Finally, that the ventilation system was not connected to the morgue does not mean that a single bomb would suffocate the inhabitants of the morgue, it simply means that they would not be able to get air from it in the event of a direct hit on their ventilation system -- a common enough situation confronted by, and dealt with by, the inhabitants of cities like Dresden and Hamburg.

ARGUMENT #11 Mattogno argues that the presence of corpses would make the use of these spaces as air raid shelters impossible. COMMENT: If the presence of corpses would make the use of these spaces unsatisfactory for air raid shelters, the presence of corpses would make the use of these spaces equally unsatisfactory for sanitizing incoming inmates as Mattogno will ultimately argue. However, Mattogno ignores survivor evidence that indicates that prisoners were indeed taken to basements during air raids and moreover, according to Nyiszli, *directly to the morgue in question*. Indeed, Nyiszli specifies that the crematorium II Sonderkommando, 200 strong, took refuge in the "gas chamber" during air raids.

ARGUMENT #12 Mattogno argues that "*Vergasungskeller*" does not mean a "cellar for treating those who have been gassed." COMMENT: On this point, and in light of the two documents he has put forward, I agree with Mattogno, and he would have known that I agreed with him if he had read my other writings, particularly "*Defending Against the Allied Bombing Campaign*" and "*The Gas Chamber of Sherlock Holmes*". In those places I have argued that "*Vergasungskeller*" would most normally refer to a "fumigation cellar" or, by extension, a "disinfection cellar", and I further point out that it was common for the Germans in World War II to adapt existing bathing and delousing establishments to \_double\_ as gastight air raid shelters and gas warfare decontamination centers. This is what I mean when I say that the entire premise to his argument is fallacious.

ARGUMENT #13 Mattogno argues that the "*Gasskammern*" in Crematoria IV and V could not have served as aboveground gastight air raid shelters because a direct hit would have killed everyone. COMMENT: Obviously, a direct hit on most shelters by most bombs will kill everyone, just as a direct hit on a trench shelter in August 1944 killed everyone in that shelter. That does not mean however that during an air raid one should go running around the camp naked. Furthermore, Mattogno ignores the sizable evidence for aboveground air raid shelters, for do-it-yourself shelters, as well as the reference to the numerous red lamps for these two crematoria which make no sense EXCEPT in the context of air raid darkening.

ARGUMENT #14: Mattogno contends that the "*Drahtnetzeinschiebvorrichtung*" and the "*Holzblenden*" for Crematoria II could not have had anything to do with covering openings in an air raid shelter context, because there were no such openings. COMMENT: Aside from the fact that the absence of a document describing these four openings does not prove their non-existence, it would be helpful at this point if Signor Mattogno explained what these materials were for. The normal meaning of "*Blende*" is of a (vertical) shutter for an opening. The screens seem to have had an associated function. It seems likely that there were four openings -- somewhere -- for which these screens and shutters were designed. Otherwise why are they on the list? One thing is certain: wooden shutters and wire mesh screens are not common paraphernalia for delousing or disinfestation chambers of any kind, although they are common for air raid shelters. As in many other places, Mattogno offers destructive criticism, but no constructive explanation.

ARGUMENT #15 Mattogno argues that the "*Fenstergitter*" are not screens but rather "*Gitterfenster*" that is, not screens but iron bars. COMMENT: Whether Crematoria IV and V were equipped with screens, or with bars, or with grill-work, is not really relevant. What is \_more\_ relevant is that the "12 little doors" for these two crematoria are identical in design to gastight \_Blende\_ for air raid shelters, and second, that gastight *Blende* are not part of the normal equipment for disinfection chambers. Furthermore, the number and the measurements of the bars and/or screens he cites do not compare to the number and the measures of the document I cited. It is therefore not obvious that "*Fenstergitter*" are "*Eisengitter*" in the first place.

ARGUMENT #16 Mattogno argues that the "little doors" were closed from the outside, as evidenced in a photograph, and therefore could not have been used for air raid shelters. COMMENT: This was a puzzle to me, since the photo shows the "little doors" closing in one direction, while the close-ups of the "little doors" in Pressac show them all closing in the opposite direction. This might mean that the close-ups all show the doors being held upside down, or it might mean that the larger photo of the Crematorium taken from a distance has an exposure error. It might also mean that the Germans, in the camps, violated

a fundamental condition of establishing seals, as indicated in Scholle's book, which specified that the screens and other "splittervorrichtung" had to go *outside*, with the shutters *inside*.

I don't know what to make of this except that:

a) The "gas chamber/shower" at Dachau, and the "arrest bunker" at Neuengamme have a similar configuration of bars or grill-work on the inside with the gastight shutters on the outside, perhaps this adaptation has something to do with being in a concentration camp, and therefore a prison of sorts.

b) In any case, no one would argue that the "arrest bunker" at Neuengamme or the "shower room" at Dachau are delousing or disinfestation chambers, therefore the only conceivable explanations is that they were (1) adapted to serve as gas or air raid shelters and/or decontamination centers for poison gas (mustard gas) victims, or (2) they were adapted to serve as "gas chambers." Take your pick: bearing in mind that the suitability of these spaces as gas chambers is compromised for a number of other reasons..

ARGUMENT #17 Mattogno's argument that the "*Gasprufer*" document is a forgery.

COMMENT: Arguments that documents are forgeries are generally bootless unless one can explain in general who forged it, for what purpose, and how. Mattogno has done none of these things, and hence gives ammunition to those critics of revisionism who accuse us of dismissing as forgeries all inconvenient documents.

## RECAPITULATION OF MATTOGNO'S CONCLUSIONS

#1 Absolutely no air raid protective measures were undertaken before the end of 1943.

COMMENT: This is clearly wrong, and in context of the documents posted in January, 1998, a ridiculous assertion.

#2 The existence of gastight air raid shelters in Crematoria II and III would be unfeasible because: (a) the outer doors were not gastight, (b) the ventilation system was inadequate, (c) a direct hit on the ventilation system would have crippled it, so why even bother, (d) morgues would be nasty places to go during an air raid. COMMENT: Mattogno ignores: (a) the gastightness of the outer doors is of no consequence, (b) the unsuitability of the ventilation system simply means that it would be used by fewer people, (c) very few air raid shelters anywhere provide safety from a direct hit, and (d) the morgue has been attested to as having been used as an air raid shelter, dead bodies or no.

#3 Crematoria IV and V could not have functioned as air raid shelters because of their unprotected aboveground status. COMMENT: Mattogno does not explain why the "*Gasskammern*" of IV and V, the "*Gaskammern*" of Majdanek, and the Morgues of II and III were all equipped with concrete, and in most cases, reinforced concrete walls and ceilings. While it is true that delousing facilities should be sturdily constructed to retain heat, what purpose would a delousing facility have for reinforced concrete? On the other hand, a supplemental interpretation as an air raid shelter explains the point easily.

#4 There are no documents that support air raid shelter interpretation, etc. COMMENT: Actually, there are some documents and Signor Mattogno missed these. Are there more documents? I don't know. In my original article I wrote:

7) *How these German bomb shelters or anti-gas shelters were actually used, in addition to*

*their primary use as morgues, and what further modifications they would require for any other use, and when such additional modifications were in fact made, and by whom, are questions which do not fall within the scope of this article.*

*8) But historians of Modern European history are invited to address these issues and to revise their understanding of the occurrences at Auschwitz Birkenau.*

*9) To that end, they are strongly advised to consult this literature.*

In other words, I have argued that there were such gastight air raid shelters and that I would like to see others -- who have better access to the materials than I do -- to make a conscientious effort to see if any other evidence exists. In this case, however, it seems clear that Signor Mattogno has made absolutely minimal effort in this direction.

## **Mattogno's Positive Contribution**

The positive part of Mattogno's article involves the unveiling of two documents that strongly support the contention that the "Vergasungskeller" was a disinfection installation. One of these documents speaks of the use of hot water generated by the crematorium/waste disposal thermal energy for showers, and the other speaks of "disinfection ovens" (*Entwesungsofen*).

These are excellent documents because they prove that the "Vergasungskeller" as well as the associated space in Crematorium III, were equipped with showers, as well as hot air delousing installations. This strongly supports the notion that they were not, and could not, have been used for gassing.

HOWEVER, Mattogno, by failing to say even one word about the gastight doors with peepholes falls into the trap laid by Pressac. He still cannot explain what such a door would be doing on a space containing showers.

To recapitulate, if Krema II had two disinfection ovens then these could only have been applied to a small portion of the morgue's (very large) area. In all likelihood, bearing in mind the configuration in the disinfection literature, and at Majdanek as well, the hot air disinfection facilities would have been placed at the far end of the morgue, while the rest of the space would have been given over to delousing showers and, yes, areas for corpse-cleansing or storing. After all, even Henryk Tauber in May, 1945, argued that the morgue was subdivided by other walls.

But in any case one would still have the shower-space closed off by a gastight door with a peephole. And that is where Pressac's question arises, just as it arises at Dachau and Majdanek: why would a space containing showers need a gastight door, particularly one with a peephole? To be sure, one can argue that, technically speaking, these doors were not "gastight". But that gets one nowhere. The doors may have been unsuitable for sealing off HCN gas, but they were certainly suitable for the liquid aerosol which is what mustard gas actually is.

Mattogno doesn't answer this question, and he systematically avoids dealing with it. This is a pity, because as I have indicated in my other writings for two years now, the DUAL PURPOSE of disinfection facilities and gastight air raid/decontamination facilities are in no way contradictory, and, in addition, explain -- instead of avoiding -- the various types

of evidence that make little or no sense in a disinfection context, including:

#1 gastight doors with peepholes #2 screens #3 wooden shutters #4 "little doors" #5 gasdichte Tuerme #6 red lamps #7 reinforced concrete roofs and walls #8 underground location #9 attested use as air raid shelters

In short, the concept of air raid shelter protection, combined with the disinfection paradigm, explains completely and without omission all of the so-called "criminal traces" of JC Pressac, while the disinfection paradigm alone leaves behind a number of anomalies such as those listed above which are simply ignored.

The crematoria at Birkenau were large buildings that served a multitude of functions, and I have argued since July, 1997 that corpse handlers, new arrivals, and potential mustard gas victims all could have used the showers in the basements of the crematoria. They were sturdy, prominent structures of sufficient size and expanse to allow both the disinfection paradigm and the air raid shelter paradigm to exist side by side. By the same token, both functions should be able to coexist in the minds of most revisionists. Not only would it "only have been common sense" to do this, as Dr. Stäglich observes, compelling evidence shows that this was indeed the case.

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