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# BODY DISPOSAL AT AUSCHWITZ:

## THE END OF HOLOCAUST-DENIAL

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*To the Memories of Stig Hornshøj-Møller and Chuck Ferree.*

Perhaps no aspect of Holocaust denial is more widely disputed than the issue of body disposal at Auschwitz. Holocaust deniers argue that it was not possible to dispose of the 1.1 million killed at the camp. <sup>[1]</sup> Therefore, they claim that this many people were not killed at Auschwitz. In some sense the reason deniers focus on this issue is understandable. Deniers have never been able to explain what happened to the between five and six million Jews who were missing after World War II. The easiest way to make their case would be to show what happened to the missing. Yet, with a few failed exceptions, <sup>[2]</sup> deniers are understandably silent on the issue.

Deniers had for years centered their arguments on the impossibility of using gas chambers at Auschwitz. Their "expert" was Robert Faurisson, a French literature professor. He had made a number of arguments in this area in the late 1970s and early 1980s. <sup>[3]</sup> His ideas on the gas chambers were incorporated into a report by an American death penalty consultant named Fred Leuchter. As will be shown elsewhere, Leuchter's report proves that he knew almost nothing about the Auschwitz gas chambers. It is riddled with numerous technical errors. <sup>[4]</sup> Rather, he relied on Faurisson for all of his information. According to Leuchter, he met with Faurisson before undertaking his trip to Auschwitz from whom he received information for his examination. <sup>[5]</sup> In fact, Faurisson wrote the forward to *The Leuchter Report*. <sup>[6]</sup>

Deniers have sought to capitalize on Leuchter's errors and ignorance of Auschwitz. They can do this because many people don't have the

technical expertise on these issues to challenge Leuchter's credibility. However, in 1994 the [Institute for Forensic Research](#) in Cracow, Poland undertook a comprehensive examination of the structures identified by numerous eye witnesses as homicidal gas chambers. The Institute found traces of hydrocyanic acid in the six structures it tested. These were the remains of five crematoria and an execution block. Most disturbing for deniers is that the Institute found the greatest concentration of poison gas in the samples it tested from Crematorium II. Six of its seven samples tested positive. <sup>[7]</sup> By contrast, Leuchter claimed that he could not find any hydrocyanic acid in this structure. <sup>[8]</sup> This proved that Leuchter was either totally incompetent at best or dishonest at worst. The Institute's findings in Crematorium II also substantiated an earlier observation by denier critic Jean Claude Pressac, who viewed a tape of Leuchter's sample gathering, that Leuchter had purposely avoided those areas of Crematorium II which would yield positive results. <sup>[9]</sup> It may be relevant here that the Institute had the ability to take samples from places likely to collect residue, whereas even had Leuchter been honest, he could not do so as his collecting was done illegally because he lacked permission to gather samples.

The total discrediting of the Leuchter report has caused many deniers to focus on body disposal arguments. The guru of denier body disposal arguments is Italian denier Carlo Mattogno. His arguments on Auschwitz body disposal were first set forth in a 1994 monograph where he advanced his ideas on the Auschwitz gas chambers and crematoria. <sup>[10]</sup> He expanded his ideas on Auschwitz body disposal in an [article](#) he coauthored on a denier website. <sup>[11]</sup> It appears that this article was intended to be the definitive denier argument on the issue. His gas chamber arguments, along with those of all other deniers, are examined elsewhere. <sup>[12]</sup> The purpose of the following study is to examine the body disposal issue. This is the first comprehensive analysis of denier arguments on the issue. The present study will form the basis of a chapter of a much larger work which examines all denier arguments. <sup>[13]</sup> Mattogno has an advantage over other deniers in that his sources are often difficult to verify. He has used obscure German sources and archival material. The most important of these sources were located and examined for the present study. As will be seen, although Mattogno's writings are more sophisticated than those of most deniers, he basically reverts to the common denier tactics of omission and misrepresentation.

## The Typhus Myth

In 1941 Auschwitz had two double muffle coke fired furnaces built by the German firm of Topf and Sons. An additional double muffle oven was added in the Spring of 1942. Each muffle can be considered an oven, so that there were six ovens in the camp during this time. The six ovens were in the main camp known as the Stammlager or Auschwitz 1. These

six ovens were housed in a crematorium known as Krema I in much of the literature. In the summer of 1942 the Auschwitz Construction Agency, known as the Bauleitung, started to build four new crematoria in the Birkenau area of the camp, also known as Auschwitz II. These four crematoria housed an additional 46 ovens. Kremas II and III each had five triple muffle furnaces (15 ovens in each) while Kremas IV and V each had a single eight muffle furnace (eight ovens in each). Like the six ovens in the Auschwitz main camp, the 46 new ovens were built by the firm of Topf and Sons and used coke as fuel. <sup>[14]</sup> None of these facts are disputed by deniers or their critics.

The principal issue that deniers have disputed is the reason the Bauleitung began to build so many new ovens. Historians have long recognized that the extensive building campaign was because the authorities were committing mass murder and wanted an efficient means of disposing of the bodies as well as structures which could be used to gas prisoners. At the time the building began there were two structures in Birkenau which were used for gassing. They were located in the wooded area behind the camp. There was also a gas chamber in the crematorium located in the main camp which housed the six ovens. <sup>[15]</sup> Forensic tests done by the Institute For Forensic Research in Cracow, Poland in 1994 found traces of the poisonous hydrocyanic acid in all five crematoria, <sup>[16]</sup> consistent with a great deal of eyewitness testimony and other documents from Auschwitz which show that these structures were used as gas chambers. <sup>[17]</sup> The two structures in the wooded area were completely destroyed by the Germans and no trace remains. However, as will be seen later on, there is photographic evidence of one of these structures.

Deniers claim that there were no gassings at Auschwitz. They attribute the principal reason for building so many ovens to other factors. In 1977 Arthur Butz, the best known of American deniers, hinted that typhus was a principal reason for building so many new ovens. However, this hint became explicit, and by 1992 he was attributing the typhus epidemic which swept the camp in the summer of 1942 as the reason for the building campaign. <sup>[18]</sup> Carlo Mattogno attributes the building campaign to the typhus epidemic and a decision by the camp authorities to greatly expand the population of the camp. <sup>[19]</sup>

One of the reasons deniers need to make this argument is that they must find a justification for building so many ovens. This argument also involves the amount of bodies these new ovens could dispose of in a 24 hour period. A report from the Bauleitung in June 1943, after all of the new ovens became operational for at least some period, placed the cremation capacity of all 52 ovens at 4756 per day. <sup>[20]</sup> Deniers have not totally agreed among themselves on this issue, but Butz and Mattogno place the cremation capacity at about 1000 per day, or 30,000 per month. <sup>[21]</sup> Mattogno claimed the maximum cremation capacity of the six original ovens was 120 per day, <sup>[22]</sup> even though he was familiar with evidence from another concentration camp that showed a Topf double

muffle oven could burn 52 per day or 26 per muffle. [23]

In August 1942, during the worst period of the typhus epidemic, the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp had 21,451 male prisoners. [24] The information on the female population is missing. However, it is known that the female population was about 8200 in December 1942. [25] This means, according to denier calculations, that the camp authorities were building enough crematorium capacity in the summer of 1942 to incinerate the entire population of the camp in a month. According to the Bauleitung, this was enough capacity to cremate the camp's population in about a week. Even if it is assumed that the Bauleitung's number of 4756 per day was too high, the question arises as to why the camp authorities thought it necessary to have such a high cremation capacity. The highest amount of prisoners registered in the camp was in the summer of 1944 when the total reached slightly more than 92,000. [26]

It is easy to see why deniers are dependent on blaming typhus as the reason for the crematoria building. Without hundreds of thousands of such deaths, there would not be any justification for such a huge building campaign. There can be no doubt that typhus was a major problem for the camp authorities in the summer of 1942. Nearly all of the memoirs on Auschwitz mention the disease. The question is how many people were actually dying from typhus.

It is known from camp registration records that there were about 404,000 registered prisoners in the camp during its 4 1/2-year existence. [27] Polish historian Dr. Franciszek Piper did the most comprehensive demographic study of Auschwitz ever undertaken and traced 1.3 million prisoners to the camp. He found that 1.1 million had been killed. This includes 200,000 of the registered prisoners and 900,000 prisoners who never received a registration number because they were killed upon arrival. [28] Deniers have never been able to account for the missing.

In 1989, the Auschwitz Archives in Moscow were opened for the first time since the Soviets liberated the camp in January 1945. These archives contain thousands of documents which survived destruction by the camp authorities when they fled the advancing Soviet forces. Among the items discovered were the Auschwitz Death Books. These books contain the death certificates of registered prisoners only. Nonregistered prisoners who were killed upon arrival did not receive a death certificate. The death books are incomplete. They contain the certificates of 68,864 registered prisoners who died from August 1941 to December 1943. There are no books for 1944 or periods prior to August 1941. They are either missing or were destroyed. Also, there are a number of missing books for the period August 1941 to December 1943. However, each book contains between 1400 and 1500 entries. [29] By interpolating 1500 entries into each missing death book we can arrive at approximately 80,000 deaths of registered prisoners for 1942 and 1943. [30] Dr. Tadeusz Paczula, a former Auschwitz inmate, was in the camp from 1940. He also kept the

death registries for registered inmates. He later testified that for the two years following the summer of 1942, about 130,000 names were entered into the death registries. [31]

Nevertheless, the nearly 69,000 death certificates available afford researchers the opportunity to see exactly what was killing registered prisoners. It is now known on the basis of these certificates that very few prisoners died from typhus. [32] They show that only 2060 of the 68,864 deaths were from typhus. While typhus can be lethal, it need not necessarily be so. Lucie Adelsberger, a Jewish prisoner and camp doctor, got typhus, was quarantined, and resumed her duties after recovery. [33] Similarly, Ella Lingens Reiner, a German doctor, who was also a prisoner, contracted typhus and survived. [34] One of the early Auschwitz memoirs, written in 1947, recounts an episode with camp doctor [Josef Mengele](#), later to become known as the "Angel of Death" for his medical experiments. Mengele was disturbed about the typhus epidemic. The former prisoner wrote: "Alas, typhus epidemics did rage in the camp, but at this time we had comparatively few victims. The same day he [Mengele] sent us a large quantity of serum and directed mass vaccinations." [35] Petro Mirchuk, a Ukrainian prisoner, wrote that a delousing in August 1942, the worst month of the epidemic, "eliminated the epidemic and the billions of fleas and lice ceased to exist." [36]

Thus, it can be seen that people could recover from typhus and that the authorities did have means of combating the disease. What then was killing all of the registered prisoners if not typhus? Perhaps the most revealing part of the death books is what they claim were the causes of death. Many of the causes deal with various forms of heart failure such as "heart attack", "heart muscle degeneration," "heart and circulatory collapse" etc. There are over 25,000 deaths listed which relate to some kind of heart problem. Other causes deal with general physical weakness, tuberculosis, pleurisy (dealing with lung problems), gastroenteritis, pneumonia, etc. People 50 and under account for 59,000 deaths. Those 40 and under account for more than 44,000 deaths. [37] While all of these deaths would have been possible for people with typhus who were not treated, it is simply not possible for people of the ages listed to have died from the stated causes. Young people, with rare exceptions, do not die of heart failure. In some cases children were said to have died from "decrepitude", an affliction of the aged. [38]

How then can the death certificates be explained if the stated causes do not conform to physical reality? The only explanation is that the camp authorities were engaged in a massive killing campaign of registered prisoners. Part of this has to do with typhus. Wieslaw Kielar, a Polish prisoner, was one of those charged with making up the death certificates. He writes that the method for getting rid of sick prisoners was to kill them. His memoirs were written in 1972, seventeen years before the discovery of the death books. He describes the falsification of the death certificates:

My work consisted of writing out death certificates. The description of the illness for which the prisoner had died also applied to those who had been murdered in the camp. Shot, killed by injection, gas chamber. Each one had to have his case history - a fictitious one, of course. That was what the camp authorities demanded, and that was what I was ordered to do. I must admit that, to begin with, I wrote "heart failure" in the case of prisoners who I knew had been shot. Later, though, I decided that there had been too many of these heart failures... In the case of a man who had been shot, for instance, I wrote diarrhea... In brief it was nothing but a barefaced falsification of the death records, an obliteration of all traces of mass murder that had been committed on defenseless prisoners. [39]

Kielar's description is borne out by the by the death certificates of 168 prisoners who were shot on May 27, 1942 but whose cause of death was listed as "heart attack." [40]

Ella Lingens Reiner, the German medical doctor referred to above, wrote that typhus patients were killed by phenol injection. "The result was that we, the prisoner-doctors, simply disguised typhus as influenza in our lists." [41] The death books show 1194 death certificates listing influenza as the cause of death. [42]

Pery Broad, an SS private first class assigned to Auschwitz, made a similar observation in his memoirs written shortly after the end of the war. He writes that the death certificates:

were written by a medically trained prisoner whose job in the hospital it was to concoct such reports in the case of each prisoner who had died in the camp, whatever the cause. All the countless victims, those who...had been shot in Block 11 [the execution block], or the sick who had phenol injected into their hearts, the victims of starvation or of tortures, they had all regrettably lost their lives, according to the Deaths [sic] Book by succumbing to some ordinary disease." [43]

Jenny Schnauer, an Austrian prisoner, also recorded deaths in the Death Books. She testified at the Auschwitz trials in Germany in the mid-1960s as follows:

Most of the recorded causes of death were fictitious. Thus, for example, we were never allowed to enter "shot while escaping" in the book; I had to write "heart failure." and "cardiac weakness" was the cause listed instead of "malnutrition." [44]

Even though deniers reject all post war testimony as fraudulent, the above observations by four witnesses who were there conform exactly to the

death certificates. Moreover, these observations were made years before the discovery of the death books. Unless one is willing to believe that heart failure and other unlikely causes were killing thousands of people not at risk for such ailments, then the only choice is to acknowledge the accuracy of the above memoirs and testimony that mass murder was taking place at Auschwitz. At any rate, the death books and eyewitness observations prove that typhus was not killing that many prisoners - certainly not enough prisoners to justify the building of so many ovens.

Predictably, deniers have totally ignored the causes of death listed in the death books since this information was first published in 1995. Rather, Mattogno and others continue to propagate the myth that typhus was responsible for the high inmate mortality.

A postscript to erroneously attributing typhus as a leading cause of death also arises in the Mogilev prisoner of war camp for Soviet soldiers, a camp in Belorussia. It was commonly believed that many of these soldiers died of typhus. The estimated capacity of cremation ovens for Mogilev was 3000 per day. However, it is now known that there were relatively few deaths from typhus. Rather, the policy of extermination through labor, hunger and cold resulted in most of the deaths. [\[45\]](#)

## Origins of the Crematoria

On October 22, 1941, more than six months before the outbreak of the typhus epidemic, the Bauleitung sent a letter to Topf and Sons, builder of the Auschwitz ovens. The letter referred to a previous conversation between the head of the Bauleitung and a representative of Topf and Sons. It informed Topf that the Bauleitung was ordering five triple muffle furnaces, or 15 ovens. The order is also referred to in two subsequent letters of March 5 and March 30, 1942. [\[46\]](#) At the time Auschwitz had four ovens and another double muffle furnace was being built. Therefore, the authorities had six ovens.

Why did the authorities decide to increase the camp's cremation capacity by 3 1/2 times (from 6 to 21 ovens) when there was no major epidemic in the camp? The answer lies in other events of October 1941, the month that the order was first placed. For the period October 7 to 31 the Auschwitz morgue registries - not to be confused with the Auschwitz Death Books - show 1255 deaths of Soviet Prisoners of War. For the period from October 1941 through January 1942 the morgue registries record the deaths of 7343 Soviet POWs of the 9997 brought into the camp, an astounding 73% mortality rate over a four month period. [\[47\]](#) The Auschwitz authorities had plans to greatly expand the population of the camp to 125,000 [\[48\]](#)

There is also substantial evidence that non-Soviet prisoners were being murdered en masse. The Auschwitz Death Books, though mostly

incomplete, provide useful information in this regard. They show that from August 4 to September 10, 1941, 1498 registered prisoners died. An additional 1490 died from October 21 to November 22, 1941. <sup>[49]</sup> Although there are two death books missing for this period, as was noted earlier each death book carries between 1400 and 1500 names. This means that about 6,000 non-Soviet prisoners died in the five month period from August to December 1941. <sup>[50]</sup> Although the total number of prisoners registered in Auschwitz in 1941 is not known, camp records for January 19, 1942 show a total of 11,703 registered prisoners, which includes 1510 Soviet POWs. <sup>[51]</sup> This means that in the last five months of 1941 more prisoners died than were registered at the beginning of 1942. Camp documents show that of the 36,285 prisoners who were known to have been in Auschwitz from May 20, 1940 to January 31, 1942, 20,565 cannot be accounted for. <sup>[52]</sup> In November 1941, the Polish Government in Exile reported, based on information received from the Polish underground, that "[d]uring the winter months, the crematoria ovens have not sufficed for burning all the corpses." <sup>[53]</sup> Consequently, the origins of the new crematoria can be traced to mass murder.

Our knowledge of Auschwitz is that sometime in the Spring of 1942 it became an extermination camp for most of the Jews who arrived there. <sup>[54]</sup> On October 13, 1942 the head of the Bauleitung stated in a letter : "As regards the construction of the new crematorium buildings, it was necessary to start immediately in July 1942 because of the situation caused by the special actions." <sup>[55]</sup> This letter clearly shows that the "special actions" were resulting in dead bodies which needed to be cremated.

The term "special action" was mentioned 14 times in a [diary](#) kept by Auschwitz doctor Johann Kremer for the period from September through November 1942. <sup>[56]</sup> The diary was seized by the arresting authorities. In his 1947 trial Kremer testified that the special actions referred to gassing prisoners. "These mass murders took place in small cottages situated outside the Birkenau camp in a wood." <sup>[57]</sup> Kremer gave similar testimony at the Auschwitz trials in the mid-1960s where he was not a defendant. <sup>[58]</sup> French denier Robert Faurisson argued that the "special actions" mentioned by Kremer referred to fighting the typhus epidemic which swept the camp in the summer of 1942. <sup>[59]</sup> However, nowhere in any of his entries did Kremer equate typhus with special actions. His October 12 entry, written one day before the Bauleitung "special action" memo, specifically separates typhus from the special actions where he mentions being inoculated against the disease in the evening. "Despite this, that night, I was present at still another special action on people coming from Holland [1600 individuals]. Terrifying scenes in front of the last bunker [Hoessler]! It was the tenth special action." <sup>[60]</sup>

Another revealing [letter](#) dated August 21, 1942 from the Bauleitung deals

with discussions with Topf and Sons on building six new ovens in the Birkenau area of the camp. The letter states that it is anticipated that the new ovens will be built near the "bathing installation for special actions." [61] The new ovens were probably intended to be used on a temporary basis until the crematoria were built. The letter is saying that these special actions are taking place in the "bathing installation." Just so there is no misunderstanding as to what these words mean, they are the only ones in this lengthy two page memo which are underlined. The fact that the ovens are to be located near the "bathing installation" gives a good idea that the "bathing" will be producing dead bodies. The context of the bathing remark should be viewed in light of a great deal of testimony from eyewitnesses that it was a common practice to disguise the gas chambers as showers. [62] An [inventory of equipment](#) for one of the "corpse cellars" in Krema III lists "14 showers" and a "gas tight door." [63]

Mattogno argued that "special actions" did not necessarily have to mean gassing. He cited a memo referred to by denier critic Jean Claude Pressac that referred to a "special action" among the civilian workers. The Bauleitung memo states that "for security reasons there was special action among all the civilian workers." [64] Pressac believed that this "special action" did not mean killing. Rather, he interpreted it to mean a security check among civilian workers. While Pressac's interpretation is possible in this instance, it is not certain because he mentions this "special action" within the context of a strike among the civilian workers. [65] It is quite possible that the camp administration sought to make an example of some of the civilian workers by executing them. This could explain why the memo is marked "secret".

## **Necessity of the Crematoria**

As was noted earlier, deniers attribute the building of the four new crematoria and the 46 additional ovens to the typhus epidemic that swept the camp in the summer of 1942. Although it was shown that typhus was responsible for very few deaths, it is still possible to test the necessity of the building based on the amount of deaths of registered prisoners had they died of typhus. In other words, assuming that all of the deaths of registered prisoners were due to typhus, was it necessary to build four new crematoria and 46 ovens to handle these deaths? The only way to test the necessity is to compare it to deaths in other concentration camps and the cremation capacity of those camps. While such comparisons are difficult because they depend on knowing the amount of deaths and cremation capacity of other camps, there is one camp that affords us the information needed to make the comparison.

Gusen was a camp in the Mauthausen concentration camp complex. Mauthausen and Gusen are located in Austria. Gusen was comprised of three camps. In February 1941, Gusen had a Topf double muffle furnace,

two ovens, installed in order to handle the deaths there. No additional ovens were added during the remainder of Gusen's existence. <sup>[66]</sup> Prior to March 1943, Auschwitz had three Topf double muffle ovens, or three times the cremation capacity of Gusen. In 1942 there were 7410 deaths in Gusen. <sup>[67]</sup> In 1942 there were 44,000 deaths of registered prisoners and an additional 1100 Soviet POWs recorded in the morgue registries. These deaths are not in dispute. <sup>[68]</sup> Non-registered prisoners who were killed upon arrival are not included in these numbers. Therefore, in 1942 there were six times as many deaths in Auschwitz as Gusen and three times the cremation capacity. Also revealing is an examination of the highest three consecutive months of deaths in both camps. The highest three months of deaths of registered prisoners in Auschwitz was 21,900 for the period from August through October 1942. The highest three month period for Gusen was from December 1942 through February 1943 when 3851 prisoners died. Thus, in the highest three month period Auschwitz death totals for registered prisoners were six times the Gusen amount.

A comparison of these death statistics suggests that Auschwitz could have accommodated the excess death rate over that of Gusen by doubling its cremation capacity from 6 to 12 ovens. If Auschwitz really needed 46 additional ovens, a nearly ninefold expansion of its existing capacity, then Gusen needed to expand to at least 12 ovens. Yet, no such expansion was ever undertaken.

The evidence for this comes from data available on the Gusen ovens which show that each oven could burn on the average about 26 bodies per day, so that both ovens could together burn at least 52 bodies per day or about 1500 per month. <sup>[69]</sup> However, as will be seen later, these ovens could also substantially exceed this number. The highest monthly death total for Gusen was 1719. <sup>[70]</sup> This means that the six Auschwitz ovens could have consumed about 4500 per month. The highest monthly death total for registered prisoners at Auschwitz was 9000 in September 1942. Yet, as early as October 1941 the Bauleitung had ordered an additional 15 ovens. Even if we accept Mattogno's low estimate of the burning capacity of these ovens as being 20 per day, the existing six ovens in place by mid-1942 and the additional 15 would have enabled the authorities to dispose of 420 bodies per day or about 12,500 per month.

If the denier explanation of these ovens is to be believed, then the authorities were anticipating an incredible 30,000 deaths per month of registered prisoners! This, of course, assumes that the low denier estimate of these ovens cremation capacity is correct. The only explanation is that the camp administration anticipated this many deaths, but not of registered prisoners. More verification comes from an attempt in early 1943 to investigate the possibility of building a sixth crematorium. As the result of a meeting with Topf and Sons, the crematoria oven builder, on January 29, 1943, the Bauleitung instructed the firm to produce a sketch for a sixth crematorium. The sketch was delivered to the Bauleitung in the first half of February and the Auschwitz camp commandant was informed of the discussions. <sup>[71]</sup>

At the time these discussions were taking place, Auschwitz was experiencing a low death rate for registered prisoners when compared to the summer of 1942. The death books show about 3000 deaths of registered prisoners for January 1943. A similar number of registered prisoners had died in the months of November and December 1942. [72] Therefore, the 9000 deaths of registered prisoners for the period from November 1942 through January 1943 was far less than one half of the 21,900 deaths from August through October 1942. The four new crematoria were scheduled to become operational in the near future. The first would go into operation in March 1943. Thus, according to low denier estimates, the total cremation capacity of the ovens at 30,000 per month could dispose of 10 times the number of registered monthly deaths at the time these discussions were taking place. Why then would the camp authorities seek to build another crematorium in addition to the four that would shortly begin operation? The answer lies in the date that the Topf representative, engineer and oven builder Kurt Prüfer, was in the camp for discussions concerning this newly proposed (but never built) crematorium - January 29, 1943. On this same day the Bauleitung: (1) issued a [memo](#) saying that there was a "gassing cellar" in Crematorium II [73] and (2) issued another [memo](#) that in Crematorium II body burning and "special treatment" could occur simultaneously. [74] Special treatment [Sonderbehandlung] was a word used to denote the killing and disappearance of prisoners. [75] Several weeks later, on March 2, Prüfer sent the Bauleitung a letter that his firm had been making inquiries about "apparatus you want indicating the traces of prussic acid" for Crematorium II. [76] Prussic acid was the lethal poison gas used in the gas chambers. On the same day a worker's report stated that there was a "gas chamber" [Gaskammer] in Krema IV. [77]

Perhaps the best evidence for the reason for the crematoria was the secrecy required of those involved in their building. Bauleitung Directive 108 issued in 1943 is a reminder of Directive 35 issued on June 19, 1942. It states that "plans for the crematoria are to be strictly controlled. No plan can be passed to the work brigade...and all plans must be kept under lock and key when not in use..." The key part of the memo states: "In addition, we have to point out that we are dealing with *econo-military tasks that must be kept top secret* [geheimzuhaltende]" [78] This memo raises the question as to why the building of crematoria would be considered an econo-military task requiring a great deal of secrecy if the only purpose of these structures was to dispose of dead bodies. In the memo, the key German words *wehrwirtschaftliche und geheimzuhaltende* are the only ones underlined. The memo only makes sense if these structures were to be used for some secret purpose in addition to body disposal. The memo also further separates the building of the crematoria from typhus by referring to the original directive as being issued on June 19, 1942. The typhus epidemic did not hit Auschwitz until July 3, 1942, two weeks after the memo was issued. [79]

## Expansion of the Camp

Mattogno and other deniers often argue that a planned expansion of the camp to 200,000 was the catalyst for the new crematoria. However, the Bauleitung began negotiating with firms for construction of the four crematoria in July 1942, while the first evidence of the planned expansion to 200,000 is on August 15. <sup>[80]</sup>

As noted earlier, the planned expansion of the Auschwitz camp, Auschwitz II, to a population of 125,000 was enunciated by the Bauleitung in October 1941. It coincided with the mass murder of camp inmates, especially Soviet POWs. (See the discussion in [footnotes 47-53](#).) However, the first planned expansion was advanced on March 1, 1941, before the mass extermination of Soviet POWs. It called for 130,000 prisoners. At the time, there were only two double muffle furnaces, or four ovens in Auschwitz. The only additional plan for ovens was to order another double muffle furnace in September 1941. This may give a true picture of the real cremation needs of the camp. <sup>[81]</sup>

The planned expansion of the camp to 200,000 could not have influenced the Bauleitung to expand the cremation capacity from 6 to 52 ovens. As noted earlier, the Bauleitung memo of October 1942 tied the crematoria building to the "special actions" taking place (see the discussion at [footnote 55](#)), not any planned expansion. Moreover, comparative information from the Mauthausen concentration camp shows that there would not have been a reason for the Auschwitz authorities to build so many ovens even with the planned expansion.

In 1942 Mauthausen experienced about a 50% death rate for its registered prisoners. This percentage dropped to 15% in 1943. In 1944 Mauthausen expanded its camp population from 17,000 to 90,000, and experienced a 15% death rate for the year. <sup>[82]</sup> However, the camp only added two ovens to the existing one in mid-1944 for a total of three ovens. Similarly, in 1944 Gusen expanded from two to three camps, but did not add any ovens.

Based on the Mauthausen information, Auschwitz should not have expected more than 100,000 annual deaths on a camp population of 200,000 when it started to build the four new crematoria in August 1942. However, such a death rate would mean mass murder of registered prisoners was taking place, as it was in Mauthausen in 1942. A more reasonable annual death rate would be 15 to 25% annually or 30,000 to 50,000 on a camp population of 200,000. Even this would mean the murder of many prisoners. An additional six ovens to the existing six Auschwitz ovens would easily have given the camp enough capacity to handle this many annual deaths. As noted earlier, the Gusen information shows that an oven had a capacity to incinerate 26 bodies per day. Thus 12 ovens had the capacity to dispose of 300 per day. Yet, as noted earlier,

the Bauleitung had already begun to order an additional 15 ovens in October 1941. When added to the existing six ovens, there was more than enough capacity to handle the maximum number of deaths that could be expected in the absence of a massive extermination campaign. Even a 50% annual death rate of registered prisoners in Auschwitz on a camp population of 200,000 could have easily been handled by 21 ovens. Mattogno's argument was that the high death rate Auschwitz was experiencing during the typhus epidemic coupled with the expansion meant that the cremation capacity provided by an additional 46 ovens was justified. However, his argument assumes that the Bauleitung was expecting something on the order of 30,000 to 50,000 deaths per month from typhus as a result of this proposed expansion. In fact, the camp would not have been able to function under these circumstances and would most certainly be forced to close down with a continuous epidemic of this proportion.

The camp authorities must have envisaged that any expansion would accompany an eventual bringing of the typhus epidemic under control. On July 15, 1942, twelve days after the typhus epidemic hit the camp, a Bauleitung memo stated that for the time being the camp's population would remain at 30,000 even though an eventual unspecified expansion was expected. As late as December 1942 there had hardly been any increase in the camp's prisoner population from 30,000. The new prisoners who were added to the existing register were brought in for labor to replace the sick prisoners who were killed by the camp authorities. Rather, the registered camp population began to increase in 1943, after the worst of the typhus epidemic had passed and there was a relatively substantial decrease in the number of camp deaths. On August 31, 1943 Auschwitz held 74,000 prisoners. For the five months from April through August 1943 there were about 10,300 deaths of registered prisoners in Auschwitz. Though high, the 1943 death figures for registered prisoners compare very favorably with the 26,000 who died in the four months from July through October 1942. <sup>[83]</sup> Of course, non-registered prisoners were still brought into the camp to be gassed en masse during the typhus epidemic.

## **Durability of the Ovens**

Mattogno argued that the Auschwitz ovens could not have burned as many bodies as has been asserted because they did not have a long enough useful life. He claimed that the ovens had a relatively short life span when compared to what would be needed to dispose of all the bodies. His principal source for this assertion was an article appearing in a 1941 German engineering journal by engineer Rudolph Jakobskotter. Mattogno quoted Jakobskotter as "speaking in 1941 of the Topf ovens heated with electricity in the crematory of Erfurt [in Germany], [he] states that the second oven was able to perform 3000 cremations, while the normal duration of the refractory walls of the ovens was 2000 cremations." In fact, when read in its proper context, the 2000 reference

in the article was to the amount of bodies which could be burned in an earlier version of the oven, not the one that could perform 3000 cremations.

The ovens Jakobskotter referred to were electric ovens. While Mattogno mentioned this fact in his monograph, he omitted it in his article when discussing the subject. The type of oven used in the concentration camps was coke fired. Many of these ovens had been converted from oil burning. <sup>[84]</sup> The electric oven, as Jakobskotter noted, was first placed into service in 1933. He classified these electric ovens into generations, the first generation lasting until 1935. After burning 1300 bodies it was decided that improvements were needed. This first generation could burn 2000 bodies. The second generation, beginning in 1935, had a life of 3000 bodies which was expected to increase to 4000 bodies. A third generation would go into effect in 1939. No durability was specified for the third generation. Jakobskotter did state that "they expect to have even higher numbers for future ovens." <sup>[85]</sup> It is not known what additional improvements were made by the early 1940s. All that is really known is that these ovens were not used in the concentration camps, and even if they were they could have had a substantially extended useful life beyond 4000 bodies by the 1940s. It is obvious from Jakobskotter's discussion of them that rapid progress was being made in improving the useful life of the electric oven. In addition, discussions about the number of bodies which an oven could burn over its useful life, as in the Jakobskotter study, refer to burning a single body at a time. This was the normal civilian practice. This method also utilized a coffin. As will be shown later, multiple body burnings in an oven was common at Auschwitz and other camps, and coffins were not used for such cremations.

Mattogno found a file which showed that the two Topf Gusen ovens had to have their walls replaced after that camp experienced 3200 deaths from the time the ovens were installed in February 1941. The overhaul took place in October 1941. He concluded from this that the Topf ovens did not really have that long of a useful life. <sup>[86]</sup> The problem is that it is not really known what caused these ovens to be overhauled. Mattogno was not able to produce any information that the overhaul had anything to do with the body disposal capability of the ovens. In Auschwitz, the eight ovens of Krema IV broke down two months after they were placed in service in March 1943 and could not be used again. <sup>[87]</sup> Topf admitted that the Krema IV ovens were made defectively. <sup>[88]</sup> On the other hand, the 15 ovens of Krema II worked quite well. Krema II was closed down for a brief period of one month in 1943, but that did not have to do with the lifespan of the ovens. <sup>[89]</sup> It is possible that the Gusen ovens may not have originally been built correctly.

Mattogno argued that if the Auschwitz ovens really had burned as many bodies as would be needed to dispose of all the victims, they would have been overhauled several times, but that there is no information in the Auschwitz archives which suggests that these overhauls took place. <sup>[90]</sup>

In fact, no information has surfaced from these archives, or any other archives, that even one cremation took place in Auschwitz. In other words, not one contemporaneous document has surfaced from any source showing that even one cremation took place in Auschwitz. Nor is there any information which describes how any of these 52 ovens worked, an anomaly which will be analyzed later. This should be contrasted with Gusen which only had two ovens but for which there is a file describing the efficiency of these ovens over a period of several weeks. <sup>[91]</sup> According to Mattogno's logic, this must mean that no cremations took place at Auschwitz!

Mattogno failed to inform his readers of the fact that his own data on the Topf ovens suggested that they could burn many thousands of bodies without being overhauled. The source from which Mattogno obtained his information about the number of deaths at Gusen being 3200 from February through October 1941 also gives a monthly breakdown which shows that there were about another 18,500 deaths there from November 1941 through the end of 1944, and that there were a total of 30,000 cremations from the time these ovens were installed until May 1945. <sup>[92]</sup> Yet there is no evidence that any overhauls of these ovens took place after October 1941.

In fact, Mattogno had examined the files in the Mauthausen Memorial Museum in Austria and the Bundesarchiv in Germany, where he found information about the overhaul which took place in October 1941. The author has also obtained the files for the overhaul of the Topf ovens which took place in 1941. The Bundesarchiv informed the author that there are 290 pages of information from this file. <sup>[93]</sup> Mattogno had access to this file which is labeled as File NS 4 Ma/54. He even cited documents from this file which date to 1943 and 1944 on the installation of the Mauthausen ovens. <sup>[94]</sup> Yet, despite this archival information, Mattogno was unable to cite any information of additional overhauls to the Gusen ovens which, according to the argument he was making, should have occurred at least five more times in order to dispose of the number of dead bodies at Gusen. If these overhauls had taken place, they would have certainly been detailed in this file because the information on the 1941 overhaul includes all correspondence with Topf on materials used, billing information and time sheets for the days and hours worked, including overtime. <sup>[95]</sup>

Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any information on the durability of the Topf ovens used in the concentration camps. A detailed file on the Gusen ovens which includes correspondences between Topf and the camp authorities as well as instructions for the ovens does not address the issue. <sup>[96]</sup> Similarly, no information has as yet appeared from the Auschwitz Archives in Moscow. The limited number of Auschwitz files examined by the author which give billing and installation information do not address the issue of durability. <sup>[97]</sup>

In addition to the information from Gusen, examined earlier, there is also some indication as to the useful life of these ovens from Mauthausen. From 1940 through mid-1944 Mauthausen had one single muffle oven. It was built by Topf's chief competitor. An additional Topf double muffle oven was added in July 1944. <sup>[98]</sup> From 1940 until the end of 1943 approximately 12,500 prisoners were cremated in Mauthausen. From 1940 through April 1945 there were 27,556 cremations in Mauthausen. <sup>[99]</sup> Yet, Mattogno was arguing that all 52 Auschwitz ovens could not have disposed of more than 162,000 bodies. <sup>[100]</sup>

There is also information about oven durability from 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris. In the late 1880s, two ovens were installed in a crematory in Southern Paris. These ovens were designed to cremate 5000 bodies per year or 2500 per furnace. <sup>[101]</sup> Augustus Cobb, a leading cremation expert of the period, learned from the engineer who worked in the crematory that "[a]lthough nearly four hundred bodies are burned in these furnaces every month, a close inspection of their walls showed no traces of fissures; and the same remark applies to the walls of the furnaces in the crematory in Milan [in Italy]." <sup>[102]</sup> Additional information on these ovens published in 1893 shows that from 1889 to 1892, 11,852 were cremated in these facilities. This number includes 3743 stillborn children, so that more than 8000 bodies from a representative population were incinerated in these two ovens. The only problem mentioned in the report accompanying these statistics is that of transporting the bodies to the crematory. <sup>[103]</sup> As will be seen, Germany led Europe in cremation technology in the 1930s. It would appear logical to conclude that Germany of the 1940s had more durable ovens than France of 50 years earlier.

## Cremation Capacity

The use of cremation ovens appears to have begun sometime in the 1870s. It is known from cremations carried out in 1874 that a 47-pound child could be cremated in 25 minutes, a 144-pound woman in 50 minutes and a 227-pound man in 55 minutes. <sup>[104]</sup> In 1875 it was reported that a body could be cremated in 50 minutes. <sup>[105]</sup>

Mattogno cited a participant from a British cremation conference in 1975 who stated that the "thermal barrier" for a cremation was 60 minutes. <sup>[106]</sup> He ignored the comments of another conference participant who suggested that most of the burning occurred in the first 30 minutes:

After about half an hour, whether the furnace has gotten up to a temperature of 1100°C or whether it is 900°C, there is a rapid fall away, and I think the investigations should be concerned with the last twenty minutes or so of the cremation cycle. At that time you have in the cremator a very small

quantity of body material...roughly the size of a rugby football, about twenty minutes from the end of the cremation, and this is the thing which is most difficult to remove. [107]

The instructions for the Topf double muffle furnaces envisaged that a body would be added into the oven during the last twenty minutes that it took to fully cremate the corpse that had been previously inserted.

As soon as the remains of the corpses have fallen from the chamotte grid to the ash collection channel below, they should be pulled forward towards the ash removal door, using the scraper. Here they can be left for a further twenty minutes to be fully consumed....*In the meantime, further corpses can be introduced one after the other into the chambers.* [108] (Emphasis added.)

As will be seen later, there is now strong evidence that bodies were added before the prior corpse was fully incinerated, resulting in a 25 minute burning cycle for each body. (See the discussion at [footnote 136.](#))

In Germany of the 1880s it was possible to cremate a body and the coffin which housed it in 60 to 75 minutes. [109] The cremation process became very popular in Germany in the years preceding World War II. In 1926, Berlin newspapers reported that one fifth of all those who died in that city were cremated. [110] By 1931 Germany led Europe in cremations. Of the 94,978 cremations in Europe that year, 59,119 were in Germany. Germany had 107 of the 226 crematoria in Europe. Membership in German cremation societies exceeded those in other countries. Germany also had more cremation journals than any other country. Of the seven named cremation journals at a British cremation conference in 1932, four were German. [111] By the 1930s there were two principal oven builders in Germany. One of these was Topf and Sons, identified earlier as the builder of the Auschwitz ovens.

One of the problems when discussing cremation issues at Auschwitz is that using ovens to dispose of bodies at the rate taking place there is without precedent in human history. To put this in some type of perspective, in the state of California with 20 million people in 1982 there were 58,000 cremations. [112] Yet in Auschwitz, which never had more than 92,000 registered prisoners, many times this number were cremated over a four year period.

The traditional means of body disposal in times of war has been through open air burnings. Thus in Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, during World War II at least one million people were known to have died. They were burned in the open. [113] As will be seen later on in this study, open air burnings were also utilized extensively at Auschwitz.

The specific problem with Auschwitz is that because of the unique nature of what was happening there and the absence to date of any records

documenting even one cremation or how these ovens worked, we are necessarily forced into a certain amount of speculation. We don't really know how many bodies could be burned in the crematoria on a daily basis, how much fuel was needed to burn a body, the life span of an oven, or the effect on any of these considerations when more than one body was being burned in an oven. Moreover, the nature of what happened makes it scientifically impossible to duplicate. For example, it is unlikely that there will ever be another opportunity for 52 ovens, all in the same location, to dispose of bodies under the same conditions that existed in Auschwitz. Also, modern cremations are subject to a whole host of rules and regulations not applicable to German concentration camps. In modern cremations the ashes of those cremated cannot be comingled with the ashes of other decedents. German concentration camps were under no such compulsion.

Mattogno computed what he claimed was the maximum number of bodies that could possibly be cremated in the four Birkenau crematoria from the time each became operational until October 30, 1944, the date that camp historian Danuta Czech identifies as the last gassing. He had found documents showing the days repairs were done to the ovens. From these repair documents, he claimed that he was able to establish how many days each of the crematoria could function. He claimed that Krema II went into operation in mid-March 1943 and went out of service shortly thereafter for 115 days until July. It then functioned until October 30, 1944. He also claimed that Krema III went into operation on June 25, 1943 and was out of service for 60 days in 1944. <sup>[114]</sup> He was correct as to the dates that these crematoria went into service. However, the sources he cited do not support his contentions about the crematoria being out of service for the period claimed. His source for Krema II being down for 115 days was a letter to Topf from the Bauleitung, dated July 17, 1943, which discusses problems with the blueprints for the chimney because they had not taken into account temperatures caused by an expansion of the heat. However, the letter says nothing about the Krema being out of service. <sup>[115]</sup> The most current research on this issue states that Krema II went out of service for one month beginning on May 22, 1943 because internal lining of the smokestack and the flues connected to the incinerator began to collapse. <sup>[116]</sup>

Similarly, Mattogno's source for Krema III being down for 60 days in 1944 only mentions that doors on the ovens were being repaired on June 1. It also mentions that there were continuing repairs in all of the crematoria from June 8 to July 20, though it is not stated whether these repairs were on the ovens. <sup>[117]</sup> However, these documents present no evidence that any of the crematoria were shut down or that the ovens for Crematoria II, III and V were not working during this period of time (Recall that Krema IV's ovens went down permanently in May 1943.) It is known from information on Gusen that Topf ovens could function even on days when there were repairs. <sup>[118]</sup>

Based on his erroneous estimate on down time of the ovens in

Crematoria II and III, Mattogno calculated that if each oven could burn 24 bodies per day, then a maximum of 368,000 bodies could have been burned from the period these ovens first started operation until October 31, 1944. <sup>[119]</sup> Mattogno did not address the issue of Krema I, in the main camp, which was shut down on July 19, 1943. <sup>[120]</sup> As will be seen, however, in the part of this study dealing with open air cremations, Mattogno also identified a body disposal method not dependent on the functioning of the ovens. This means that even if his numbers on Krema capacity are correct, they are irrelevant.

The issue of oven overuse surfaced in the recently discovered post war interrogations of three Topf engineers by the Soviets. Kurt Prüfer, builder of the ovens, was asked why the brick linings of the ovens were damaged so quickly. He replied that the damage resulting after six months was "because the strain on the furnaces was enormous." He recounted how he had told Topf's chief engineer in charge of crematoria, Fritz Sanders, about the strain on the furnaces because of so many corpses waiting to be incinerated as a result of the gassings. <sup>[121]</sup> Sanders stated that he had been told by Prüfer and another Topf engineer that the "capacity of the furnaces was so great because three [gassed] corpses were incinerated [in one oven] simultaneously." <sup>[122]</sup> A Sonderkommando, one who worked in the crematoria during this period of time, wrote that cracks in the brickwork of the ovens were filled with a special fireclay paste in order to keep the ovens running. <sup>[123]</sup>

At the hate speech trial of Canadian Ernst Zundel <sup>[124]</sup> in 1988, a supposed expert on cremations named Ivan Legace testified that the maximum number of bodies which could be disposed of daily in each of the 46 Birkenau ovens was three per oven for a total of 138. <sup>[125]</sup> This figure found its way into the *Leuchter Report*. <sup>[126]</sup> This is one more example of Leuchter's incompetence in these matters. Even Mattogno stated that "[t]his figure is actually far below the actual capacity." <sup>[127]</sup>

Contrary to Legace and Leuchter, it is known that the Topf ovens could work on a continuous daily basis. This information comes directly from notes kept by prisoners who worked at the crematorium on the daily operation of the Topf double muffle furnace in Gusen from October 31 to November 12, 1941. The notes show that an average daily incineration of 26 per muffle over a 13 day period. <sup>[128]</sup> However, the Gusen ovens did not always work around the clock. Therefore, the records show that on most days they only operated part time. <sup>[129]</sup> Topf's instructions for these muffles from July 1941 state:

In the coke-heated T double muffle incinerator, 10 to 35 bodies can be incinerated in about 10 hours. The quantity mentioned above can be incinerated daily without any problem, without overworking the oven. It is not harmful to operate the incinerator day and night if, required, since the fireclay [resistant walls] lasts longer when an even

temperature is maintained. [\[130\]](#)

These comments also apply to the three double muffle furnaces in Krema I of Auschwitz which were of the same construction. Similar instructions were issued by Topf for the Auschwitz ovens in September 1941. These instructions state that "[o]nce the cremation chamber [muffle] has been brought to a good red heat [approximately 800°] the corpses can be introduced one after the other in the cremation chambers." The instructions also state that at the end of the operation the air valves and doors and dampers must be closed "so that the furnace does not cool." [\[131\]](#) These instructions directly contradict Legace's assertion that the ovens needed to be cooled. [\[132\]](#)

It is interesting to note that the instructions for both the Gusen and Auschwitz ovens suggest that continued use at an even temperature will actually prolong the useful life of the ovens. On the same day that the Gusen instructions were issued, two Topf engineers stated that the Topf double muffle furnace could incinerate 60 to 72 bodies [30 to 36 per muffle] in a 20 hour period with three hours of maintenance required. [\[133\]](#)

Kurt Prüfer, the Topf engineer who built the 46 Birkenau ovens, stated in a letter on November 15, 1942 that the ovens he installed in the Buchenwald concentration camp had a one third greater output than had previously been thought. [\[134\]](#) Unfortunately, he does not say what number the one third is greater than. However, on the same day he informed the Bauleitung that five triple-muffle furnaces, 15 ovens, could incinerate 800 corpses in 24 hours. [\[135\]](#) This means that a muffle could burn about 53 bodies in a 24 hour period. Reducing the time by four hours means that 44 bodies per muffle could be burned in a 20 hour period

As has been mentioned twice before in this study, the best information we have on the output of these ovens is the period from October 31 to November 12, 1941 in Gusen, after they had been overhauled. While the 677 bodies burned during these 13 days average 26 per muffle, an analysis of the underlying data reveals that a Topf oven could burn far in excess of this amount. On November 7, 1941 these two muffles incinerated 94 bodies in a period of 19 hours and 45 minutes, or 47 per muffle. This means that each oven could incinerate a body in 25.2 minutes. This was probably achieved by adding a new body to the oven before the prior body had been totally incinerated, a method which appears to have been envisaged by the Topf instructions discussed earlier. (See the discussion at [footnote 108](#).) This method should not be confused with multiple body burnings to be discussed in the next part of this study. This 25 minute figure is not far from the Prüfer estimate cited in the prior paragraph. Mattogno totally ignored this information. Rather, he focused on the November 8 information which shows 72 bodies burned. He erroneously claimed that it took 24 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours to burn these bodies. He had

misread the time sheets. The actual burning time for these bodies was between 16 and 17 hours. <sup>[136]</sup>

The most controversial information comes from the Bauleitung on June 28, 1943. It reported that in a 24 hour period the six ovens of Krema I could incinerate 340 bodies; the five triple muffle furnaces each in Kremas II and III could incinerate 1440 corpses, or 2880 combined; Kremas IV and V could each incinerate 768 corpses or 1536 combined. The total for all five was 4756 and the total for the four Birkenau crematoria Kremas II through V - was 4416. For purposes of comparison with Gusen, there were many lighter-weight women and children incinerated in the Auschwitz ovens. By contrast, there were no women and children in Gusen in 1941, only men. <sup>[137]</sup>

Deniers reject the Bauleitung figures outright. Denier critics have not totally accepted these numbers. However, the Gusen data suggests that the Bauleitung figures may have been more credible than previously suspected. The Bauleitung's 340 figure for 24 hours for the six ovens of Krema I comes out to about 25 minutes per body burned, the same result achieved at Gusen on November 7, 1941.

What about the four Birkenau crematoria? At the time the Bauleitung gave these numbers, all the crematoria had been functioning for some period of time. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the Bauleitung at least had some information upon which to base these figures. Both deniers and their critics agree that an oven could not incinerate a body in 15 minutes time, which is what would be required for the 46 ovens to burn 4416 bodies in 24 hours. The information available from Gusen suggests that the maximum attainable was 25 minutes, and then only by adding a body before the previously introduced body was fully consumed. It is also certain that the ovens could not operate on an indefinite basis for 24 hours per day.

But could an oven burn a body in 15 minutes? Not with the traditional method of burning one body at a time. However, the issue becomes more problematical if multiple body burnings are considered. This means that an oven would burn more than one body at a time. The practice was not unusual in German concentration camps. For example, one of the early histories of Dachau stated that it took 10 to 15 minutes to burn a body. <sup>[138]</sup> The source does not say how this was accomplished. However, the standard history of Dachau, written some years later, states that an oven could burn 7 to 9 bodies in two hours when they were all introduced simultaneously. <sup>[139]</sup> Seen in this light, the 15 minutes becomes more feasible. The issue of multiple body burnings will be examined more comprehensively in the next part of this study dealing with fuel consumption.

## Fuel Consumption

As was noted earlier, the furnaces at Auschwitz were coke fueled. Mattogno claimed that there were not enough coke deliveries to Auschwitz to cremate the number of bodies of non-registered prisoners who were murdered in Auschwitz from April to October 1943, the time when the four new crematoria were operating. Prior to mid-March 1943 only Krema I in the main camp was operational. There are only records of coke deliveries for the period from February 16, 1942 through October 1943. From April 1943 to October 1943 there were 497 tons of coke delivered. <sup>[140]</sup> The information on coke deliveries was compiled by denier critic and French researcher Jean Claude Pressac, who gathered the information from the records of the period held in the Auschwitz State Museum. He examined the records of 240 coke deliveries and then compiled these amounts into monthly figures for the period in which records exist. It should be noted that it is not known whether these records are complete for this period of time.

Considering the fact that there are no records for the periods before mid-February 1942 and after October 1943, and that ovens were known to have operated during this period, it is quite possible that the records under discussion are incomplete. Such incompleteness can be inferred by comparing coke deliveries for which there are monthly records with the number of deaths of registered prisoners. In July 1942 there are records for 16.5 tons of coke delivered. In that month there were 4124 deaths of registered prisoners. However, for March 1942 there are records for 39 tons of coke delivery but only 2397 registered prisoner deaths. <sup>[141]</sup> In September 1942 there were about 9000 deaths of registered prisoners and 52 tons of recorded coke delivery. In the following month there were about 5900 deaths of registered prisoners and only 15 tons of recorded coke deliveries. The second-highest month of coke deliveries was in May 1943 when 95 tons were delivered. However, the deaths of registered prisoners were very low in that month. The exact number cannot be isolated because the death books run from April 14 to June 4 and show 2967 deaths. Thus, it is safe to assume that there were about 2000 deaths of registered prisoners. Therefore, the month of the second-highest recorded coke delivery also corresponds with the month of either the lowest or one of the lowest monthly death totals of registered prisoners. <sup>[142]</sup>

The issue as to how much coke was actually delivered to Auschwitz would be resolved if there were some central numbers issued by the Bauleitung for the years at issue. Holocaust denier David Irving published in 1993 what he purported to be such numbers for the years 1940 through 1944. These figures had allegedly been found in the Auschwitz Archives in Moscow. <sup>[143]</sup> However, no file number is cited for these figures. Three attempts by the author to have Mr. Irving identify the source of these numbers have not been successful. Mattogno writes that he was unable to find any support for Irving's numbers in the Auschwitz Archives in Moscow. <sup>[144]</sup>

Mattogno examined the record of cremated prisoners at Gusen for the period from October 31 through November 12, 1941. These numbers are a contemporaneous account that were kept by prisoners on the cremation detail. Photocopies were sent to the author by the Mauthausen Memorial Museum. <sup>[145]</sup> Mattogno stated that the numbers show that over a 13 day period from October 31 to November 12, 677 bodies were cremated using 20,700 kilograms of coke, or 30.5 kilograms per body. One kilogram equals 2.2 pounds. Mattogno argued that the 497 tons of coke delivered to Auschwitz from April to October 1943 were not enough to cremate the number of registered and non-registered prisoners who were killed. One thousand kilograms equals one metric ton. He examined Danuta Czech's *Auschwitz Chronicle* which shows that about 103,000 unregistered prisoners disappeared after arriving at Auschwitz during this period of time. He added this number to 21,580 registered prisoners who died in the camp. He stated that there was not enough coke to cremate the corpses. In order to cremate this many corpses with the available coke, it would mean that each corpse was cremated using 4.1 kilograms of coke. <sup>[146]</sup> Therefore, he argued that 103,000 non-registered prisoners could not have been killed in the camp during this period of time. When he divided the 21,500 registered prisoner deaths by the amount of coke consumed from April 1943 to October 1943, he arrived at 22.7 kilograms per body. <sup>[147]</sup> Mattogno did not explain what happened to the 103,000 non-registered prisoners.

The Gusen file that Mattogno relied on shows the amount of coke in the form of wheelbarrows used to transport it to the ovens. <sup>[148]</sup> At the top of the page it states "Karren Koks," or wheelbarrows of coke. Below this heading it states that one wheelbarrow equals 60 kilograms. However, this weight is only stated for the period from September 26 to October 15, 1941. During this period 203 bodies were cremated using 153 wheelbarrows. This means that 9180 kilograms (60 kilograms times 153 barrows) incinerated 203 bodies at 45 kilograms per body. The 9180 number appears on a backup page of this file where the 153 wheelbarrows are multiplied by 60 kilograms. There is some reason, however, to suspect that each wheelbarrow did not contain 60 kilograms of coke but that this was a generic number based on the theoretical maximum that each delivery could hold. In other words, 60 kilograms was attached to each wheelbarrow regardless of actual weight. For example, on October 3 eleven bodies were incinerated using 13 wheelbarrows. At 60 kilograms per wheelbarrow it would have taken 71 kilograms per body. However, on October 15, 33 bodies were incinerated using 16 wheelbarrows, or 29 kilograms per body. <sup>[149]</sup>

The ovens underwent an extensive overhaul from October 16 to 22. The period of time that Mattogno was analyzing, October 31 to November 12, shows that 345 wheelbarrows were used to incinerate 677 corpses. However, unlike the information prior to the repair of the ovens which attached a weight to each wheelbarrow, and an aggregate weight to all 153 wheelbarrows, there is no such information on wheelbarrow weight after the overhaul. Mattogno just assumed that each wheelbarrow

weighed 60 kilograms without informing his readers that there could be problems in such an assumption and that even the original weight of 60 kilograms per wheelbarrow for the pre-overhaul ovens could be erroneous.

Nevertheless, the Gusen file does provide some very valuable information. It shows that the more efficiently the ovens burned fuel the more bodies that could be burned in a much faster period of time. Thus, for the period prior to the ovens' overhaul, only 203 bodies could be burned in a 10 day period from September 26 to October 15 using 153 wheelbarrows of coke. However, over a continuous 13 day period after the overhaul was completed, 677 bodies were burned using 365 wheelbarrows of coke. It was during this period that 94 bodies were burned in two muffles on November 7 using 45 wheelbarrows of coke and 72 bodies burned the following day using 35 wheelbarrows. The implications of this fact for the 46 ovens in the four new crematoria at Auschwitz are important because the figures show that the more efficient the fuel usage the faster the bodies burned.

Mattogno admitted that the triple muffle ovens of Kremas II and III and eight muffle ovens of Kremas IV and V could burn bodies with greater fuel efficiency than the double muffle ovens of Crema I, but would not admit that this translated into faster body burning. He stated that the triple muffle furnace could burn a body with one third less coke than was needed in the double muffle furnace. He calculated the amount needed to be 16.7 to 20.3 kilograms per body. The eight muffle furnace could burn bodies at about half the fuel needed in the double muffle furnace, or 12.5 to 15.25 kilograms of coke per body. <sup>[150]</sup> Mattogno gave some calculations as to the reason for this phenomenon without mentioning that his figures are loosely based on data provided to the Bauleitung by Topf.

The only authoritative information available on the fuel efficiency of the triple and eight muffle ovens was provided to the Bauleitung by Topf. On March 17, 1943 the Bauleitung issued a memo under the heading: "Estimation of coke usage for Crematorium II K L [concentration camp] according to data [Angaben] from Topf and Sons [maker of the ovens] from March 11, 1943." The memo goes on to describe the data in terms of fires. Crematoria II and III each needed ten fires for 350 kilograms of usage per hour. However, the number could be reduced by one third if they were used on a continuous basis, which meant that each crematorium would use 2800 kilograms of coke in a 12 hour period. In the eight muffle furnace the fuel savings were even greater. When those ovens were worked continuously they would burn 1120 kilograms of coke in a 12 hour period. This means that all four crematoria could operate on 7840 kilograms of coke in a 12 hour period (2800 each for Kremas II and III and 1120 each for Kremas IV and V). The Bauleitung concludes: "These are top achievements. It is not possible to give a number for usage for the year because it is not known how many hours or days it will be needed to heat it." <sup>[151]</sup>

Mattogno represented this information as meaning that "Crematoria II

and III could have cremated about 240 bodies a day, and Crematoria IV and V about 130 - a total of some 370 bodies. The estimate given in the memo thus indicates that a daily average of 370 emaciated adult corpses were expected for cremation." <sup>[152]</sup> This is simply a false characterization of the data. There is no mention of the number of bodies that could be burned. The key fact is that the fuel data given by Topf is based on the number of hours worked irrespective of the amount of bodies burned. This fact caused many problems for Mattogno because, as noted earlier, estimates on the number of bodies which could be burned in a ten hour period in one oven ranged as high as 36, and Topf engineer Prüfer had even estimated 800 bodies in five triple muffle ovens in a 24 hour period. The real dilemma for Mattogno was in the Bauleitung figures given on June 28, 1943, discussed earlier, that 4416 bodies could be burned in a 24 hour period in the four new crematoria, or 2208 in a 12 hour period. When the 7840 kilograms of coke usage for a 12 hour period are divided by the 2208 bodies which could be cremated in a 12 hour period, the average comes out to about 3.5 kilograms per body. Mattogno never addressed this issue directly. However, he was aware of the problem that the June 28 Bauleitung figures could pose. To deal with this problem he reverted to a common denier tactic. He announced that "this document is a fabrication." <sup>[153]</sup> Thus, any document which deniers do not like is commonly explained as the result of forgery and conspiracy. Mattogno did not say who might have "fabricated" this report.

The issue is whether the crematoria were capable of burning a body in 15 minutes, the amount of time suggested in the Bauleitung report of June 28, 1943. As was noted earlier, an oven could not incinerate a body in 15 minutes with any known technology of the period, but a different picture emerges when multiple body burnings are considered. The information from Dachau, cited earlier, mentions burning 7 to 9 bodies simultaneously in a period of two hours. In the Hartheim Castle in Austria, where there was a gas chamber, a crematorium worker testified after the war that two to eight bodies would be simultaneously cremated. <sup>[154]</sup>

The practice of multiple cremations was known outside of Germany well before World War II. In Osaka, Japan in the 1880s there were 20 cremation ovens each of which could incinerate three bodies simultaneously in a period of four hours. <sup>[155]</sup> In 1911, a Japanese oven was presented at the International Exhibition of Hygiene in Dresden, Germany which could burn five bodies simultaneously in a period of 2 to 2 1/2 hours. <sup>[156]</sup> This history reinforces the feasibility of being able to burn multiple bodies in technologically advanced Germany 30 years later. The fact that ovens are not built for the purpose of multiple cremations is not determinative as to whether the practice is actually carried out. The best illustration is the United States where the practice is illegal. There was a major scandal in the early 1980s involving mortuaries in Southern California. Employees of a facility testified that it was common practice to burn several bodies together. An embalmer stated that he saw five bodies in one retort (an oven) while another saw seven or eight people

being cremated simultaneously. The founder of one of the United States's first cremation companies stated that the burning of several bodies simultaneously results in their not burning "uniformly and the ashes come out very dark." [157] Interestingly, deniers are often critical of eyewitness accounts that describe black smoke belching from the crematoria. Burning that produced black ashes may very well have led to black particulates in the smoke.

There was a great deal of testimony about the practice of multiple burnings at Auschwitz. Alter Feinsilber, a Sonderkommando - one who removed the dead bodies from the gas chambers to be cremated - stated that five bodies "burned more quickly in that quantity." [158] The SS guard Pery Broad wrote that four or five bodies could be held in each oven in Kremas II and III. [159] Sonderkommando Filip Müller stated that three or four could be incinerated at a time. [160] Sonderkommando Szlama Dragon testified that three bodies were incinerated at a time. [161] Two prisoners who escaped in April 1944, whose report was based on information received from Sonderkommandos, stated that three bodies would be burned at a time. [162] Mieczyslaw Morawa, a worker in the crematoria, testified that tests done on the Birkenau crematoria before they became fully operational showed that three bodies could be simultaneously burned in a period of 40 minutes in each of the 15 ovens in Krema II. He stated that these tests were conducted with a stopwatch by the SS. [163]

Mattogno was aware that the testimony about multiple body burnings would cause him trouble in making his coke arguments. He argued that such a procedure produced no benefits either in the time a body could be burned or the fuel savings. Thus, he argued that multiple burnings would simply take two times longer to burn two bodies which were simultaneously introduced and require two times more fuel. His argument was based on the information for the double muffle ovens in Gusen. He stated that if there were multiple burnings it would have occurred in Gusen on November 8, 1941, the day that 72 bodies were burned. [164] Recall from the prior section of this study that Mattogno claimed that on November 8 it took 24 hours and 30 minutes to burn 72 bodies, but that the actual time was between 16 and 17 hours. Actually, the Gusen information for November 7 which shows 94 bodies burned in 19 hours and 45 minutes, or about 25 minutes per body, would have been more compelling information for the argument he was trying to make. However, he was unwilling to admit that a body could be burned in 25 minutes under any circumstances.

The problem with Mattogno's argument is that we can be fairly certain that there were no multiple burnings on these days. An engineer's report for November 7 and 8 shows four hours of work was done on these ovens on each day, with four hours of work on November 6 and an additional 8 hours on November 9. These facts mean that there were repairs on the ovens on the same days they were burning bodies. [165] Under these

circumstances it is highly unlikely that multiple burnings would have occurred. Mattogno also examined this file but was unable to find any evidence of multiple burnings. As was noted in the prior section of this study (see discussion at [footnote 135](#)), Prüfer's estimate of 53 bodies per muffle in a 24 hour period is a rate within the range of the 47 bodies per muffle burned on November 7 in a period of 19 hours and 45 minutes. As was noted, this rate was most probably achieved by introducing a body into a muffle before the prior body had been fully consumed, which is not the same as multiple burnings. This possibility appears to have been envisaged in the Topf instructions for the Auschwitz ovens discussed earlier. (See the discussion at [footnote 108](#).)

The most complete account of the operation of these ovens was given by Sonderkommando Henryk Tauber in his deposition of May 1945. Auschwitz was liberated in January 1945. It is as close as is available to a contemporaneous document. Tauber began work in Krema I in February 1943 but was eventually moved to Kremas II and III. He also worked in Krema V. Mattogno never addressed Tauber's testimony. Tauber stated that it was common to burn five bodies simultaneously in an oven. He also stated that it took about an hour and a half to incinerate five corpses being burned simultaneously. <sup>[166]</sup> This time period is not unrealistic. Recall that it was earlier noted that a Japanese oven could burn five bodies simultaneously in a period of 2 to 2 1/2 hours in 1911.

Tauber also noted that under the right conditions it was possible to burn eight bodies simultaneously in an oven. He mentions the case when there were eight emaciated corpses. He also states that when children were incinerated the Sonderkommando would burn the bodies of five or six children with two adults. <sup>[167]</sup> He even described how the children's bodies were placed in the furnace to prevent their falling into the ash bin. <sup>[168]</sup>

Tauber also addresses the issue of fuel usage in the burning of the bodies. His testimony is important in this respect because he shows that it was an issue and the authorities had developed methods of dealing with it. He explains:

As I have already said, there were five furnaces in Crematorium II, each with three muffles for cremating the corpses and heated by two coke-fired hearths. The fire flues of these hearths came out above the ash [collection] boxes of the two side muffles. Thus the flames went first round the two side muffles then heated the center one, from where the combustion gasses were led out below the furnace, between the two firing hearths. Thanks to this arrangement, the incineration process for the corpses in the side muffles differed from that of the center muffle. The corpses of ... wasted people with no fat burned rapidly in the side muffles and slowly in the center one. Conversely the corpses of people gassed on arrival, not being wasted, burned better in

the center muffle. During the incineration of such corpses, we used the coke only to light the fire of the furnace initially, for fatty corpses burned of their own accord thanks to the combustion of the body fat. [\[169\]](#)

Tauber's explanation of using the body fat of fat corpses as a source of fuel was emphasized elsewhere in his testimony. Thus early on he mentioned that "[t]he process of incineration is accelerated by the combustion of human fat which thus produces additional heat." This method was used in Crematoria II and III. Later on he mentioned that when a fat body "was charged into hot furnace, fat immediately began to flow into the ash bin, where it caught fire and started the combustion of the body." [\[170\]](#)

Using the body fat of corpulent victims as a fuel was something that would require first hand knowledge. Tauber was a shoemaker and would not have been in a position to know this without actually observing it. The issue is how credible was this testimony. The German engineer Rudolf Jakobskotter, who Mattogno had cited as an authority on cremation ovens, wrote that body fat produces heat for burning in an oven. [\[171\]](#) Mattogno did not directly address the issue of using body fat in the ovens as a source of fuel. He had initially dismissed testimony about using body fat in cremation pits to accelerate the burning process. However, he subsequently withdrew his initial objection by writing that "I have discovered that such a procedure can be made to work if done in a determined fashion..." [\[172\]](#) Tauber had also discussed how body fat was used in the cremation pits to accelerate burning. [\[173\]](#)

The process of using body fat in an oven was also described by Sonderkommando Filip Müller, who noted that the authorities had found ways to place the bodies in the ovens to maximize fuel efficiency.

In the course of these experiments corpses were selected according to different criteria and then cremated. Thus, the corpses of two Mussulmans [camp slang for emaciated prisoners] were cremated together with those of two children or the bodies of two well nourished men together with that of an emaciated woman, each load consisting of three, or sometimes four, bodies. Members of these groups [SS men and civilian visitors to the crematoria] were especially interested in the amount of coke required to burn corpses of any particular category...

Afterwards all corpses were divided into the above mentioned four categories, the criterion being the amount of coke needed to reduce them to ashes. Thus it was decreed that the most economical and fuel saving procedure would be to burn the bodies of a well-nourished man and an emaciated woman, or vice versa, together with that of a child, because, as the experiments had established, in this combination, once

they had caught fire, the dead would continue to burn without further coke being required." [174]

Similarly, Auschwitz camp commandant, Rudolph Hoess testified at Nuremberg that three bodies would be burned simultaneously and that the bodies of fat people burned faster. [175] He also mentioned the burning of three bodies simultaneously in his memoirs, [176] the accuracy of which is the subject of [another study](#) on the THHP website.

The Tauber deposition was given and Müller memoirs written years before anyone knew that coke would be an issue. Both accounts clearly show that fuel was a serious consideration in the running of the crematoria and that the authorities had found ways to deal with the problem.

Wood was also another fuel source available for the ovens. Topf had made ovens which could be fueled with wood but they were not as efficient as the coke models. [177] Tauber stated that wood and straw were used for the ovens when coke was in short supply. [178] Mattogno located records for the delivery of wood made in September and October 1943. He argued that the amount of wood delivered was the equivalent of 21.5 metric tons of coke, not nearly enough to solve the problem. [179] However, Mattogno is familiar enough with the Auschwitz surroundings to know that the camp authorities were not dependent on formal deliveries of wood. Photos of the Birkenau area during this period where the crematoria were located show it surrounded by a heavily forested area. [180] In fact, there was an abundant supply of wood in the surrounding area. It was only necessary to go out and cut it down. Photos of Krema III after its liberation show large piles of cut wood on its outside grounds. [181] A report on the strength of the crematoria detail for August 1944 shows 30 wood unloaders [Holzablander] attached to 870 fire stokers divided into two 12 hour shifts. [182]

## **Absence of Records**

One of the points made earlier in this study is that no records have surfaced from Auschwitz documenting how these ovens worked. This should indeed be considered strange because there are thousands of documents in hundreds of files which contain the correspondence of the Bauleitung on plans for the crematoria before and during the construction stage. One would think that considering all of the effort that went into building the crematoria and the ovens that the camp authorities would have wanted to know how they functioned. Even in Gusen, with only two ovens, some records have survived, even though they are only for a limited period of time. Yet there has not as yet surfaced from any source a contemporaneous documented record of even a single cremation at Auschwitz. Therefore, only one of two conclusions can be reached.

Either no one was cremated at Auschwitz or the records were deliberately destroyed.

In his memoirs, Auschwitz camp commandant Rudolf Hoess wrote that he was ordered by Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler to destroy all information about the number of victims murdered after each action. He states that he personally destroyed the evidence and that department heads did the same. He notes that while some information may have escaped destruction, they "could not give enough information to make a calculation." [183] Auschwitz SS guard Pery Broad wrote of destroying records which documented mass murder. [184] Henryk Tauber recounted how he witnessed truckloads of documents which dealt with deaths being destroyed from time to time in the incinerator in the Crematorium. [185] Tauber also noted that the shift boss on the crematorium detail kept records on the number of victims murdered. These numbers were checked by an SS man who removed the notebook with this information after each transport was cremated. [186] Tadeusz Paczula, who recorded deaths in the death books, writes that records of those burned in Krema I were kept in a volume entitled "The Book of the Burned" [Verbrennungsbuch]. [187] Paczula also notes that the incriminating files in these matters were burned in the crematorium. [188]

It is known that the destruction of incriminating documents in these matters was a policy of the Germans. On March 15, 1945 the Gauleiter and Commissioner for Reich Defense, Sprenger, issued a secret order which stated:

All files, particularly the secret ones, are to be destroyed completely. The secret files about ... the installations and deterring work in the concentration camps must be destroyed at all costs. Also, the extermination of some families, etc. These files must under no circumstances fall into the hands of the enemy, since after all they were secret orders by the Führer. [189]

In fact, the absence of any records dealing with body disposal matters at Auschwitz is perhaps the best evidence of their destruction. Considering the fact that there is at least some information for Gusen, it is reasonable to conclude that there must have been data for Auschwitz. This causes problems for researchers because we have no information on how the triple muffle and eight muffle ovens in Birkenau actually functioned. The Bauleitung memo cited earlier on the amount of coke required for these ovens, which was based on data supplied by Topf, is the only contemporaneous information available. The only other comprehensive information available is the Tauber deposition.

The destruction by the camp authorities of these documents has proved very beneficial for deniers like Mattogno because it has allowed them to engage in all kinds of speculations without any concrete data. Nevertheless, as will be seen, Mattogno ended up discrediting many of

his key arguments by offering an alternative method of body disposal at Auschwitz not dependent on the ovens.

## Open Air Burnings, 1942 and 1943

A principal method for disposing of the bodies of mass murder victims was by open air burnings. The method was used in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp by the authorities when high death rates were occurring. <sup>[190]</sup> The practice was used in the Majdanek concentration camp, where gassings and mass murder occurred. <sup>[191]</sup> The Germans also used open air burnings to dispose of their own citizens who were killed as a result of the Allied bombings. There are photos of German fatalities from the Allied bombing of Hamburg being burned in pits and on pyres. <sup>[192]</sup>

The method of open air burnings was used in the Operation Reinhard camps of Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka, where the victims were gassed and burned. Until recently, the only surviving evidence from these camps was eyewitness testimony from perpetrators and victims to the burnings. <sup>[193]</sup> Nearly all of the incriminating evidence was destroyed. Odilo Globocnik, who had overall responsibility for Operation Reinhard, wrote a "Top Secret" memo on January 5, 1944, after these camps had been destroyed, which states that

[w]ith regard to the complete final accounts of "Operation Reinhard" I must add that all vouchers should be destroyed as soon as possible, as has been done in the case of all other documents pertaining to this operation. <sup>[194]</sup>

Just as with Auschwitz, the most incriminating evidence was destroyed. However, recent excavations on the site of the Belzec extermination camp by an archaeological team revealed mass graves of thousands of bodies that the Germans did not incinerate, as well as ashes of incinerated bodies. <sup>[195]</sup>

Another document that has come to light recently is a daily report from the military commander in the General Government, an administrative unit in German occupied Poland, from October 1942 about Treblinka. The report states:

Supreme Command ... informs that the Jews in Treblinka are not adequately buried and that, as a result, an unbearable body stench befouls the air. <sup>[196]</sup>

Treblinka camp commandant Franz Stangl testified at his trial that dead bodies were excavated at the beginning of 1943 to be burned along with those of recently gassed prisoners. <sup>[197]</sup>

Mattogno's journey into the open air burnings began with a problem he had with coke consumption. In his 1994 monograph, he did not address the issue of what happened to those registered prisoners who had died prior to the building of the four new crematoria. Recall that he was arguing that only registered prisoners died in the camp and no non-registered prisoners were brought there to be murdered. The problem is with those registered prisoners. The Auschwitz death books show that from March 1942 through February 1943 about 51,000 registered prisoners died while the available information - which, as noted earlier, may be incomplete - shows 373.5 tons of coke delivered for the three double muffle furnaces during this period of time. <sup>[198]</sup> This averages to about 7.3 kilograms per body. Recall that Mattogno argued that it took 30 kilograms of coke to cremate a body in a double muffle furnace. Even within this information there are discrepancies. For example, in March 1942, 39 tons of coke were delivered and there were about 3000 deaths. <sup>[199]</sup> This comes to about 13 kilograms per body. In July 1942, 4124 prisoners died <sup>[200]</sup> while there were 16.5 tons of coke delivered for a little more than 4 kilograms per body. The biggest discrepancy was in October 1942 when there were 5900 registered deaths and only 15 tons of coke delivered for slightly more than 3 kilograms per body.

Mattogno also faced another problem. He had accepted as valid coke deliveries of 93.6 tons for the period November 1941 through January 1942. <sup>[201]</sup> These figures were published by Holocaust denier David Irving. As was noted earlier, Irving refuses to offer any substantiation for the coke numbers he published. The problem Mattogno had is with the number of deaths which occurred at Auschwitz during this period of time. There were 6745 deaths of Soviet prisoners and about 4000 deaths of other prisoners. <sup>[202]</sup> This means that when the alleged coke figures are divided by the number of deaths, the consumption comes out to 8.7 kilograms of coke per body.

Mattogno never admitted directly that the above numbers were an issue. However, he was no doubt aware that at some point a researcher would compare the deaths of registered prisoners for the periods of time under discussion with the coke deliveries and conclude that his thesis did not work. Therefore, he did something no other denier had ever done: he admitted that there were open air burnings of bodies. His only other choice was to admit that these bodies were being disposed of in the ovens. However, if he did this he would invalidate his coke limitation arguments. His source for outdoor burnings was camp historian Danuta Czech. Mattogno wrote: "According to Danuta Czech's *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939-1945*, the incineration of exhumed bodies began on September 21, which seems quite credible, and ended in November." <sup>[203]</sup> The problem is that Mattogno deliberately concealed the source of Czech's information. She was relying for this information on the memoirs of the Auschwitz camp commandant, Rudolf Hoess. <sup>[204]</sup> As has been [noted elsewhere](#), Hoess's memoirs are extremely reliable in that

there is a good deal of independent documentation for most of the major statements he made in them. [\[205\]](#) Since his memoirs confirm that mass murder was taking place at Auschwitz and the means by which it was being carried out, deniers have excoriated them as being false. Obviously, therefore, Mattogno could not quote them directly. Nevertheless, what is particularly interesting is that he found them as reliable as many historians when attempting to solve a problem.

However, Mattogno ignored the principal context in which Czech was relying on these memoirs and the context in which Hoess was presenting this information about open air burnings. Hoess was writing about the bodies of gassed victims. He wrote the following:

During the spring of 1942 we were still dealing with small police actions. But during the summer the transports became more numerous and we were forced to build another extermination site [in addition to Crematorium I] ... Five barracks were built, two near Bunker I and three near Bunker II. Bunker II was the larger one. It held about 1200 people. As late as the summer of 1942 the bodies were still buried in mass graves. Not until the end of the summer [September] of 1942 did we start burning them. At first we put 2000 bodies on a large pile of wood. Then we opened up the mass graves and burned the new bodies on top of the old ones from the earlier burials... The burning went on continuously - all day and all night. By the end of November all the mass graves were cleared. The number of buried bodies in the mass graves was 107,000. This number contains not only the first Jewish transports which were gassed when we started the burnings but also the bodies of prisoners who died in the main camp [Auschwitz I] during the winter of 1941 and 1942 because the crematory was out of order. The prisoners who died at Birkenau are included in this number. [\[206\]](#)

The two bunkers were located in a wooded area, several hundred yards apart, behind Birkenau, not far from where Kremas IV and V would later be built. They were known as the Red Bunker, or Bunker I, and the White Bunker, or Bunker 2. The five barracks mentioned by Hoess are referred to in a lengthy Bauleitung report on the camp from July 15, 1942 as "5 barracks for prisoners (special treatment)

[Sonderbehandlung]." [\[207\]](#) As [noted earlier](#), special treatment was a word used for murder. French researcher Jean Claude Pressac found in the archives of the Auschwitz State Museum that every document in a 120 item of inventory of material needed for the completion of the four crematoria in Birkenau for the period December 10 to 18, 1942 was captioned: "Concerning Prisoner of War Camp Auschwitz (Carrying Out of Special Treatment)" [Durchführung der Sonderbehandlung]. [\[208\]](#) Similar documents mentioning "special treatment" in connection with the Bauleitung have now surfaced in the Auschwitz Archives in

Moscow. <sup>[209]</sup> The connection of "special treatment" to murdered prisoners being cremated is mentioned in a memo stamped "Secret" from the Gestapo headquarters in Dusseldorf. The subject of the memo is "Special Treatment for Foreign Workers." The relevant portion reads:

...I request that those persons subjected to special treatment be sent to the crematorium to be cremated if possible...for purposes of intimidation, the proclamation by means of posters of the execution of the death sentence in the labor camp will be continued. <sup>[210]</sup>

The time line for Hoess's reference to dead prisoners in the main camp as being buried in the open is unclear as far as these deaths occurring in winter of 1941 and 1942 is concerned. He may have been referring to the first two weeks of February because the coke figures start in the middle of the month. If Mattogno's assertion that there were coke deliveries for November 1941 through January 1942 is correct, then the first half of February would be the time period. On the other hand, if there were no coke deliveries then the ovens of Krema I might have been down for two or three months. As was noted earlier, there are no coke figures for any period prior to mid-February 1942 - unless we are willing to accept Mattogno's November 1941 through January 1942 figures as being accurate.

Hoess's reference to the dead prisoners from Birkenau as being buried and then burned in the open is also unclear. Is he referring to all of the Birkenau prisoners who died in 1942 or only those who died in the period he defines as the winter of 1941 and 1942? Mattogno argued that all dead Birkenau prisoners from 1942 were buried in mass graves so he could salvage his coke arguments. <sup>[211]</sup> He did not, of course, mention that his source was Hoess - and it is not even certain that this is what Hoess meant.

The issue of how many prisoners were cremated in Krema I during the period which preceded the building of the four Birkenau crematoria - prior to March 1943 - is problematical. Any registered prisoner who was gassed in one of the two bunkers was obviously burned in the open. Many registered prisoners were killed by phenol injection in the hospital of the main camp where Krema I was located. There were also non-registered prisoners killed in the gas chamber of Krema I. According to Sonderkommando Alter Feinsilber, about 250 non-registered prisoners were brought into the main camp on a weekly basis and shot. <sup>[212]</sup> We do not know how many other non-registered prisoners were killed in the gas chamber of the main camp and therefore how much coke was used to cremate each prisoner. Birkenau was about a mile and a half from the main camp and it is possible that any registered prisoner who died there was burned in the open prior to the building of the four crematoria. There is no concrete information on the issue.

Hoess's account of the outdoor burnings resulting mainly from the

gassings in the two bunkers has been confirmed in the memoirs of Auschwitz SS private Pery Broad, which were written at about the same time as Hoess's. <sup>[213]</sup> These body burning activities and the context in which they occurred were also confirmed by Sonderkommandos Alter Feinsilber, <sup>[214]</sup> Szlama Dragon, <sup>[215]</sup> Henryk Tauber, <sup>[216]</sup> and Filip Müller; <sup>[217]</sup> and two prisoners who escaped in April 1944 and filed a report published with the War Refugee Board. <sup>[218]</sup> The gassings in the two bunkers were also confirmed by French prisoner doctor Andre Lettich, <sup>[219]</sup> and the post war testimonies of Auschwitz SS doctor Johann Kremer and SS men Karl Höbinger and Richard Böck. <sup>[220]</sup> Mattogno attempted to coopt all of this evidence to make it seem that the outdoor burnings were only of registered prisoners who had died of typhus.

However, Mattogno had created a dilemma for his argument. He had now identified a body disposal method, confirmed by many witnesses, which was not dependent on the ovens. This means that even if every false limitation Mattogno was placing on the ovens was correct, it made no difference. Outdoor burnings were not dependent on coke and there was no need to worry about breakdowns or maintenance. Therefore, bodies could be burned in an unlimited quantity. This being the case, there was no reason that the number of bodies of murdered prisoners, which exceeded one million, could not be disposed of. In order to extricate himself from his own argument, he then claimed that the open air burnings ceased when the new crematoria became operational. He had to do this or else admit that his arguments about the limitations he was placing on the ovens were irrelevant. Mattogno's source was denier critic Jean Claude Pressac, whose writings he had been attempting to discredit for some years. <sup>[221]</sup> However, Mattogno had carefully omitted to mention the context in which Pressac's remarks were made. Pressac had reproduced the testimony of Sonderkommando Szlama Dragon, who had discussed the gassing and burning of prisoners. Dragon then stated:

After the construction at Birkenau of [C]rematorium II, the [undressing] huts situated next to Bunker 2 [the second of two gassing bunkers which is also known as the "White Bunker"] were also dismantled. The pits were filled with earth and the surface was smoothed. The bunker itself was kept until the end. It remained unused for a long time and then was started up again for gassing the Hungarian Jews [beginning in May 1944]. They then built new huts and dug new pits. <sup>[222]</sup>

Thus, for all of his pseudotechnical wizardry Mattogno was, in the final analysis, forced to rely on the Hoess memoirs, via Danuta Czech, and Dragon's testimony, via Pressac. However, he could not reveal the true sources for his argument or the context in which Hoess and Dragon made their comments. One major problem Mattogno had with Dragon's testimony is that he specifically mentions that Bunker 2 - also known as

the White Bunker or Bunker V in some of the literature - was reactivated for the Hungarian operation in May 1944. Mattogno was arguing that no open air burnings took place after the new crematoria became activated.

Dragon's statement that the open air burnings near the White Bunker ceased with the building of Crematorium II until the Hungarian operation was started needs some further comment. According to Hoess who, as noted above, Mattogno found very credible in these matters, the White Bunker was kept as a standby when Crematoria II and III broke down. <sup>[223]</sup> In his Nuremberg testimony Hoess stated that the two bunkers "were also used later on whenever the crematoria were insufficient to handle the work." <sup>[224]</sup> His testimony only differs from his memoirs in that in the former he mentions both bunkers as being active when needed whereas in his memoirs he only mentions the White Bunker.

The White Bunker was in a wooded area outside the Birkenau camp. As will be shown later on, it can be seen on a photograph taken of the camp in 1944. Even Mattogno admits that there were four huge pits in the area used for body disposal - though he did not admit the existence of the White Bunker. <sup>[225]</sup> The continued usage of this area after the building of the Crematoria is suggested by the testimony of Soviet prisoner Nicolai Vassiliev at the Auschwitz trials in Germany in the mid-1960s. He stated that in the summer of 1943 about 300 Soviet prisoners were "exterminated," in a wooded area outside of the camp. This description fits the area where the White Bunker was located. <sup>[226]</sup> Another useful piece of information is a report from the Bauleitung on June 13, 1943. It states that doors for Krema II are "urgently needed for the execution of the special measures... Likewise, the completion of windows for the reception building and the doors for 5 [barracks] for the accommodation of prisoners [Häftlingsunterkünfte] is urgently required for the same reasons." <sup>[227]</sup> There is no further information about the five barracks in the memo. Recall, however, that Hoess mentioned five barracks in his memoirs for the two bunkers in the area where prisoners were gassed, and this is the same number referred to for "special treatment" in the Bauleitung memo of July 15, 1942.

It would appear that the five barracks in the June 1943 memo are the same ones used for undressing in the areas where the two bunkers were located. Thus, their continued usage after the crematoria were built and before the Hungarian operation was undertaken is strongly suggested. Moreover, the continued usage after the building of the four crematoria is the only explanation why the White Bunker was not destroyed until the camp authorities ceased all gassings. Bunker I, the Red Bunker, was dismantled at some point - though it is not known exactly when. The only conceivable reason for not destroying the White Bunker was because its continued usage was envisaged and indeed occurred for some periods following the completion of the crematoria up until the time of the Hungarian operation. The structure could not have been kept after the building of the crematoria for the express purpose of the Hungarian

operation because Germany did not seize control of Hungary until March 1944, one year after the first of the crematoria were completed. At the time the first of the crematoria went into service, the Auschwitz authorities could not have known that the Hungarian deportations would take place. As will be seen in the next part of this study, there is photographic evidence documenting the existence of the White Bunker.

As was noted earlier, Mattogno claimed that Crematorium II was down for 115 days from March 25 to July 18, 1943 and Crematorium III was down for 60 days in 1944, meaning that there were potentially 175 days following March 1943 when open air burnings could have occurred in the area of the bunkers. However, it was also noted that there is no support for Mattogno's assertion about the down time of these ovens. [228] Nevertheless, it was noted that Krema II was down for a month from May to June 1943. [229] It is also reasonable to assume that there were periods when the ovens did not work to full capacity because of repairs or other factors. This interpretation would be consistent with Hoess's comments on the issue. On the other hand, the two prisoners who escaped in April 1944, before the White Bunker was reactivated for the Hungarian operation in mid-May 1944, state that the gassings and burnings were discontinued there with the inauguration of the new crematoria. [230] Thus, their version agrees with Dragon's.

As will be seen in the next part of this study, the White Bunker was used for the Hungarian transports which began to arrive in mid-May 1944. How often it was used between March 1943 and May 1944 is not known. The testimony suggests that it was closed down for a period of time, and reactivated in May 1944. The exact period of time it was closed down between March 1943 and May 1944 cannot be stated with certainty. Was it used when needed, as suggested by Hoess, or was closed down for 14 months, as stated by the escapees and Dragon? It is possible to reconcile both accounts by acknowledging that the White Bunker was officially shut down in March 1943, but that the area surrounding the bunker was still used for open air burnings when problems arose with the crematoria. Mattogno's attempt to have the bunkers permanently closed down in March 1943 is based on testimony which: (1) he has taken out of context, (2) contradicts the arguments he was making about there being no mass murder and gassing in Auschwitz, and (3) for which he refused to quote the original sources for his claims. The key point is that the outdoor facilities were always there if needed, as suggested by Hoess, Vassiliev and the June 1943 memo, and that the camp authorities need not be hampered by any limitations that might have been imposed by the new crematoria assuming there were such limitations.

## **Open Air Burnings and Photos, 1944**

The issue of open air burnings in 1944 centers around the deportation of Hungarian Jews, which lasted from mid-May to mid-July. Deniers claim

that no extermination of the Hungarian Jews occurred. However, what actually happened to the Hungarian Jews is a topic that most deniers avoid.

The fate of the Hungarian Jews was traced in a series of memos by Germany's Plenipotentiary to Hungary, Edmund Veessenmayer. On April 23, he wrote a secret memo that negotiations about the Jewish deportations had started.

They call for a daily shipment of 3000 Jews, mainly from the Carpathia area, beginning on 15 May. If transportation facilities permit, there will later on also be simultaneous shipments from other ghettos. Auschwitz is designated as receiving station. [231]

The actual deportations, however, far exceeded the 3000 daily because Jews were being shipped from all areas, as anticipated by Veessenmayer, not only Carpathia. Laszlo Ferenczy, the Hungarian official in charge of ghettoization and concentration of Jews prior to the deportations, sent a memo on May 29, 1944 which stated that up to May 28, 184,049 Hungarian Jews in 58 transports all went through Auschwitz. [232]

Veessenmayer wrote nine memos from May 23 to July 6 detailing the total Jews deported ranging from 110,000 in the earliest memo to 423,000 in the latter. All of these memos identify the area of destination as the Reich. [233] Auschwitz was in that part of what is now Poland which was then known as part of the Reich. The final number of deportees was cited by Veessenmayer in a memo of July 11 as being 437,402. [234] Laszlo Ferenczy, the Hungarian official in charge of the deportations, also kept a list of the deportees. His figures show 434,351 Hungarian Jews deported. [235] Germany's Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, publicly stated that 430,000 Hungarian had been deported up until July 9. "The Jews are taken over at the Hungarian frontier and up to this point the carrying into effect of the provisions of the anti Jewish measures..." [236]

The problem for deniers is that Auschwitz registration records only show 26,000 Jews as being registered while an additional 20,000 who were not registered were classified as being in transit to other concentration camps. [237] Therefore, about 90% of the deportees are unaccounted for. What happened to them? There have been two diametrically opposing and contradictory explanations. Arthur Butz claimed that most of the deportations never took place and that the Veessenmayer memos which traced the number of deportees were forgeries. [238] Carlo Mattogno, on the other hand, did not dispute the fact that the deportations took place, but claimed that the Hungarian Jews were used for labor at places other than Auschwitz. He did not say where these places might have been. [239] Both of these claims are thoroughly examined elsewhere. [240]

As far as the author has been able to ascertain, no other denier has adopted Butz's thesis. Rather, most deniers tend to avoid a discussion of what actually happened to Hungary's Jews. Suffice it to say here that the major source upon which Butz relied for his argument actually confirmed that the deportations had taken place, something with which Butz does not appear to have been familiar. [241]

While Mattogno's thesis is extensively dealt with elsewhere, it can easily be dismissed on the basis of a German report dated August 15, 1944 on the number of all prisoners in German concentration camps. The report states that 90,000 Hungarian Jews had arrived in the concentration camps along with 522,000 other mostly non-Jewish prisoners who had been added to the existing population. [242] The 90,000 number appears to be twice as high as the actual number. [243] The important point, however, is that even if it is correct, about 80% of the Hungarian Jews are missing. Since they were not being interned, what happened to them? It should be noted that Mattogno was familiar with this report since he had cited it in another context in a study not dealing specifically with Hungarian Jews. [244] He did not mention the report when addressing the specific issue of the Hungarian Jews seven years later because it disproves his argument that they were somewhere other than Auschwitz. [245]

As was noted earlier, most of the primary evidence in the form of documents for the extermination of the Jews at Auschwitz was destroyed by the Germans. Deniers have argued that approximately 400,000 Jews could not have been exterminated in a two month period because of the body disposal problem. Some try to argue that it was not possible to cremate so many people in the ovens in such a short period of time. No one familiar with the problem argues that the crematoria could have disposed of so many people in a two month period. In fact, the capacity of the crematoria was limited at this time. The eight ovens of Krema IV went down permanently in May 1943 while the six ovens of Krema I were withdrawn in July 1943. The eight ovens of Krema V functioned off and on during 1944. This means that there were only 30 reliable ovens operating in Kremas II and III during the Hungarian operation.

The eyewitness testimony from those who were there states that there were two areas utilized for open air burnings. One was the area near the White Bunker which, as noted earlier, had been utilized in 1942 and 1943. It was reactivated on a full time basis for the Hungarian operation. The other area was located behind Krema V where pits were dug to burn the gassed. Hoess mentions pits in the wooded area outside of the camp where the White Bunker was located and pits near Krema V. [246] Sonderkommando Henryk Tauber told of the pits dug along Krema V and the wooded area near the White Bunker. [247] Sonderkommando Filip Müller wrote of the cremation pits at the White Bunker and Krema V. [248] Sonderkommando Alter Feinsilber testified as to the pits near the Bunker and Krema V "which were expressly dug to burn the Hungarian Jews." [249] Two prisoners who escaped from Auschwitz on

May 27, 1944, while the Hungarian operation was taking place, spoke of pits near the White Bunker that were 50 by 100 feet. <sup>[250]</sup> Miklos Nyiszli, a Hungarian Jewish doctor who arrived in May 1944 and had first hand experience with the work of the Sonderkommando, wrote of the ditch at the White Bunker being 18 by 150 feet with "a welter of burning bodies" <sup>[251]</sup> Paul Bendel, a French doctor and Sonderkommando, wrote of three pits of 20 by 40 feet dug near Kremas IV and V because the crematoria could not handle the bodies. <sup>[252]</sup>

How credible was this testimony? The witnesses who knew first hand were the Sonderkommando, workers who burned the bodies of the gassed victims. Sonderkommando Filip Müller wrote that during the Hungarian operation their number increased from 450 to 900. <sup>[253]</sup> Feinsilber also placed the number at 900. <sup>[254]</sup> Tauber mentioned 1000. <sup>[255]</sup> Nyiszli states that there were 860 such workers clearing the dead. <sup>[256]</sup> Unfortunately, no documentary evidence is available for mid-May through mid-July, the time of the Hungarian deportations. However, a camp document dated July 28, 1944 lists 870 stokers [Heizer] and 30 wood unloaders [Holzablader] assigned in two 12 hour shifts to the four crematoria. <sup>[257]</sup> A similar report from August 29 shows 874 workers assigned to the four crematoria in two 12 hour shifts. <sup>[258]</sup> These two reports on the strength of the crematoria detail further reinforce the credibility of the eyewitnesses. This extremely high number is far beyond any amount that would be needed for a normal death rate. There is no benign explanation for this number, and deniers have never addressed the issue.

Deniers argue that such burnings could not have been utilized because of two aerial photographs taken by the Allied powers of the Auschwitz camp during the Hungarian operation. Deniers claim that the photos show no activity. The best known of these photos is the one taken of the camp on June 26, 1944. The photo does not, in fact, show any activity. However, the reason is that the deportations were suspended during this period of time. A list of the transports shows that no trains left Hungary from June 17 to June 24. Transports resumed on June 25. <sup>[259]</sup> However, it took three or four days to reach Auschwitz from Hungary. <sup>[260]</sup> Auschwitz registration records show no Hungarian Jews being registered from June 20 to June 27. <sup>[261]</sup> The accuracy of this information is also verified in reports by Veessenmayer and Ferenczy. In a report on June 13 Veessenmayer stated that Hungarian Jews were to be concentrated in Hungary from June 17 to 24 and transported from June 25 to 28. <sup>[262]</sup> A memo by Ferenczy states the same thing. <sup>[263]</sup> However, when the June 26 photo was first analyzed in a Central Intelligence Agency study in 1979 it was noted that ground scarring near Crematoria IV and V, consistent with the eyewitness testimony about burning pits, was visible. <sup>[264]</sup>

The other photo was taken on May 31, a time when deportations were

occurring. This photo was not analyzed in the original CIA study. The full extent of the extermination process is not recorded on this photo. However, it needs to be kept in mind that this is a still photo taken at a particular point in time, not round the clock surveillance. Nevertheless, the May 31 photo does reveal important information not addressed by deniers. In 1994 Mattogno assured his readers that the May 31 photo did not show a "trace of smoke" or "pits, crematory or otherwise." [265] The problem is that at the same time his monograph appeared, a book published on Auschwitz showed smoke rising from a pit near Krema V, the same place all of the eyewitnesses said bodies were being burned. [266] This was the same May 31 photo. It had actually first been reproduced showing the smoke in 1983. [267]

The May 31 photo also showed something that was spotted by Dr. Nevin Bryant, supervisor of cartographic applications and image processing at Caltech/NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He identified prisoners being marched into Krema V. [268]

Mattogno claimed in 1995, the year following the publication of the May 31 photo, that the smoke was not from burning bodies but most probably from trash. [269] However, it is known that this is not the case because Kremas II [270] and III [271] each had a trash incinerator. Therefore, there would not have been a reason to burn trash in the open. Moreover, as will be seen, there are three pits near Krema V in the photo. Mattogno simply had no explanation for the presence of this smoke.

Mattogno had also assured his readers that the Red and White Bunkers were not found in any German documents and that they had "been created by postwar witnesses." [272] While the Red Bunker had been dismantled by the time of the Hungarian operation, there is now documentary evidence of the White Bunker's existence. In the Spring of 1998 the author spoke with Dino Brugioni, the former intelligence photo expert who first analyzed the Auschwitz photos in 1979. Brugioni was also a photo analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency during the Cuban missile crisis and he appeared on the CNN documentary "Cold War" to discuss how he located missiles in Cuba. Brugioni stated that the White Bunker was visible on the May 31 photo. Deniers have always claimed that this bunker did not exist.

Holocaust History Project member and computer programmer Mark Van Alstine has examined the May 31 photo for the author and confirms Brugioni's observation that the White Bunker is in the wooded area where the eyewitnesses said it was. He has identified three burning pits in the area of the White Bunker (Mattogno states that there were four). [273] Van Alstine is able to confirm from the photo the existence of three huts that were used for prisoner undressing near the White Bunker. Recall that Hoess wrote that there were three huts near the White Bunker. [274] Van Alstine also confirms the existence of the three pits near Krema V each of which he estimates to be about 1150 square feet for a total of 3450 square

feet of pit space. <sup>[275]</sup> As will be seen in the next part of this study, there is good reason to believe that Mattogno was not only aware of the Krema V pits, but of the existence of the White Bunker as well. Mattogno's failure to address the issue of the existence of the pits and the bunker is understandable in that he could offer no plausible explanation as to why they were there in the first place.

The author has also had Mr. Carroll Lucas, a photo imagery expert with 45 years experience, examine the May 31 photo and others taken by the Allies in 1944. Mr. Lucas's qualifications are discussed in the next section of this study dealing with denier John Ball. Lucas confirms the existence of a "farmhouse and a couple of storage buildings" outside of the Birkenau complex. This is the White Bunker, which had been a farmhouse before its conversion to a gas chamber, and the undressing installations for prisoners. Lucas also was able to find a connection between the structure and Birkenau.

...the interesting thing that brought it to my attention was the existence of a small unimproved road/trail that begins at this structure and traverses southeast to the security barrier next to the Birkenau water/sewage processing plant, continues along the southernmost edge of this plant to the northwestern corner of the wall surrounding Crematorium III... The light snow in the December 21 [aerial photo] image allows one to observe the extent of the trail although the resolution is much poorer than the May 31 coverage. This implies a definite connection at one time between the structure and the Birkenau complex.

The road that Lucas discovered leading to the White Bunker was probably the path victims took to the site after arriving at Birkenau. Also, Lucas identifies outside of the Birkenau complex on the May 31 photo:

four, possibly five large, recently bulldozed linear excavations... The total length of these excavations is between 1200 and 1500 feet. All appear to have recently been covered over, since no shadows are evident. These excavations have the classic appearance of a mass grave site...

Mattogno claimed that these gravesites had ceased being used in 1943 with the completion of the four crematoria. However, Lucas's observation about their recently being bulldozed shows that they were in current use.

Lucas also examined the land area around Kremas IV and V on the May 31 photo where he finds a:

series of narrow trenches excavated in echelon within a large area of bare soil. Twelve of the trenches (having a total length of approximately 800 feet) are open, whereas another 9 trenches (totaling approximately 650 feet) appear to have

been filled in... They have all the appearances of a hand dug, mass grave site used to dispense the residue of the adjacent crematoria...

Lucas does not specify a square footage amount for the mass grave sites outside or inside the Birkenau area. However, it would appear reasonable to conclude that these areas must have been at least several feet in width.

Lucas observes that on the August 25 photo "[t]here is no evidence of mass grave sites..." This indicates the transitory nature of the mass graves. The outdoor burning activity most likely ceased with the completion of the Lodz ghetto operation in August 1944.

There has also been some question about whether there were railroad cars in the complex. May 31 was during the period when many Jews were arriving from Hungary. Lucas was able to identify over 100 rail cars on the photo. "The receiving rail yard is also heavily used, containing primarily the smallest rail cars (possible cattle cars)."

Lucas was able to identify 21 separate formations of people on the May 31 photo. The author specifically asked him about the findings of Cal Tech's Dr. Nevin Bryant (discussed at [note 268](#) herein) about prisoners entering Krema V. In an addendum to the report, Lucas writes:

My notes indicate "possible" lines of people moving between the open hand dug trenches toward Crematorium V. There is a broken line of four different irregular dark spots along the road. These may possibly be personnel assigned to digging the trenches or being marched into the Crematorium. The fact that one formation appears to be turning the corner into the area of the crematorium suggests the latter. However, the resolution of the photo is such that a clear call cannot be made. The call is strengthened by the independent analyses conducted by Cal Tech.

Another photo has recently surfaced from the National Archives that was taken towards the end of the Hungarian operation. It is a Luftwaffe photo taken on July 8, 1944. It shows smoke coming from the area of Krema V where the pits are located. <sup>[276]</sup> Therefore, the evidence on the May 31 and July 8 photos confirms all aspects of the eyewitness accounts about the open air burnings at the pits of the White Bunker and Krema V.

Mattogno had argued that pit burnings were not an effective means of body disposal. He cited a study by H. Frolich in an 1872 German military journal that the attempt to dispose of the bodies of soldiers by opening mass graves and filling them with tar "resulted in charring of the uppermost layer of the corpses, the baking of the intermediate layer, and no effect on the bottom layer." <sup>[277]</sup> He ignored the fact that the author of the study gave guidelines for the effective disposal of bodies in pits by using gasoline. Frolich wrote that the grave had to be drenched with gasoline in a tar pit. After three hours, 250 to 300 bodies were disposed

of. [\[278\]](#)

The Frolich study mentions that this method had been approved of by a Belgian commission. [\[279\]](#) In 1887 Dr. Hugo Erichsen, one the world's leading experts in body disposal in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, wrote of the Belgian government's efforts along these lines in a battle in 1814. The individual charged with body disposal was named Creteur.

[Creteur] determined to cover the graves with a layer of chloride of lime, and to pour diluted muriatic acid upon them subsequently. By this means he succeeded in laying bare the topmost layer of the corpses. He then had large quantities of coal poured into the pit... He then had more chloride of lime heaped upon the corpses, and finally had bundles of hay, previously saturated with kerosene thrown into the pit. Creteur declares that from 200 to 300 were consumed within 50 to 60 minutes.... About one fourth of all the contents remained in the pits, consisting of calcined bones and a dry mass. These were again covered with chloride of lime, and the trenches were closed. In this way 45,855 human and equine bodies were disposed of. [\[280\]](#)

Dr. Erichsen then advocated using this technique in time of war. "Under the existing circumstances, I think Creteur's method would be best. By this means, several hundred bodies would be destroyed at once." It stands to reason that if the Belgians could do this in 1814, Germany certainly had the capability to improve on the process 130 years later. Deniers like Mattogno would have people believe that the Germans of World War II were incapable of replicating the achievements of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century European country.

Many of the eyewitnesses to the outdoor burnings at Auschwitz stated that gasoline was used to dispose of the bodies, something that Mattogno did not mention. [\[281\]](#) The Germans used gasoline to dispose of bodies at Bergen-Belsen, [\[282\]](#) Majdanek, [\[283\]](#) and the Operation Reinhard extermination camps. [\[284\]](#) Like Dr.Frolich and the Belgian army in 1814, Sonderkommando Filip Müller addressed the specific problem Mattogno mentioned:

...[I]n the pits the fire would burn only as long as the air could circulate freely between the bodies. As the heap of bodies settled, no air was able to get in from the outside. This meant that we stokers had constantly to pour oil or wood alcohol on the burning corpses...

About fifteen stokers had to place the fuel in the pit and to light and maintain the fire by constantly stoking in between the corpses and pouring oil, wood alcohol and liquid human fat over them. [\[285\]](#)

Sonderkommando Paul Bendel also mentioned using human fat to accelerate the open air burning process. <sup>[286]</sup>

When Mattogno finally did admit that outdoor burnings took place in order to salvage his coke arguments - discussed earlier - he stated that it was done on pyres. <sup>[287]</sup> Recall that he placed these burnings in the area of the White Bunker as all the eyewitnesses had done, but only for the period before the Birkenau crematoria were built. Once again he had coopted eyewitness testimony which spoke of using pyres near the White Bunker in the context of burning gassed victims. <sup>[288]</sup> Thus, it appears that while pyres were used in the pits near the White Bunker, bodies were simply placed in pits behind Krema V.

The best evidence of the outdoor burnings was captured in a photo taken by a Sonderkommando in August 1944, after the Hungarian operation. It shows the burning of a large number of corpses in back of Krema V. The area can be identified because it is consistent with the background of that area. <sup>[289]</sup> A high barbed wire fence can be seen with a forested area outside of it. The photo is well known and has been reproduced in many places, including the internet. <sup>[290]</sup> However, the best copy of the photo was published in a study done under the auspices of the Auschwitz State Museum. It has wing span of about 18 inches and shows more of the photo than has been published elsewhere. It is possible to see 14 Sonderkommandos in uniform and many naked bodies being burned. The exact number cannot be ascertained because the smoke is obscuring the pits. <sup>[291]</sup> Müller wrote that 25 Sonderkommandos would stack the corpses in the pits. <sup>[292]</sup> Mattogno has never addressed this photo, not even to call it a forgery as deniers are fond of doing with evidence they can't explain. This photo was probably taken during the Lodz Ghetto operation.



How many prisoners were incinerated in open air burnings during the Hungarian operation? The answer will probably never be known. In the author's opinion, at least 75% of the Hungarian Jews killed were burned in the pits near Krema V or on the pyres near the White Bunker while the remainder were burned in the ovens of Crematoria II and III. According to Hoess, about 9000 per day were murdered during this period of time. <sup>[293]</sup> Hoess's number is consistent with the number of victims who were arriving on trains. The train transport records from Hungary show about 1200 to 3400 victims on each train transport leaving Hungary. <sup>[294]</sup> Assuming that three trains per day arrived, it would have been possible to incinerate all 9000 victims in three operations without having to use either Krema II or III.

This could be done as follows. The best information on the White Bunker is that it was sufficiently large enough to gas 1200 victims while Krema V had three gas chambers which totaled an area of 2500 square feet. <sup>[295]</sup> This means that about 1800 victims could be squeezed into the area of Krema V designated for the gassing. Therefore, by using only the

White Bunker and Krema V, an entire transport of 3000 could be incinerated and burned in the open. As noted earlier, the White Bunker and its pits were in a wooded area. This area would have been obscured from the view of newly arriving prisoners. Krema V was surrounded by trees and was often referred to as the forest Krema. <sup>[296]</sup> The photo of the prisoners being incinerated in the open by the sonderkommados in the back of Krema V, discussed above, shows the pit area not surrounded by trees, so it was visible. However, it was still further away from the railroad tracks where new prisoners arrived than any of the other crematoria. Also, Krema V was relatively close to the White Bunker. Consequently, by using the White Bunker and Krema V the authorities could keep the gassing and burning operations fairly close together while at the same time provide the best opportunity to conceal them from newly arriving prisoners.

There were certainly enough Sonderkommando assigned to the operation to make it run efficiently. As was noted above, camp records show 900 Sonderkommandos on duty. They were divided into two 12 hour shifts. This means that when Kremas II and III were not being used, Sonderkommandos assigned to those facilities could be moved to Krema V and the White Bunker. As was noted earlier, Krema IV was not operational so that Sonderkommandos assigned there could be used wherever needed. Thus, there were 450 Sonderkommandos on a shift to clear about 3000 bodies, the probable amount of prisoners from one transport gassed in an operation. The photo of the burning operation shows that a body was carried by one or two Sonderkommandos. It also shows that the burning started before all of the bodies were cleared from the gas chamber because corpses are being dragged to the area while smoke is obscuring the view of the pits. <sup>[297]</sup>

It is likely that as each transport arrived some of the victims were directed to Kremas II and III. The vast majority, however, were directed to the White Bunker and Krema V. This is the only logical scenario since the crematoria could not possibly have disposed of the number of victims who were being murdered on a daily basis. The camp authorities were already aware that the crematoria would not be able to dispose of the number of victims that would arrive every day from Hungary. This is why they utilized the White Bunker and its pits and dug pits behind Krema V.

## **John Ball's Photos**

A discussion of the open air burnings would not be complete without mentioning John Ball, the principal denier "expert" on photo analysis. In 1992 Ball published what he purported to be an analysis of photos taken of the various extermination sites of the Nazi "Final Solution." He had examined these photos in the United States National Archives. The following discussion examines his analysis of the Auschwitz-Birkenau photos that were taken by the United States Air Force in 1944. Two of

these photos, from May 31 and June 26, were discussed in the prior section of the present study.

Ball claimed in several places that the air photos do not show fences around the crematoria. He was arguing that they could not have been homicidal facilities if they were not secure. [298] However, earlier he claimed that a fence had been drawn around the crematoria. Here he is saying that the original photo had been altered by forgers to make it look as if there was such a fence. [299] Ball's claims in this regard should be considered rather fantastic since he reproduced a well known ground level 1944 photo taken by a member of the Bauleitung which shows prisoners arriving at Auschwitz and a photo of Krema II in the background. A high barbed wire fence is shown immediately outside of Krema II. [300] Ball did not claim that this photo was a forgery. In fact, a number of Bauleitung photos from the period show high barbed wire fences around the four Birkenau crematoria. [301] How Ball could either not find these fences on the aerial photographs or claim they were forgeries is beyond comprehension. They are at least 10 feet in height if not higher. Ball was making a far fetched claim even for a denier.

A Bauleitung memo from April 1943, as the crematoria were being completed, requested electrified fencing for 30 prisoner barracks and the crematoria. [302] A "Top Secret" memo from the chief of the SS Economic and Administrative Main Office from April 1944 describes the three areas which comprised Auschwitz. Birkenau was known as Auschwitz II or Camp II.

...Camp II is also surrounded by an electrically charged wire fence; there are also watch towers...

Apart from the direct security of camp I and II by manned watch towers and electrically chargeable wire fences, a line of bunkers has been constructed as an inner ring which will be manned by SS men. [303]

A Bauleitung report from June 1944, during the Hungarian operation, lists among the construction tasks: "three barracks for immediate measures: Jewish Action", "building six rooms for corpses in Kremas II and III" and "camouflaging [Tarnung] crematoria." [304] Why would the Bauleitung need more space for corpses? There was no typhus epidemic. Also, why would it be necessary to camouflage the crematoria during the Hungarian operation? Hoess wrote that during the summer of 1944 the camp authorities attempted to camouflage the crematoria to hide mass murder. [305]

Ball claimed that there was no smoke from pits on the May 31 photo. [306] As was discussed earlier, the photo does show smoke rising from an area near Krema V that many witnesses described as having burning pits. Ball's original claims were made in 1992, but the photo

finally got exposure when it was published in 1994. Ball later backtracked, after the smoke was identified, by claiming that there really was not very much smoke at all on the photo without explaining how he missed it in the first place. [\[307\]](#)

Ball used a similar technique when he "analyzed" the Luftwaffe photo of July 8, 1944. As was noted earlier, this recently discovered photo shows smoke coming from the pits near Krema V. However, Ball never even acknowledged that there was any smoke on the photo when he reproduced it. Rather he claimed that it had been tampered with in respect to the crematoria. In fact, he had "cropped" out the smoke from the photo so that reader would not see it. [\[308\]](#) He could have at least claimed that the smoke was added by some unknown conspirator. However, this may have caused him problems because he had not challenged the authenticity of the smoke on the May 31 photo. Since Mattogno claimed that the May 31 smoke could have been from trash burning, Ball may have believed that using this same false excuse twice would stretch the credulity of his readers.

Ball was also not very familiar with the crematoria. He questioned whether there could have been burnings in the crematoria during the Hungarian operation because there is no coke, the fuel used to charge the ovens, visible on the photos. [\[309\]](#) He does not appear to have been aware that oven fuel was stored inside of the crematoria. [\[310\]](#) He also claimed that there was no fuel delivery system from the railroad tracks to the crematoria. [\[311\]](#) However, the railroad ramp was about 100 feet from Krema II. [\[312\]](#) It would not have been difficult for coke to be unloaded from the trains onto trucks which could then deliver the fuel to the crematoria. Alternatively, trucks could have carried the coke into the camp directly. Ball would apparently have us believe that there was no way to deliver fuel to the crematoria. If this is correct, then they never functioned at all! Why would the authorities build so many ovens with no means of fueling them?

After the publication of Ball's photo book in 1992, Mattogno acknowledged that there were open air burnings. As was discussed earlier in the present study, he did this because he was trying to explain what happened to the registered prisoners who died. He could not say that they were burned in the ovens because it would have destroyed arguments he was making about coke usage. These arguments were examined earlier in the present study. Mattogno stated that there were four huge parallel pits in the area historians identify as the location of the White Bunker. He attempted to put the right spin on this information by saying that they were only there to burn bodies before the building of the crematoria, but not used during the Hungarian operation. [\[313\]](#) Mattogno never mentioned the White Bunker. He referred his readers to the article by Ball which was published as part of a collection of denier materials, including the article by Mattogno.

However, Ball never addressed the issue about the burnings in the wooded area where the White Bunker was located. He said there were open air burnings, but did not identify a geographic location. <sup>[314]</sup> In fact, this tells us a great deal about Ball's dishonest methodology. Mattogno must have learned of the pits from Ball, who never mentioned them in his original 1992 study. However, now that Mattogno needed to show that such burnings took place, Ball was willing to accommodate him with a made to order analysis. Ball must have seen the White Bunker on the May 31 photo when he wrote his 1992 book. Yet there has never been so much as a mention of it from either he or Mattogno. Moreover, Ball has never addressed the issue of the four huge pits that Mattogno mentions. This is all the more amazing since he must have been Mattogno's source for the existence of these pits. After all, Mattogno was referring his readers to Ball's essay.

Ball's most controversial allegation is that these photos were tampered with. The issue of the May 31 photo has already been addressed. The August 25 photo has also caused a great deal of problems for deniers. The CIA analysis published in 1979 shows four vents on Krema II - identified as Birkenau Krema I in the report <sup>[315]</sup> - which are identified as "vents used to insert the Zyklon B gas crystals." <sup>[316]</sup> This confirmed Sonderkommando Henryk Tauber's testimony in 1945 that there were four openings for inserting the gas. <sup>[317]</sup> Jean Claude Pressac found a document for Krema II which mentioned "four wire mesh introduction devices" and "4 wooden covers." <sup>[318]</sup>

The CIA analysts also wrote that a rail transport of 33 cars could be seen at the Birkenau railroad. The report states: "[t]he selection process [for gassing] is either under way or completed. One group of prisoners is apparently being marched to Gas Chamber and Crematorium II [known in most literature as Krema III]" <sup>[319]</sup> The report also discusses the September 13 photo as showing 85 boxcars on the railroad. "A large column of prisoners, estimated at some 1500 in number, is marching on the camp's main north-south road. There is activity at the Gas Chamber and Crematorium IV [known in most literature as Krema V], and the gate is open; this may be the final destination of the newly arrived prisoners." <sup>[320]</sup>

Ball claimed that the gas chamber vents and people moving in the photos were drawn on by the CIA, so that the photos were essentially fake. <sup>[321]</sup> Ball repeated these claims several years later. <sup>[322]</sup> He then offered \$100,000 to anyone who could prove him wrong. The condition was that three experts would have to agree that the photos were not fake. The challenge was accepted by Nizkor, an internet group that monitors Holocaust denial. However, when the group attempted to contact Ball, he did not respond. Ball is a Canadian citizen. John Morris, of the University of Alberta, explains the attempts to contact Ball. A letter was sent to Ball.

The letter was returned by Canada Post a few weeks later

marked as "Unclaimed." Canada Postal also noted that a pick up card was placed in Ball's post office box on April 12, 1997 and that they returned the letter a week later on April 19, 1997.

Two copies of a second letter were sent on May 10, 1997, one to Ball's home address as listed by the Internet Yellow Pages, and one to the post office box advertised on Ball's web page.

In addition, I sent an e mail message to the address advertised on the web page advising Ball that the letters had been sent.

In the second and third letters, the requests for clarification were reiterated, and Ball's challenge was tentatively accepted on condition that some show of good faith was forthcoming. In addition, the name of an "aerial photo expert" was offered as our first nominee

No reply to the e mail was ever received, and the letter sent to the supposed home address was returned by Canada Post as "Moved, Address Unknown."

More alarmingly, the third letter, sent to the advertised post office box, was returned June 10, 1997 marked by Canada Post as "Moved Address." [\[323\]](#)

Ball had vanished, and his hoax was exposed. It is clear that Ball's challenge was nothing more than a publicity gimmick. This is not surprising. Dr. Nevin Bryant, supervisor of cartographic and image processing applications at Caltech/NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, had already examined these photos before Ball issued the challenge. Dr. Bryant used digital enhancement techniques not available to the two CIA analysts who wrote the report in 1979. He found that the photos were not tampered with. [\[324\]](#) Ball was probably aware that he had already been exposed by Dr. Bryant by the time that Nizkor attempted to contact him.

The author has also had his own expert examine Ball's claims of photo tampering. Carroll Lucas has a long and distinguished career as a photo analyst. He has over 45 years experience in the area. He spent 25 years with the CIA in the development, evaluation, comparison, and effective exploitation of products from strategic, tactical and civil imaging programs. He received a CIA commendation for outstanding service during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. He spent 14 years as the Deputy Chief of the Imagery Applications division of Autometric Incorporated. An examination of his extensive resume shows that he has, in effect, done it all in the area of photo imagery. Mr. Lucas carried out his research of the Allied photos in the National Archives, where he was able to obtain the original negatives. The full text of the *Lucas Report* will be published elsewhere. [\[325\]](#) The following are some excerpts from that report:

All frames could be accounted for, based on header data and on the lack of gaps in the number sequences. No splicing was observed between frames, that would indicate that someone had cut out a frame and replaced it. Since the overlap between frames ranges from 55 to 80%, it is easy to observe whether a gap occurred in the coverage because of a frame being edited out. Procedures used to cut out frames from the original film in the 1940's, and still used in the 1970's was to place a metal straight edge in the metered area between frames and cut the film... No evidence of such editing/removal of original data, was observed over the sites of interest.

There is no evidence of the cutting and splicing of film in the original negative film rolls that would isolate frames covering the Auschwitz I / Birkenau facilities.

...all frames containing the Auschwitz I / Auschwitz II / Birkenau target areas were compared with their surrounding frames, under magnifications of 60x, to determine if a quality difference occurred between objects within the targets, and similar objects on adjacent frames. In all cases, the quality did not appear to change. If duplicate negatives had been inserted for the originals in some esoteric way that produced invisible splices, changes in image quality would still give the deception away. No such quality degradation was observed during this detailed analysis.

...When making duplicate negatives, if the original negative isn't precisely aligned to the duplicate negative stock during the printing process, a thin black edge will occur that would not be on the negative. The presence of this black edge... is a positive sign that a duplicate negative has replaced the original negative of the affected frames. No such indications were observed on the original negatives reviewed.

...The bottom line is that the cans of aerial reconnaissance film extracted from the DIA files, provided to the CIA and finally presented to the National Archives, unequivocally contain unedited and untainted original negatives of U.S. aerial reconnaissance missions flown over targets adjacent to the Auschwitz I/Auschwitz II/Birkenau facilities.

In 1992 Ball claimed that he had been interpreting aerial photos in his position as a mineral exploration geologist for 16 years. <sup>[326]</sup> However, nowhere in any of Ball's writings does he specify the tests he did to determine whether the Auschwitz photos were tampered with. In fact, it is probable that he is not even familiar with the type of tests that Lucas did, otherwise he would have certainly mentioned them. The *Lucas Report* shows that John Ball is either incompetent, dishonest or both.

## Conclusion

On April 2, 1945, as the Allies were closing in on Germany, Hitler's secretary recorded his final boast: "National Socialism will earn eternal gratitude for exterminating the Jews in Germany and Central Europe" [die Juden aus Deutschland und Mitteleuropa ausgerottet habe]. <sup>[327]</sup> Auschwitz represented the finality of Hitler's vision. The gas chambers were the principal, though not only, murder instrument at Auschwitz. The ovens and burning pits were the method of disposing of the dead. The evidence presented in this study, whether it is documents, aerial photos or testimony, clearly shows that there was no shortage of facilities to accomplish this task.

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Mr. Carroll Lucas, a professional photo analyst with 45 years experience, worked many hours in the National Archives examining original negatives of Auschwitz aerial photos to ascertain their authenticity.

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