

# Some Details of the Central Construction Office of Auschwitz

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## 1. Introduction

In 1992 the Moscow Central Archives made its holdings publicly accessible.<sup>1</sup> These include the – evidently not entirely complete – correspondence of the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police of Auschwitz – some 83,000 documents.<sup>2</sup> This Construction Office was in charge of all matters relating to construction in the concentration and prisoner-of-war camps in the environs of Auschwitz. Auschwitz-Birkenau, the infamous camp belonging to this complex and generally described today as “concentration and extermination camp”, was designed and built by this Central Construction Office as a “prisoner-of-war camp”. Construction began in late 1941. Work proceeded as per a blueprint of the Special Construction Office of Auschwitz, dated October 7, 1941.<sup>3</sup> Construction Section BA Ia was completed in March 1942, and housed prisoners-of-war until August 1942. The designation of the camp was retained. A renaming does not become apparent until mid-April 1944, as of when the term “*KL-Auschwitz, Lager II*” (Concentration Camp Auschwitz, Camp II) was also used.

Up to early 1998, only a tiny fraction of the holdings of this archive had been tapped by three researchers, and a non-objective choice of documents on their part is obvious.<sup>4</sup> Since early 1998, a series of well-researched articles on a range of construction problems of the Auschwitz camp appears regularly in a German journal,<sup>5</sup> and a comprehensive monograph about the activities of the Central

<sup>1</sup> This archive underwent several name changes since 1991. It is now called *Rossiski Gosudarstvenni Vojenni Archiv (RGVA)*, Viborskaja ult 3, Moskau.

<sup>2</sup> Index of this Archive: Heinz Boberach, *Inventar archivalischer Quellen des NS-Staates. Die Überlieferung von Behörden und Einrichtungen des Reichs, der Länder und der NSDAP*, 2 vols, ed. by IFZ, K.G. Saur, Munich 1991 and 1995.

<sup>3</sup> J.-C. Pressac, *Die Krematorien von Auschwitz. Die Technik des Massenmordes*, R. Piper GmbH & Co. KG, Munich 1994, p. 185

<sup>4</sup> Gerald Fleming, “*Engineers of Death*”, in *The New York Times*, July 18, 1993, p. E19; cf. F. Toben, “*Ein KGB-Novellist: Gerald Fleming*”, *Vierteljahreshefte für freie Geschichtsforschung (VffG)* 2(1) (1997) p. 87-91 (online: [vho.org/VffG/1997/2/Toben2.html](http://vho.org/VffG/1997/2/Toben2.html))., Jean-Claude Pressac, *op. cit.* (Note 3); Robert van Pelt, Deborah Dwork, *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present*, Yale, University Press 1996; cf. review by Carlo Mattogno, “*Architektonische Stümpereien zweier Plagiatoren*”, *VffG*, 4(1) (2000), pp. 25-33 (online: [vho.org/VffG/2000/1/Mattogno25-33.html](http://vho.org/VffG/2000/1/Mattogno25-33.html)); English: “*Auschwitz 1270 to the Present*”, [www.russgranata.com/irving.html](http://www.russgranata.com/irving.html)); Robert van Pelt, *The Pelt Report*, Irving vs. Lipstadt (Queen’s Bench Division, Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London, David John Cawdell Irving vs. (1) Penguin Books Limited, (2) Deborah E. Lipstadt, Ref. 1996 I. No. 113; for a detailed critique of van Pelt’s flawed *The Pelt Report* see Gernard Rudolf, “*Gutachter- und Urteilsschelte*”, *VffG* 4(1) (2000), pp. 33-50 (online: [vho.org/VffG/2000/1/Rudolf33-55.html](http://vho.org/VffG/2000/1/Rudolf33-55.html)); Engl.: [vho.org/GB/Contributions/RudolfOnVanPelt.html](http://vho.org/GB/Contributions/RudolfOnVanPelt.html) and [.../CritiqueGray.html](http://.../CritiqueGray.html)).

<sup>5</sup> M. Gärtner, W. Rademacher, “*Grundwasser im Gelände des KGL Birkenau*”, *VffG* 2(1)(1998), pp. 2-12 (online: [vho.org/VffG/1998/1/GaeRad1.html](http://vho.org/VffG/1998/1/GaeRad1.html)); H.J. Nowak, “*Kurzwellen-Entlausungsanlagen in Auschwitz*”, *VffG* 2(2) (1998), pp. 87-105 (online: [.../1998/2/Nowak2.html](http://.../1998/2/Nowak2.html)); H. Lamker, “*Die Kurzwellen-Entlausungsanlagen in Auschwitz, Teil 2*”, *VffG* 2(4) (1998), pp. 261-272 (online: [.../1998/4/Lamker4.html](http://.../1998/4/Lamker4.html)); W. Rademacher, “*Sauna ein ‘Verbrechen’?*”, *VffG* 1(4)(1997), pp. 245ff. (online: [.../1997/4/Rademacher4.html](http://.../1997/4/Rademacher4.html)); M. Gerner, “*Schlüsseldokument ist Fälschung*”, *VffG* 2(3) (1998), pp. 166-174 (online: [.../1998/3/Gerner3.html](http://.../1998/3/Gerner3.html)); Carlo Mattogno, “*‘Schlüsseldokument’ – eine alternative Interpretation*”, *VffG* 4(1) (2000), pp. 50-56 (online: [.../2000/1/Mattogno50-56.html](http://.../2000/1/Mattogno50-56.html)); Engl “*The Auschwitz Central Construction Headquarters Letter Dated 28 June 1943: An Alternative Interpretation*”, [www.russgranata.com/lalett.html](http://www.russgranata.com/lalett.html)); H.J. Nowak, W. Rademacher, “*‘Gasdichte’ Türen in Auschwitz*” *VffG* 2(4) (1998), pp. 248-260 (online: [.../1998/4/NowRad4.html](http://.../1998/4/NowRad4.html)).

Construction Office was presented by Carlo Mattogno in the summer of 1998.<sup>6</sup> Two especially interesting findings resulting from a study of the Moscow archives will be summarized in the following.

## 2. Shortwave Delousing Facilities in Auschwitz

### 2.1. Introduction

A new discovery of immense significance is one about which Jean-Claude Pressac reports in his second book: the VHF delousing facilities.<sup>3</sup>

These facilities were actually used with phenomenal success, and not only in Auschwitz and Birkenau. It is only astonishing that to date – in other words, for 53 years – neither the deloused nor the delousing inmates nor any of the supervisory personnel have reported about these facilities that were present in both Auschwitz camps, as well as in other camps!

The high-frequency technique used here for the first time was far superior to all other delousing methods known at that time. Not only did it kill the lice and their nits, it also destroyed the bacteria that caused spotted fever – as small-scale tests performed by the manufacturer showed. The facilities were developed by the firm Siemens-Schuckertwerke in Berlin; preliminary tests were conducted in 1939.

In rather oversimplified terms, the microwave appliances used in almost every household today are the next generation. Only recently, on November 2, 1996, the press<sup>7</sup> reported that the Göttingen Institute for Agricultural Technology had developed a procedure for sterilizing foods that “*utilizes microwave energy and steam*” – exactly the procedure described in the documents at hand, but 55 years later.

The significance of this discovery is heightened when we consider that 55 years lie between the development of these facilities and our first knowledge of their use in those days – for this is how long the documents we speak of have been held under lock and key. This discovery confirms with great emphasis that research about Auschwitz is yet in its beginning stages.

Before we discuss the significance of the shortwave technology,<sup>8</sup> we shall give an overview of disinfection and disinfestation as a whole, with special attention paid to Auschwitz. We have at our disposal archival documents that permit a complete analysis. This goes equally for the technical, the medical and the organizational aspects.

### 2.2. Danger of Epidemics

We postulate as a given that in wars throughout history, for example in the American Civil War, epidemics caused more deaths among the soldiers and the civilians alike than did the use of weapons. It took the atomic bomb, deployed in ruthless and criminal manner by the United States against unarmed people, in contravention of international laws, to change this aspect of war.

The epidemic most feared at the eastern front in World War I was typhus or spotted fever.<sup>9</sup> Since that war – in which this epidemic claimed uncounted thousands of lives among the German soldiers at the Russian front and could be prevented from spreading into German territory after the end of the war only by the most rigorous of measures – the danger of epidemics has been firmly entrenched in the awareness of all medical and military offices and personnel.

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<sup>6</sup> C. Mattogno, *La “Zentralbauleitung der Waffen-SS und Polizei Auschwitz”*, Edizione di Ar, Padova 1998.

<sup>7</sup> (dpa) “*Lebensmittel in 3 Minuten keimfrei*”, *Münchener Merkur* no. 253, Nov. 2, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding technical development and method of operation of the facilities, cf. the two original studies, op.cit. (Note 5).

<sup>9</sup> Although caused by different bacteria, typhus and spotted fever (sometimes called typhoid fever) are frequently confused because they cause similar symptoms.

For example, the encyclopedia *Der große Brockhaus*, vol. 6 of the 1930 Leipzig edition, contains a comprehensive article on typhus fever and states that this acute infectious disease is spread only by the body louse:

*“The disease is caused by Rickettsia prowazeki (discovered in 1910 by Ricketts and in 1913 by Prowazek), a micro-organism found in the intestines and salivary glands of infected lice. [...]*

*Epidemic typhus occurs chiefly where unfavorable social and sanitary conditions prevail, in dark overcrowded living quarters, hospitals, prisons, emigration ships, caused by crop failures and price increases, thus also known as starvation, hospital, prison, ship or war typhus. Typhus is endemic in Russia, the Balkans, northern Africa, Asia Minor, and Mexico. According to Tarrassevich, 25-30 million people suffered from typhus in Russia in 1918-1921, which amounts to 20-23% of the population. [...]*

*Successful control and prevention of typhus consists of enforcing all measures available to destroy the body louse.”<sup>10</sup>*

Countless publications elaborated the topic further. Practical experiments were also conducted to increase man’s understanding of means for the successful control of the cause. For example, Dr. G. Peters reports in his work “*Blausäure zur Schädlingsbekämpfung*”<sup>11</sup> about the fumigation of ships with hydrogen cyanide, done in the United States as early as 1910, and about tunnel facilities which entire railway trains could drive into to be disinfested. Thus it is no surprise that Peters also mentions the quantity of hydrogen cyanide that is lethal when absorbed by humans, and therefore, Pressac’s claim<sup>12</sup> that the lethal dose was not known is completely false. It was also already a known fact in those days that HCN could be absorbed via the skin.

Professor Dr. F. Konrich was completely justified in stating, in his publication “*Über die Sanierungsanstalten der deutschen Kriegsgefangenenlager*”<sup>13</sup>, that epidemics such as that in question “[...] had long been extinct here [in Germany].” However, it also becomes quite understandable why all offices and institutions involved **over-reacted** totally when spotted fever was introduced to the concentration camp Auschwitz for the first time in early July 1942, brought in from outside by civilian laborers.<sup>14</sup> The spreading of the epidemic to the camp’s environs, *i.e.*, to the civilian population, had to be prevented.

## 2.3. Epidemic Control

### 2.3.1. Terminology Used

We shall use the technical terms established in the 1939 Army Regulations (Heeresdienstvorschrift 194),<sup>15</sup> since these determined how the personnel, *i.e.*, the physicians and those who disinfect the camps, were to proceed:

**“Disinfection**

*Disinfection means [...]: destroying the disease-(epidemic)-causing agents on objects, in rooms, in excretions and on the bodies of infectious persons.*

<sup>10</sup> The *Brockhaus* encyclopedia refers to the article by A. Schittenhelm, “*Flecktyphus*” in *Handbuch der Inneren Medizin*, 2nd ed., 1925.

<sup>11</sup> Gerhard Peters, *Blausäure zur Schädlingsbekämpfung*, Ferdinand Enke Verlag, Stuttgart 1933.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Claude Pressac, *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers*, Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, New York 1989, p. 148.

<sup>13</sup> Friedrich Konrich, “*Über die Sanierungsanstalten der deutschen Kriegsgefangenenlager*”, *Gesundheits-Ingenieur*, July 19, 1941, pp. 399-404.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. W. Stromberger, “*Was war die ‘Sonderbehandlung’ in Auschwitz?*”, *Deutschland in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 44(2) (1996), pp. 24-25.

<sup>15</sup> H.Dv. 194. *Entseuchungs- und Entwesungsvorschrift für die Wehrmacht*, (Ents. V.) Verlag der Reichsdruckerei, Berlin 1939.

### *Disinfestation*

*Disinfestation means: ridding rooms, objects and people of vermin (small life forms) that can transmit pathogens, cause economic damage or annoy man.*"

The regulation quoted lists all physical and chemical means of disinfection and disinfestation that were known. Similarly, a “work guideline” was released in 1943 by the Sanitation Institute of the Waffen-SS: “*Entkeimung, Entseuchung und Entwesung*”<sup>16</sup> (Sterilization, Disinfection and Disinfestation).

The authority in charge of sanitation in the Waffen-SS as well as in the concentration camps was the “*Hygieneinstitut der Waffen-SS*”<sup>17</sup> (Sanitation Institute of the Waffen-SS), established in 1942 in Berlin, which set up a branch office in Rajsko near Auschwitz, with its “*Hygienisch-bakteriologischen Untersuchungsstelle Südost d. W-SS*” (Sanitary and Bacteriological Testing Station Southeast of Waffen-SS). The files<sup>18</sup> from this testing station have survived (151 volumes dating from 1943 to 1945).<sup>19</sup> To date we know of approximately 110,000 laboratory tests. Many informative documentary facsimiles are reproduced in the *Hefte von Auschwitz*.<sup>20</sup> It is unfortunate that research generally underestimates the historical value for Holocaust studies of these books.

The garrison physician (army medical officer) and the medical personnel were in charge of implementing all sanitary measures. This physician – and this was the case in Auschwitz as well – was to be consulted as subject expert in all relevant matters of construction planning. Where hydrogen cyanide and T-gas were to be used, requirements even called for specially trained expert personnel. In Auschwitz, this role was filled by the “*disinfectors*”.

On September 9, 1942, Dr. E. Wirths was stationed here as garrison physician for the time period at issue. From the records we can say that he fulfilled his duties correctly, and in this context we refer particularly to his massive criticism, directed to the highest echelons.

### 2.3.2. Procedures Used

We shall confine our analysis to procedures used in Auschwitz primarily before the outbreak of the first spotted fever epidemic, since the latter outbreak resulted in considerable changes in the camps. We draw our data from the listing dated January 9(?), 1943: “*Hygienische Einrichtungen im KL und KGL Auschwitz*”<sup>21</sup> (Sanitary Facilities in the POW and Concentration Camp Auschwitz) directed to the Amtsgruppenchef C (Berlin), and a “*Aufstellung über die im KL und KGL Auschwitz eingebauten Entwesungsanlagen Bäder und Desinfektionsapparate*.”<sup>22</sup> (List of Disinfestation Facilities, Baths and Disinfection Apparatus Installed in the POW and Concentration Camp Auschwitz), dated July 30, 1943. All the facilities listed therein were subject to modifications. The number of sanitary facilities increased with the number of inmates, as the two aforementioned documents already show. In his first book, on p. 550, Pressac mentions 25 chambers operated with Zyklon B. However there is no verifiable listing provided.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Dötzer, *Entkeimung, Entseuchung und Entwesung*, in J. Mrugowsky (ed.), *Arbeitsanweisungen für Klinik und Laboratorium des Hygiene-Instituts der Waffen-SS*, 2nd., unchanged ed.. Urban & Schwarzenberg, Berlin and Wien 1943.

<sup>17</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-26-117.

<sup>18</sup> Heinz Boberach *et al.*, *op. cit.* (Note 2), vol. 3/2, K. G. Saur, Munich 1995.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3/1, 1991.

<sup>20</sup> *Hefte von Auschwitz* 1 to 19, special issues, Verlag staatliches Auschwitz-Museum, as of 1959.

<sup>21</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-332-46/46a. Since the document is in poor condition and barely legible, we shall dispense with a reproduction of it here.

<sup>22</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-332-9/10. This document is also in poor condition; the efficiency data are transcribed in our original work, *op. cit.* (Note 5).

### 2.3.3. Results

Results could be reliably assessed only if the total number of people disinfested in these facilities is known. We have chosen for this analysis a document that is beyond all doubt, from an 18-page report about a September 25, 1942, visit of SS-Obergruppenführer and General of the Waffen-SS Pohl to Auschwitz.<sup>23</sup> The report is the typical work of an aide-de-camp. The “*overview of total labor expenditure*”, contained therein, including “*persons unable to work, and persons concert for duty*”, ends on Sept. 25, 1942, with a total of 28,207 persons. The calculated capacity of the various parts of the camp is given as follows:<sup>24</sup> “*preventive detention camp [concentration camp; auth.], 15,000*” and “*camp Birkenau [POW camp; auth.], 12,000 men and 18,000 women.*” Thus, a total of 45,000 persons.

It is not yet possible to say for certain whether the delousing facilities that were available at that time were consistently adequate for the number of persons stated. In his second book,<sup>25</sup> Pressac sets the height of the first epidemic at “*from September 7 to 11*”, with “*375 deaths per day*”.

### 2.3.4. Policy Decisions

Two policy decisions made by the *SS-Hauptamt Haushalt und Bauten* in the Reich Administration of the SS and its successor no doubt also influenced the measures taken in the camp. The first decision of June 5, 1940,<sup>26</sup> stated that HCN would no longer be used, and replaced instead with a hot-air method. The second, issued on March 11, 1942,<sup>27</sup> 21 months later, instead called for the “[...] *conversion of all delousing facilities to operation with HCN.*” A further letter from the Office C VI of February 11, 1943,<sup>28</sup> to the Commandant then again expressly states, probably with reference to the letter of June 5, 1940: “[...] *as per the prohibition against the use of HCN for disinfection* [...]”.

Now, if one puts oneself into the shoes of those in charge of the camps, one gains some idea of the situation that resulted from these decisions. It may have been what prompted the renovation of “*Bunkers 1 and 2*”. To clarify this, it is necessary to know how and where and when buildings were in fact constructed in Birkenau at this time. We do have some documents that indicate an “*extant building*” in Sector BA III which housed appropriate facilities, but as yet we doubt that this evidence is conclusive.

Men in positions of authority who are used to making decisions, who are faced with a dangerous epidemic that could also spread to the civilian population with incalculable consequences, find a way out of this situation, and act on it! Hydrogen cyanide (= Zyklon B) was the most reliable disinfection agent at that time. (For details the reader is referred to “*Blausäure als Entlausungsmittel in Begasungskammern*”,<sup>29</sup> or “*Entlausung mit Zyklon-Blausäure in Kreislauf-Begasungskammern*”.<sup>30</sup>) The only choice was that of a safe location for such facilities. We have not yet finalized the further logical consequences to be drawn from the policy decisions and the relevant documents, but perhaps they are logically inevitable: namely, to use buildings far from the camp barracks.

<sup>23</sup> RGVA 502-1-19-86/103.

<sup>24</sup> RGVA 502-1-19-86.

<sup>25</sup> J.-C. Pressac, *op. cit.* (Note 3), p. 157.

<sup>26</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-145.

<sup>27</sup> RGVA 502-1-336-94.

<sup>28</sup> RGVA 502-1-332-37.

<sup>29</sup> Gerhard Peters und W. Rasch, “*Die Blausäure als Entlausungsmittel in Begasungskammern*”, *Der praktische Desinfektor*, September 1941, pp. 93-96.

<sup>30</sup> Gerhard Peters, E. Wüstinger, “*Entlausung mit Zyklon-Blausäure in Kreislauf-Begasungskammern. Sach-Entlausung in Blausäure-Kammern*”, *Zeitschrift für hygienische Zoologie und Schädlingsbekämpfung*, issue 10/11 (1940), special reprint. RGVA 502-1-332-86/90. Received by the Construction Office of Auschwitz on July 3, 1941.

### 2.3.5. The Army Medical Officer

The situation did not end with the number of inmates given, nor at only one epidemic. Therefore, we shall briefly summarize by means of examples which conclusions this physician came to and what steps he took.

On December 4, 1942, Dr. Wirths reported to headquarters about a discussion held in the administrative council of Bielitz District.<sup>31</sup> The subject was spotted fever. A considerable number and range of persons had participated in the discussion, from the medical officer to the Wehrmacht to representatives of the government. This shows how seriously the epidemic was taken to be:

*“He reports that at present three large disinfection, shower and sauna facilities could be put into operation, specifically two facilities for the inmates and one for the members of the SS troops. The capacity of these facilities is some 3,000 to 4,000 persons per 24 hours. Zyklon B disinfection has been discontinued entirely, since it has been found that success is not 100% certain with this procedure.”*

Buildings BW5a and 5b were intended for the inmates. The capacity of these disinfection facilities was probably adequate for the number of inmates at this time. One must consider, however, that at this same time the structural shell for another 19 DEGESCH circulation fumigation chambers (normal gas chambers = serial type; cf. the publication *Die kleine Testafibel über Normal-Gaskammern* by Tesch and Stabenow<sup>32</sup>) was being completed in Building BW160 of the Main Camp (Admissions building). Pressac has called the above term for the gas chamber an “*incredible error*” on the part of Jährling, a civilian employee and the Central Construction Office’s official in charge of heating questions.<sup>33</sup> In actual fact, however, it has been shown that it was instead a typical error in judgment on the part of Mr. Pressac. The publication explaining these gas chambers<sup>30</sup> bears the Auschwitz Construction Office’s date-of-receipt stamp from July 3, 1941. We shall return to this point later.

Another paragraph of the above letter states that the garrison physician of Kattowitz had provided the loan of two mobile boiler installations. On April 18, 1943, Wirths reports to the Commandant, with warning reference to the sewer system in Birkenau, and concludes that “[...] *great danger of epidemics is inevitable.*”<sup>34</sup>

On May 7, 1943, in a discussion with the chief of Amtsgruppe C, SS Brigadier General and Major General of the Waffen-SS engineer Dr. Kammler, and others, the garrison physician set out in section “*II. Bauten in Zuständigkeit des Standortarztes*” (II. Buildings Under the Charge of the Garrison Physician).<sup>35</sup>

*“[...] that the continued health of the inmates for the major tasks is not guaranteed, due to the poor toilet conditions, an inadequate sewer system, the lack of hospital barracks and separate latrines for the sick, and the lack of washing, bathing and disinfection facilities.”*

Dr. Wirths clearly pointed out the inadequacies, and also how to rectify them.

At this point we must warn the reader, who may perhaps not be sufficiently aware of the historical context, not to jump to false conclusions. The reader may well lack an understanding of all the problems that were involved in obtaining materials as well as all the other necessities required to build these facilities in wartime. For every brick – figuratively speaking – it was necessary to obtain permission for purchase. We must also point out that a sewer system of any kind at all was already ex-

<sup>31</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-332-117/119.

<sup>32</sup> As quoted by W. Dötzer, *op. cit.* (Note 16).

<sup>33</sup> J.-C. Pressac, *op. cit.* (Note 3), p. 114; cf. Mattogno, “*Auschwitz: Das Ende einer Legende*”, in H. Verbeke (ed.), *Auschwitz: Nackte Fakten*, Vrij Historisch Onderzoek, Berchem 1995, pp. 101-162 (online: [vho.org/D/anf/Mattogno.html](http://vho.org/D/anf/Mattogno.html); Engl.: [vho.org/GB/Books/anf/Mattogno.html](http://vho.org/GB/Books/anf/Mattogno.html)).

<sup>34</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-332-219.

<sup>35</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-233-33/38.

emplary in those days, and this goes all the more for sewage treatment facilities, which were built for both camps with a great investment of resources and in a technically outstanding fashion.

The document last quoted continues:

*“The Brigadier General acknowledges the foremost urgency of these matters and promises to do everything possible to ensure rectification of the shortcomings. He is somewhat surprised, however, that on the one hand, the medical side presents him with reports giving a very favorable account of the sanitary and hygienic conditions, and on the other he is then immediately confronted with reports to the exact opposite effect. The Chief of the Central Construction Office is hereby instructed to present suggestions for rectification by May 15, 1943.”* (Emphasis added.)

Given the widespread disinformation, we consider it appropriate to also speak of the physicians of Auschwitz themselves, that is, of their tasks and activities, based on the files in our possession. The relevant files reposing in the Auschwitz Archive would of course be better suited to this, but to date we have not been able to review them. From a physician who spent a brief time on a cursory review, we are aware of the bulk of these holdings. In his words: *“A gigantic amount.”* For example, the infirmary records have been preserved in their entirety up to 1943. The garrison physician of Auschwitz took care of everything that was his job, and much more. We shall thus mention only a few particulars that relate to our present topic. It began with the toilet facilities; here he enforced changes which he considered necessary. For example: lids on the toilets, because otherwise *“[...] a great danger of epidemics is inevitable.”*<sup>36</sup> These lids were ordered by the Amtschef C of the WVHA (Economic Administrative Main Office) on May 10, 1943.<sup>37</sup> It ended with roofing matters related to the gypsy kindergarten:

*“For the damaged roofs of kindergarten blocks 29 and 31 in the Gypsy Camp I request 100 rolls of roofing felt (very urgent).”*<sup>38</sup>

In between, on May 28, 1943,<sup>39</sup> he selected six circulating air delousing facilities which – as was noted down by hand – were ordered on May 29, 1943, by the Construction Office’s expert on heating matters, Jährling. Then there is an account of a water quality test on June 1, 1943,<sup>40</sup> etc. This extensive correspondence resulted in separate subject files in the filing system of the Central Construction Office, such as *“Sanitary Conditions”*.<sup>41</sup>

The physician’s field of work was great and varied indeed. Even ensuring that the inmates’ kitchen personnel be frequently examined – including laboratory tests of their stool, etc. – was part of his job. Dr. Wirths truly saw to absolutely everything! This is evident from the documents.

One comment made by Pressac<sup>42</sup> strikes us as highly important; he concludes from *“[...] Dr. Wirths’ blunt report of April [...]”* that *“the terms ‘Sondermaßnahme’ and ‘Sonderbaumaßnahme’ [special measures and special construction measures] [...] are not used in a criminal context [...]”*. Evidently Pressac has realized by now that the German prefix ‘Sonder-’ [special] has no negative connotations whatsoever – rather the opposite. The garrison physician’s reminders and admonitions even increased over time. We shall return to this later.

On balance one must conclude that, just as today, while there were *“opportunists”* and *“careerists”* in those days, there were also – as our example shows – SS-men with backbone and a sense of duty, professional ethics and the courage to stand up for their beliefs.

<sup>36</sup> RGVA 502-1-322-219.

<sup>37</sup> RGVA 502-1-322-31.

<sup>38</sup> From a letter dated March 23, 1944, to the Central Construction Office, RGVA 502-1-332-175.

<sup>39</sup> RGVA 502-1-332-28.

<sup>40</sup> RGVA 502-1-332-212.

<sup>41</sup> RGVA 502-1-149-135.

<sup>42</sup> J.-C. Pressac, *op. cit.* (Note 3), p. 105, Note 256.

At the end of the comments section of the Memorandum of May 9, 1943, we find:

*“As stop-gap measure until that time, the Brigadier General provides the loan of a new shortwave delousing train.”* (Emphasis added.)

## 2.4. Shortwave Delousing Facilities

### 2.4.1. History of the Shortwave Facilities

Together with the Siemens-Reiniger Werke AG, which developed medical instruments, the Siemens-Schuckertwerke GmbH (henceforth called SSW) developed the shortwave facilities after the outbreak of the war brought with it the problem of pest extermination. At that time, the German eastern border was also the border for lice and fleas and other vermin. This new means of combating pests was directed first and foremost at lice as the carriers of spotted fever. The aim was, on the one hand, to improve upon the long exposure times necessary for hot-air or gas methods, and on the other hand, to find a means that would also kill off the spotted fever microorganisms, as well as to improve efficiency.

Together with the Reich Biology Institute in Dahlem, led by Professor Dr. Hase, SSW conducted successful tests in the high-frequency field of a shortwave transmitter. In operating the transmitter that had broadcast the 1936 Olympic Games it had already been found that shortwave frequencies had previously unknown effects on insects. These tests were then demonstrated to civilian and military authorities. Soon the advantages of these new facilities over the ones used previously became apparent. Once considerable difficulties were overcome, they achieved not only a great throughput in a very short treatment time, but also absolute certainty in the killing of lice and nits. The pests were dead only 1 to 2 seconds after the shortwave field was activated. What was more, the typhus bacteria could also be killed in the process. The suitability of these facilities for large camps aroused the interest of the Reichsführung-SS.

Many different kinds of camps grew up in the course of the war. Today, particularly maps in Polish books<sup>43</sup> show the large number (5,877) of these camps in what used to be the “*General Government*”. These were not all concentration camps. There were considerably more labor camps and others. Next to almost every larger factory there was a “*guest or foreign workers’ camp*”. However, here is not the place to go into greater detail on this topic. Large sectors of German industry, for example, were transferred into areas which, for the time, were not accessible to the bomber planes of Germany’s enemies. Industries essential to the war effort were not moved underground until later. We refer the reader to the immensely informative book *Siemens 1918-1945*.<sup>44</sup> A detailed, information-packed and relevant reference section is included. On page 168, for example, we read:

*“On May 31, 1944, 7.126 million foreign workers were employed on the territory of the Reich; by fall the number had risen to about 7.7 million.”*

In *Heft von Auschwitz* issue 14,<sup>45</sup> other camps are also named:

*“In 1943 there were more than a dozen secondary camps in Gliwice [Gleitwitz; auth.], and in Upper Silesia there were more than 225 camps for inmates, prisoners-of-war and forced laborers.”*

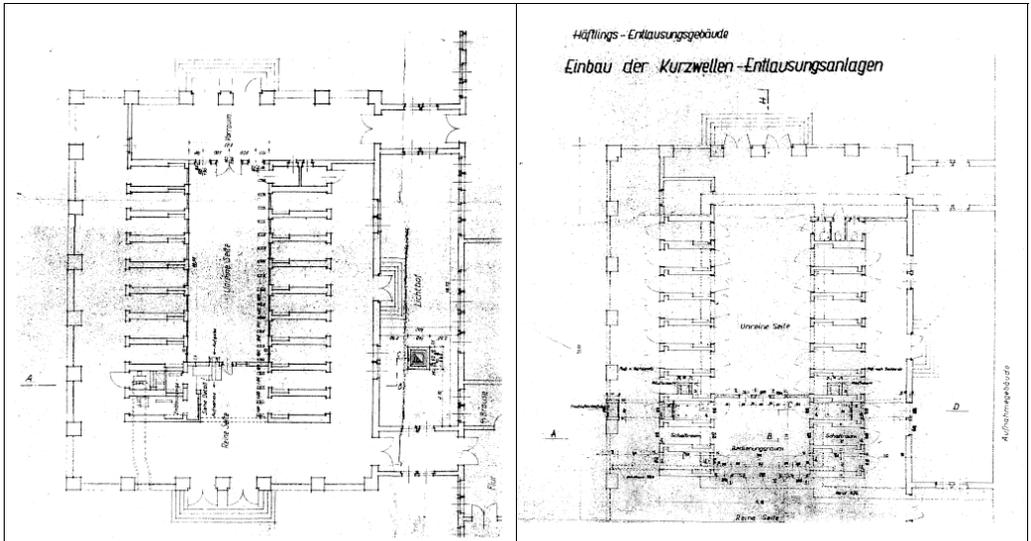
It took personnel and materials support from the SS-Reichsführung to continue developing the high frequency facilities. Interest grew when these developments were demonstrated. The Wehrmacht (Army) ordered a first installation for its own use which, however, was never completed.

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<sup>43</sup> *Obozy hitlerowskie na ziemiach polskich 1939-1945*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warschau 1979 (Encyclopedia).

<sup>44</sup> Wilfried Feldenkirchen, *Siemens 1918-1945*, R. Piper GmbH & Co. KG, Munich 1995.

<sup>45</sup> *Heft von Auschwitz*, no. 14, Verlag staatliches Auschwitz Museum, 1973.



**Illustrations 1 and 2:** Plan sketches of the building that was to house the shortwave delousing facility.

#### 2.4.2. Orders

Not so the SS; they ordered five facilities to begin with, and after the first mobile one (“*Osten II*”) proved effective in Lublin in 1943 they ordered another five stationary facilities. The aforementioned mobile installation fit onto the trailer of a truck manufactured by Dromos-Werke of Leipzig. Operating the installation merely required a 380-volt mains connection or a portable electrical generator. There is a privately-owned film about this facility which was probably filmed in Lublin; unfortunately it is not very instructive, as it does not show the interior of the truck trailer. The main part of the process is the introduction of the parcels of clothing sideways into the vehicle on the conveyor belt. To date the owner of the film is reluctant to publish it because he fears the persecution that might result from such an action.

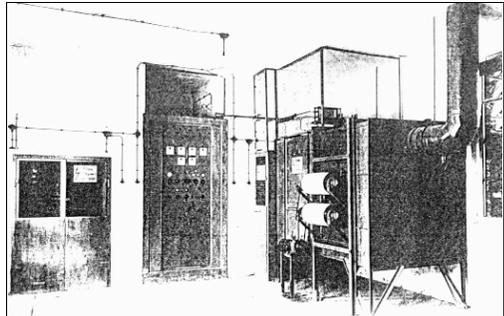
#### 2.4.3. Commission

Initially these facilities were supposed to be constructed for the front-line troops; thus, they were to be mobile (on wheels) and capable of delousing the gear of 400 men per hour. As developments progressed, the stationary model was given preference. These were to be set up at troop reassignment centers. The facilities were to be accessible within a few hours or at most a day.

#### 2.4.4. Development

The first mobile installation “*Osten II*” was developed further into the stationary facility “*Osten III*” for the Auschwitz Main Camp. Eventually it was installed in the building intended for it, BW160 in the Main Camp, which was under construction at that time. Initially 19 Zyklon B delousing chambers were supposed to be built in this facility, but this never happened – perhaps as a result of the development of the ultra-shortwave facilities. Instead, while retaining the function of the rest of the building, the shortwave facility was planned for installation in four of the chambers (*illustra-*

tion 1, previous page).<sup>46</sup> Only a short time later the plans were expanded, that is, modified to be expandable over eight chambers<sup>47</sup> (illustration 2, previous page). We even have a photo of the shortwave facility that was in service (illustration 3),<sup>48</sup> as well as the installation plan for the facility itself. We also have the further planning documents, including mass calculations and detail plans. Fifteen inmates were put to work operating the disinfection facility. A temporary heating system also had to be built in order to operate the showers installation.



Photos der stationären Kurzwellenentlausungsanlage im BW 160 des KL Auschwitz 1944

**Illustration 3:** Photo of the shortwave delousing facility, taken in Auschwitz in 1944.

#### 2.4.5. Method of Operation of the Shortwave Facilities

The louse-infested clothing was dampened slightly with a spray-gun. A photo shows this process as it was performed in Auschwitz.<sup>48</sup> Then the bagged clothing was piled into bundles of  $12 \times 40$  cm in cross-section and placed on transport belts, which carried it through the high-frequency generator's capacitor field. Efficiency was 400 kilograms clothing per hour.

#### 2.4.6. Installation of the Shortwave Delousing Facilities

Delivery of the first facility was promised for May 15, 1943.<sup>49</sup> This probably led to many a planning debacle, for example that other, expensive delousing facilities could not be built or completed because a quick delivery of the shortwave facility was expected. Reasons for the delays that occurred may have included SSW's underestimation of the development work that was yet necessary, or the increasing difficulty in obtaining materials, and of course also the destruction of parts of the manufacturing plant in bombing attacks. Only on June 18, 1943, Amt C of the WVHA stated additionally that the shortwave facilities had been assigned top priority.<sup>50</sup>

In a discussion on June 30, 1943, Dr. Willing of Amt C/3 stated<sup>51</sup> that

*"[...] after a pass through the ultra-shortwave field, which takes 11 to 12 seconds, all vermin as well as bacteria, germs, brood and nits are killed, and given non-stop operation, 13,000 to 15,000 pieces of clothing can be sterilized in one day."*

The installation of the mobile unit was carried out between July 16, 1943, (commission) and October 21, 1943 (last requisition of materials). The operation is documented right down to virtually the last screw.<sup>52</sup> The relevant files show not only that the parties involved in Auschwitz made all necessary preparations as quickly as possible, but also – and this is an important point to consider in an overall assessment – that they relied fully on the promises made them.

<sup>46</sup> RGVA 502-2-146.

<sup>47</sup> RGVA 502-2-149.

<sup>48</sup> Siemens archives, Munich. We thank an observant reader of *IffG* (yet to be kept anonymous) for discovering these valuable documents.

<sup>49</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-103.

<sup>50</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-34.

<sup>51</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-103/104.

<sup>52</sup> RGVA 502-1-316-356/367.



On July 15, 1943, the garrison physician confirmed<sup>53</sup> that it had been stated in the discussion of July 1, 1943, that

*"[...] the stationary shortwave delousing facility will be ready to begin operation in an estimated eight weeks, but that the mobile one will have arrived in the concentration camp Auschwitz in three weeks at the latest."*

These deadlines were not met. In the listing of July 30, 1943,<sup>52</sup> delivery of both units is announced for "early October". Further, the hourly capacity of each unit is given as " = 625 men = 15,000 men" per 24 hours. Thus, the total capacity of both shortwave facilities amounted to the clothing of 30,000 persons per day. On August 27, 1943, the construction costs of the stationary facility are given as RM 98,000,<sup>54</sup> which translates into approximately DM 1,568,000 today (ca. \$870,000). A notice of December 11, 1943,<sup>55</sup> stated that the materials and apparatus had already been received. The installation date for SSW is given as January 16, 1944, at the earliest. Work actually began on February 16, 1944.

A second stationary shortwave delousing facility for the Birkenau camp is first mentioned in March 1944.<sup>56</sup> In a telex of May 25, 1944, the Chief of Amt C III ordered that

*"[...] the shortwave delousing train be started on the road from Breslau to Auschwitz immediately."*<sup>57</sup>

The stationary shortwave facility went into operation on June 30, 1944.<sup>58</sup> On the initiative of the garrison physician a test of the facility's bacteria-killing effect was performed on July 29, 1944, by Dr. Weber, the Chief of the Waffen-SS Sanitation Institute; the results of this test may perhaps re-appear in Auschwitz in the files held there.

On Aug. 10, 1944,<sup>59</sup> the garrison physician reported to the Chief of Amtsgruppe C of the SS WVHA (Economic Administrative Main Office) "[...] on the effectiveness of the stationary shortwave delousing facility".<sup>60</sup> At this point it must be remembered that the second mobile unit is not taken into consideration in the above efficiency data and it is probably safe to assume that this deficiency was considerably greater. On Nov. 7, 1944, the Central Construction Office stated<sup>61</sup> that

*"[...] at that time there was a stationary shortwave delousing facility in concentration camp I [Auschwitz] and a mobile one in concentration camp II [Birkenau]."*

According to a detailed report, further developments and modifications were made to the remaining facilities that had been ordered.

## 2.5. Comparisons

The advantages of the shortwave delousing facilities become apparent in a comparison with the other types of procedures. Using the Zyklon B method,<sup>30</sup> treatment of the clothing to be disinfested required 70 to 75 minutes. The Topf delousing ovens in BW32 took 60 to 80 minutes.<sup>62</sup> For the

<sup>53</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-99.

<sup>54</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-23.

<sup>55</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-72.

<sup>56</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-61R.

<sup>57</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-45.

<sup>58</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-7.

<sup>59</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-7/8.

<sup>60</sup> For the exact wording, cf. our original work, *op. cit.* (Note 5).

<sup>61</sup> RGVA 502-1-332-1.

<sup>62</sup> RGVA 502-2-149-7.

autoclaves the time requirement was similar.<sup>63</sup> In the shortwave facilities, on the other hand, 11 to 12 seconds sufficed even to kill the bacteria.<sup>64</sup>

Installation of all the disinfestation facilities in BW32 cost RM 153,000.<sup>65</sup> The shortwave facilities in BW160, on the other hand, cost RM 75,000.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, the planning goals of the developer companies Siemens had been fully realized. Aside from that, construction costs for new buildings dropped as well, since the shortwave facilities required less space. The same goes also for installation in existing buildings, of course.

## 2.6. Summary

Evidence that has been missing for almost 50 years – the files about the shortwave delousing facilities of Auschwitz – has been rediscovered in the shape of plans and documents, even in photos and a film. They are not only proof that serious efforts were made to rid the camp of epidemics, and thus to keep the inmates alive. Their far greater significance is that they show that the inmates were so important to the Third Reich that they were given preference and priority status with regard to these new and better disinfestation facilities. The German front-line soldiers and the German civilians never enjoyed this life-saving technology – a fact that cannot possibly be overestimated. This fact is of a similar importance as the order of Dr. Mrugowsky, head of the *Hygiene-Institut der Waffen-SS*, from August 8, 1943, to all SS departments and to the committee for disinfestation and epidemic control within the Reichsminister for arming and ammunition:<sup>67</sup>

*“In future times, hydrogen cyanide may only be provided in cases of a severe danger of typhus epidemics. According to previous experiences, this is only the case in concentration camps. Thus, in future times, hydrogen cyanide may only be applied for the gassing of huts in concentration camps.”*

Furthermore, the 83,000 documents in the Moscow Archives contain not so much as one proof of the “self-evidentness” of the alleged mass murder, and as far as we know, no publication to the contrary has appeared in the meantime either. This leads to one central question: given the acute shortage of labor in the armaments industry, who could have benefited from the deliberate murder of even a single inmate? Does anyone seriously believe that this would have been tolerated? Any such murderers would have been hauled into court for “undermining military efficiency” or for “sabotage”. Pressac has neglected to this date to address this question. No historian has yet answered it either.

Similarly, another central question is also still open: why was a construction proposal submitted, on Sept. 30, 1943, to the tune of RM 32,200,000 for Birkenau alone, if the intent was to kill the inmates?<sup>68</sup> In today’s currency (1 RM had approximate purchasing power parity with 10 US-Dollar today) the estimated construction costs amount to \$322,000,000 – that is more than a third billion US-Dollar. Construction and the attendant spending proceeded as planned – the documents prove this. An analysis of the implementation of the construction project is presently in preparation for publication. We wish to state at this time that we have in our possession the complete and detailed construction proposal, that is, the calculations as well as the plans and sketches.

We are painfully aware that the entire shortwave delousing topic points to some of the SS plans and actions as being pregnantly humane, thus opening us to the legal charge in Germany of *Verharmlosung* (minimization) of the SS – a wholly evil organization according to the Nuremberg

<sup>63</sup> RGVA 502-1-335-11/12.

<sup>64</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-103.

<sup>65</sup> RGVA 502-2-149-32.

<sup>66</sup> RGVA 502-1-333-84.

<sup>67</sup> Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden, 36342-5.

<sup>68</sup> RGVA 502-1-238-10.

show trials. But a scientific accounting of history about Auschwitz compels our work – rather than politically correct acceptance in the Berlin salon *Kaffeeklatsch*.

### 3. “Gas-Tight” Doors in Auschwitz

#### 3.1. The Cause for This Investigation

The word *gas* alone takes on a sinister undertone as soon as it is used in the context of *Auschwitz*. This *psychology of horror* is precisely what is often used to escalate harmless terms, which appear in the correspondence of the Central Construction Office of the concentration camp Auschwitz, into purported evidence for the mass murder. The ordering and installation of actually or even only allegedly gas-tight doors in buildings of the camp Auschwitz-Birkenau plays a central role in this. From the fact that the term “*gas-tight door*” appears in various documents from the Central Construction Office of Auschwitz, the subject literature has drawn the – untenable – conclusion (frequently without bringing any further proofs) that these occurrences are evidence for the construction of execution gas chambers. In fact, however, the documents in question not only supply no indication whatsoever for the existence of such chambers, as shall be shown in the following. They also usually indicate that these doors were used, or were to be used, for a completely different purpose, namely to seal delousing gas chambers. To date there has also been no examination of whether the doors used in Auschwitz were in fact *gas-tight* doors in the technical sense, *i.e.*, doors suited to hermetical sealing for purposes of absolutely locking poisonous gases in or out. In the following this omission shall be rectified.

#### 3.2. The Task

Let us say at the outset that there were indisputably gas chambers in Auschwitz which were used for the eradication of vermin and in which Zyklon B was used. These rooms were also called “*gas chambers*” on the building plans, for example the extensions of Buildings (BW) 5a and 5b in Building Section (BA) 1.

What is disputed, however, is that there were such rooms for the gassing, *i.e.*, killing of human beings. To this day there is no material evidence for this claim. Pressac believed that he had discovered “*criminal traces*”, which he tried to promote as circumstantial evidence – an attempt which, however, failed and must perforce continue to fail, simply because he has no proof. We shall return to this.

A discussion of the statements of witnesses is beyond the scope of our present investigation since they do not affect our topic. Furthermore, they differ too much from each other and contain no irrefutable evidence or indisputable documents. It is thus logically consistent to question the truth of their contents. Therefore, since there is no evidence, we accept these “*execution gas chambers*” as no more than alleged until and unless the evidential situation changes.

Before the Second World War, there were practically no problems with lice or fleas among the civilian population of the German Reich proper. But the situation was very different beyond the eastern border of the Reich, for example in Poland, where as we know the German Wehrmacht advanced in late summer 1939. Interested persons should ask soldiers about this who were there in 1939.

It no doubt makes sense that vermin were to be found wherever many people lived in camps or in poor sanitary conditions. “*Polish conditions*” was a catch phrase in those days! We mention this here only to clarify how first-hand experience influenced people’s thinking. Very many persons were still living in those days who had relevant experience from World War I in combating vermin.

Physicians and administrations had at their disposal extensive first-hand reports about the sanitary conditions in eastern Europe.

### 3.3. Development of the Delousing Facilities

The following brief summary shall also clarify where, how many, and when gas-tight doors were necessary. After the arrival of the first 30 inmates in the concentration camp Auschwitz (Main Camp) on May 20, 1940, there were evidently no major problems as regards delousing.<sup>69</sup> In the following we list the delousing facilities that existed at that time.

One hot-air delousing facility (manufactured by Topf and Sons) was installed in Building BW 1 L in the fall of 1940.<sup>70</sup> It remained in service until it was damaged by fire on Nov. 5, 1942.<sup>71</sup> According to a listing of July 30, 1943, it was restored (manufacturer Klein) and equipped as before.<sup>72</sup> The facility conformed to a June 5, 1940, order of the Reichsführer-SS:<sup>73</sup>

“[...] henceforth no HCN, but rather hot-air delousing facilities are to be built. (Chief of Army Weapons and Commander of the Reserves.) These facilities are to be installed in extant buildings.”

In Crematorium I the first double-muffle oven was completed on July 25, 1940, the second on Feb. 22, 1941, and the third on May 30, 1942. Once the facilities were wholly finished, and given the maximum possible duration of operation (20 hours a day), the daily crematoria capacity was 120 corpses – as shown by the double-checked, correct calculations performed by Mattogno.<sup>74</sup> The chimney sustained damage due to overheating, since it was probably not designed to serve 3 crematories.<sup>75</sup>

On July 3, 1941, the Construction Office received documents regarding the delousing of material objects with hydrogen cyanide and circulation fumigation chambers (serial format), relating to the planning of BW160, the admissions building with delousing and laundry facilities for the concentration camp.<sup>76</sup>

In a circular of March 11, 1942, the WVHA changed its position on hydrogen cyanide.<sup>77</sup> It maintained its position that hot-air facilities were to be used everywhere where the use of hydrogen cyanide was too dangerous. The statement of principle, however, follows:

“The goal is the conversion of all delousing facilities to operation with HCN.”

We shall show later, with reference to BW32 and BW160, how strict a standard was applied here. Two further hot-air delousing facilities were ordered by the garrison physician on May 19, 1942. The order, to the manufacturer Hochheim, was confirmed on June 29, 1942.<sup>78</sup> This exchange proves one more time that matters relating to delousing were part of the garrison physician's duties.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *RGVA* 502-1-336-101; July 22, 1943.

<sup>70</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-332-46; Jan. 09, 1943.

<sup>71</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-332-54; Nov. 05, 1942.

<sup>72</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-332-9; July 30, 1943.

<sup>73</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-333-145; June 05, 1940.

<sup>74</sup> Carlo Mattogno, *Auschwitz: The End of a Legend*, Granata Publishing, Palos Verdes, CA, 1994 (online: [who.org/GB/Books/anf/Mattogno.html](http://who.org/GB/Books/anf/Mattogno.html)); Mattogno, “*Auschwitz. Das Ende einer Legende*”, in Herbert Verbeke (ed.), *Auschwitz: Nacht Fakten*, Vrij Historisch Onderzoek, Berchem 1995, table 3, p. 24 (online: [who.org/D/anf/Mattogno.html](http://who.org/D/anf/Mattogno.html); Engl.: [who.org/GB/Books/anf/Mattogno.html](http://who.org/GB/Books/anf/Mattogno.html)).

<sup>75</sup> *RGVA* 502-2-54-36; June 01, 1942.

<sup>76</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-332-86; July 01, 1941.

<sup>77</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-336-94; Mar. 11, 1942.

<sup>78</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-332-97; June 29, 1942.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Carlo Mattogno, “*Die ‘Gasprüfer’ von Auschwitz*”, *VffG* 2(1) (1998), pp. 13-22 (online: [who.org/VffG/1998/1/Mattogno1.html](http://who.org/VffG/1998/1/Mattogno1.html)); cf. As well *VffG* 2(2) (1998), p. 160 (online: [.../2/Leser2.html](http://.../2/Leser2.html)).

In the summer of 1942 the first “*chamber for hydrogen cyanide gassings*”, BW28, came into service in an old building of Personal Effects Depot Kanada 1.<sup>80</sup> One advantage of these chambers was that heat-sensitive objects that had to be deloused were treated with care.

On July 1, 1942, a sergeant from the gendarmerie of Auschwitz arrived and closed off the construction firms’ civilian laborers’ camp due to spotted fever.<sup>80</sup> As the voluminous correspondence in our archives confirms, this event threw all involved offices and authorities from the state, the Wehrmacht and the SS into an uproar. It was deemed possible that the epidemic could spread to the camp and the civilian population, with immeasurable consequences for, among other things, the numerous armaments factories in Silesia. The files at hand from the RGVA prove in all clarity that the subsequent re-designing of the Birkenau camp and most of all the elaboration of the crematoria was a consequence of this spotted fever epidemic.

And just at that critical time, the chimney of Crematorium I was broken off (on June 12) and repairs were not finished until Aug. 8, 1942.<sup>81</sup> Thus, cremation of victims of the epidemic was not possible during that time.

As a result, a newly revised construction program was immediately drawn up for the POW camp Birkenau. The file containing the outline of October 28, 1942, and plans was found in the War Archives in Prague, with the additional description “*Durchführung der Sonderbehandlung*” (Implementation of Special Treatment).<sup>82</sup>

On the plans contained within this file, however, only one building is marked with the express and special note “*Sonderbehandlung*” (Special Treatment), namely the disinfection facility BW32.<sup>14</sup> To date no one has produced any evidence for the common, though much-disputed claim that in this case “*Special Treatment*” amounted to killing. Building BW32 was first put into operation in the POW camp Birkenau on January 29, 1944. It housed hot-air delousing facilities pure and simple,<sup>83</sup> and thus proves the exact opposite of the alleged killing of inmates, namely that “*Special Treatment*” referred strictly to delousing measures.

Almost at the same time as Building 32, another delousing facility, Building 32a, was built in Section BA IIe, also called the Gypsy Camp. It went into service on February 17, 1944, as hot-air disinfection facility, but it was heated with electricity.<sup>84</sup>

On July 9, 1942, an offer was received from the company Berninghaus, regarding gas-tight doors; a construction diagram was included.<sup>85</sup> A detailed description and the diagram at hand reveal a type of door construction that differed radically from that of the doors that were otherwise manufactured mostly by inmates at the DAW (Deutsche Ausrüstungswerke), a company operating near the camp. The doors were offered for use with the HCN-operated circulation fumigation chambers manufactured by DEGESCH which were to be installed in the delousing facility in BW160. We shall return to this matter.

<sup>80</sup> RGVA 502-332-151; 01.07.1942.

<sup>81</sup> Jean-Claude Pressac, *op. cit.* (Note 3), Note 131.

<sup>82</sup> Historický ústav Armády České republiky. “*Bauvorhaben Kriegsgefangenenlager Auschwitz, Kostenüberschläge 28.10.1942*”, 43 pages with plans. This archive contains enormous numbers of German files, including for example the war archives of the Waffen-SS, which were inaccessible, even completely unknown until 1992, and are supposed to return to such oblivion, cf. G. Rudolf, “*Wer zu spät kommt, den bestraft das Leben*”, *VffG* 2(3) (1998), p. 165 ([vho.org/VffG/1998/3/Rudolf1\\_3.html](http://vho.org/VffG/1998/3/Rudolf1_3.html)).

<sup>83</sup> We have in our possession documents showing even the smallest details, including the diagrams and instructions for operation that go with them; readers may request copies from the publishers of this work.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. also Michael Gärtner, “*Volksverhetzung? Volksverhetzung?*”, *VffG* 1(4) (1997), pp. 244f. (online: [vho.org/VffG/1997/4/Gaertner4.html](http://vho.org/VffG/1997/4/Gaertner4.html)).

<sup>85</sup> RGVA 502-1-354-8; July 09, 1942.

At this point at the latest, the Central Construction Office could see how inadequate the doors were that had been manufactured by the DAW as “*gas-tight doors*”. They lacked all the characteristics of a truly gas-tight door.

On July 23, 1942, the entire camp area was closed off due to the spotted fever epidemic that had been introduced by the civilian laborers.<sup>86</sup> Another hot-air delousing facility from the company Klein was installed in BW 20 L of the Main Camp and came into service in the fall of 1942.<sup>70</sup>

However, it took facilities in the Birkenau camp, which was at that time under construction, to bring a noticeable relief of the situation. In Birkenau, Section a of BA 1 was finished in March 1942 and Section b in August 1942. These sections each contained a large delousing facility, each with one hot-air installation from the firm of Hochheim, one disinfection apparatus by the firm of Werner, and one sauna facility.<sup>70</sup> A chamber to be used for HCN fumigation was attached to both. The buildings with the official designation BW 5a and 5b came into service in November and December 1942 respectively. Further, a facility with a hot-air apparatus from Hochheim and a disinfection apparatus from the firm of Goedicker was put into operation in January 1943 to service the civilian laborers.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.4. Undisputed, Alleged Gas-Tight Doors

Since air-tight and heat-retaining doors were also needed for the hot-air facilities, we assume that the doors were of more or less the same construction. We shall summarize for which facilities gas-tight doors were required (as per the documents from January 9, 1943,<sup>70</sup> to July 30, 1943:<sup>72</sup>

#### 3.4.1. Concentration Camp Auschwitz

- a) Block 3, upper story: (probably) 2 inside doors
- b) Personal Effects Depot Kanada 1: (probably) 1 inside door 1 outside door

#### 3.4.2. POW Camp Birkenau

- a) BW 5a: 4 inside doors, double-leaf as per diagrams
  - b) BW 5b: 4 inside doors, double-leaf as per diagrams
- Total, 12 doors.

### 3.5. Disputed, Alleged Gas-Tight Doors

We do not intend to discuss here why we question that there were rooms for the alleged gassing of human beings in the buildings described in the following. For this reason we will also just mention briefly that we also have a different, documented opinion regarding the unnamed rooms in Crematoria IV and V. We shall go into detail about this in a separate publication.

The fact is that to this date, Pressac and others have not offered any verifiable material evidence for the alleged existence of execution gas chambers. On the contrary, Pressac even refutes some of the eyewitness testimony he himself has presented. As for the rest, the published eyewitness statements which Pressac relies on heavily are so unbelievable and abstruse that even persons with no special subject knowledge can easily recognize that they are false. In many cases, all it takes are simple calculations based on logical deductions.

Some allegations have been refuted by subject publications. Other such publications are in preparation. As in previous publications, we have weighty arguments, which yet need to be thoroughly

<sup>86</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-332-143; July 23, 1942.

supplemented and reworked into final form. Not least of all, the documentary situation, which is improving constantly, is producing many new insights and changes which must be factored in.

These preparations give rise to the sweeping question whether there really was even *one single* truly gas-tight door in Auschwitz that could have fulfilled the necessary criteria. This is the only question which we shall examine in the following.

Let us look first at the controversial claims which Jean-Claude Pressac makes with regard to gas-tight doors:<sup>87</sup>

### 3.5.1. Concentration Camp Auschwitz

- a) BW 160 Admissions Building: 38 inside doors, as per diagram.

### 3.5.2. POW Camp Birkenau

- a) BW 30 Crematorium II: 1 inside door, possibly double-leaf
- b) BW 30a Crematorium III: 1 inside door, possibly double-leaf
- c) BW 30b Crematorium IV: 3 inside doors
  - " 2 outside doors
  - " 7 windows
- d) BW 30c Crematorium V: 3 inside doors
  - " 2 outside doors
  - " 7 windows

## 3.6. Alleged Evidence for Gas-Tight Doors and Windows

Aside from verbal statements which are of no value as evidence since they are clearly based on wishful thinking, the pharmacist J.-C. Pressac – and other authors as well – offer the following documentation:

### 3.6.1. Photos of Construction Parts

In his first book, Pressac repeatedly shows photos of doors and windows that have been removed from their original locations but are allegedly supposed to correspond with those we have listed in the previous.<sup>87</sup> We shall come back to this with regard to specifically quoted illustrations.

### 3.6.2. Construction diagrams allegedly showing merely the location of construction parts

Since Pressac presents a jumble of diagrams which in part are also repetitions or preliminary stages of the final diagrams, we shall proceed similarly in this case.

### 3.6.3. Documents containing the word “gas” in some form or another

This includes particularly those documents which Pressac described as “39 criminal traces” in his chapter 8. Again, we shall go into detail here only where these “traces” are specifically mentioned.

## 3.7. General Comments on the Alleged Evidence

First we shall remark on the overall concept in question, before giving detailed reasons for our position where required. Another section will then give specifics regarding buildings and construction parts.

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<sup>87</sup> Jean-Claude Pressac, *op. cit.* (Note 12), pp. 161-171.

We must mention that only one of our working group has any on-site knowledge of Auschwitz. However, considering that most of the buildings no longer exist and that only few doors remain in situ, this fact matters little, since a detailed examination of the door (which would only be possible by taking it apart) would certainly not be permitted anyhow. Yet this is the only way to obtain the information required. Construction parts held in storage cannot provide any information regarding where they were installed more than 50 years ago, unless they had special characteristics that made them distinctive and unmistakable.

Of particular interest to us in this context are the “38 *gas-tight doors*”, allegedly kept in storage. On page 31 of his first book,<sup>12</sup> Pressac tries to give the impression that the 19 HCN circulation gas chambers in BW 160 had been finished. His brief commentary at this point reveals that he knew neither how these were built nor how they were operated. While he writes:

*“The present state of the premises makes it impossible to reconstruct the techniques employed”*,

he obviously proceeds on the assumption that there was a “*technique*”. Since in 1989 he knew nothing of the ultra-shortwave delousing facilities, Pressac probably assumed that the HCN gas chambers had been finished. That, at least, is indicated by his phrase:

*“[...] making it possible to recover 38 gas-tight doors.”*

It is typical for Pressac’s style of writing that he constantly tries to infer proof even when there is not the slightest grounds for doing so. He feigns knowledge where he doesn’t have a clue. As it has turned out, uninformed readers are not the only ones who fall for this.

The fact is that these “*Degesch chambers*” were never finished. We shall prove this further on with some documents which also show that not one of the 38 gas-tight doors for the chambers in fact existed.

### 3.7.1. Comments on Photos in General

No expert is able to judge from photographs whether a construction part such as a door, where the proper construction of those parts that are not visible is also important, is “*gas-tight*”. In the case of doors this goes, for example, for every screw that was screwed through the door panel. It is commonly known that under conditions of varying humidity and temperature, wooden construction parts warp, due primarily to the ever-changing moisture levels in the wood. It would thus be necessary to know for certain whether, when and how the individual parts were given a waterproof coating, for example. This can be decisive for the wood’s tendency to absorb moisture. However, there is no data about this. It is an even more important factor for outside doors that were or are installed on the south side of buildings, for example. Where there are considerable temperature differences between the inside and the outside, such doors warp considerably. Since none of the doors shown had more than two anchors with which they could be affixed to their frames, this was a significant shortcoming.

Ultimately, the photos in question show only one thing: namely, that either a window or a door was installed – no more. Not even the date of the photo can be determined. In the best case there are also some indications of where a component was installed. If any additional information is possible, it will be mentioned.

How great the danger of falsification is in the matter of photo captions is shown by the article “*Volksverhetzung? Volksverhetzung!*”<sup>84</sup> (Incitement of the masses).

### 3.7.2. Comments on Construction Diagrams in General

An expert cannot assess, on the basis of construction diagrams, buildings which at the time of assessment have not existed for 50 years, since there is no means for comparison. There are no photos

that permit assessment with certainty. Further, the recorded eyewitness statements diverge from each other so extremely that they are useless as evidence. There are even diagrams that supposedly show technical and architectural conditions as they existed at a given time, but which provably do not represent such conditions as they are known to have existed.

One exception is the delousing facility of BW 160. In his second book<sup>81</sup> Pressac reports about new findings regarding ultra-shortwave delousing facilities. Based on his references we were able to considerably expand our own files on the subject (cf. previous).

### 3.7.3. Comments on Other Documents in General

From the fact that someone labels or has labeled a construction part as “*gas-tight*” one cannot automatically conclude that it really is or was gas-tight. The word merely means that the object was supposed to have this property. A photo showing sufficient detail can give indications for an assessment; the same goes for text documents. However, if there is no description or specification and/or no diagram of a construction part, then there is already no foundation for such an assessment.

The documents pertaining to the aforementioned stationary ultra-shortwave delousing facility enable one to draw concrete conclusions, to follow.

## 3.8. Photos Offered As Evidence

### 3.8.1. Observations on Photos Shown

All photos cited are from J.-C. Pressac<sup>12</sup> and show exclusively construction parts made of wood. Our comments, of course, also go equally for other publications, insofar as the photos they show exhibit the same characteristics or stem from the same source.

On pp. 28 and 29, photos 14 through 19 show the outside door of a hot-air delousing facility in Block 1 of the concentration camp Auschwitz. These are the only ones that can be verifiably assigned to a specific building. Whether they are still the original doors cannot be determined. However, they are not part of our topic, unless the assumption could be proven that the construction type corresponds to that of the gas-tight doors. The captions of the photos do not correspond to the undoubtedly genuine documents.<sup>70,72</sup> One more proof that Pressac should be read with great caution. We do not wish to suggest that he deliberately sought to increase the number of delousing facilities operated with Zyklon B, merely that he did not have access to the files presently available.

Photos 13 through 18, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26 and 29/30 on pp. 41 to 52, regarding BW 28 in Kanada 1, would seem to indicate that the assumption that the doors were of the same construction type is correct (cf. *illustration 5*).

Proceeding from this, the photos show the mountings of such doors. These are: a handle of round iron, two steel straps the width of the door (and bolted through the panel!) and on the hinge side supported by blocks lagscrewed into the door frame (this is the construction method for heavy door panels). At the swing side these straps are fitted with latchbolts that turn into catches made of band



*Illustration 5: Door of a Delousing Chamber in Auschwitz. (J.-C. Pressac<sup>12</sup>, p. 49.)*

steel. The catches have threaded boreholes for securing the threaded latchbolts. At the same time these latchbolts were supposed to press the panel down gas-tight.

Felt was used as gasket material, as shown by some photos as well as by documents, e.g. the materials inventory of February 24, 1943 (Pressac,<sup>12</sup> p. 444). For this purpose, strips of felt of low elasticity, 7 mm thick and of varying width, were nailed into the panel and door frame seams. This is documented by a photo on page 61, and others. There are many other minor details of evidence with which we shall not bore our readers, but one more essential point is that not every photo shows whether the necessary 5-cm-high threshold was present on the floor in every case; no door can be sealed gas-tight along the floor without one.

This manner of door construction originated with the war-time provisional air raid shelter construction programs.<sup>88</sup> It is no doubt clear that construction parts not produced to industrial standards would have resulted in inaccuracies.

The alleged windows/doors of Crematoria IV and V were of a special type. They were window-sized but not glazed, and thus were actually more like doors at window level. The aforementioned details apply by analogy. There is no need to go into specifics.

### 3.8.2. Comments on Photos Shown

We shall be brief here because detailed descriptions of doors and excerpts of the diagram for Auschwitz, which substantiate the correctness of the following, will be presented later.

The most important criteria for a truly gas-tight door are readily to be found in the contemporaneous subject literature on air raid and HCN delousing facilities. As examples for both, we refer the reader to *Schutzraumabschlüsse*<sup>89</sup> and, respectively, to *Blausäuregaskammern zur Fleckfieberabwehr*,<sup>90</sup> since this publication already took into account the experiences gained in the first years of the war. The main criteria are:

1. Due to the highly penetrative property of HCN, absolute gas-tightness of all construction parts.
2. The door panel must fit against all parts of the door frame in a parallel and uniformly tight manner. This requires a rubber gasket. To this, people often object that there was no rubber in Germany during the war. This is true only to a degree; we had a substance that was in some respects even better than natural rubber, namely buna (this is why motorcyclists' buna overcoats dating from 1937 are still in perfect condition today, whereas such made from natural rubber are not!).
3. A 5-cm-high threshold was required.
4. The door hinges required a free axis so that the door panel could pass on the band side when being closed. *Illustration 8* shows this important point. To allow the panel to be pressed tightly to the frame but also to let it pass freely, the end of the steel strap on the pin of the lagscrewed block is not round and close-fitting in shape, but oval. This allows the panel to move. This is a necessary prerequisite for a gas-tight door, since if it cannot be pressed tightly to the frame it cannot be made gas-tight. This goes even more for felt than for buna hose gaskets.
5. As locking mechanisms, even steel doors – as we shall show – required at least 8 wedge locks, three on either side and one each at the top and bottom. The wedges made it possible to press

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Samuel Crowell, "Technik und Arbeitsweise deutscher Gasschutzbunker im Zweiten Weltkrieg", *Vierteljahrshefte für freie Geschichtsforschung (VffG)* 1(4) (1997), pp. 226-244 (online: [vho.org/VffG/1997/4/Crowell4.html](http://vho.org/VffG/1997/4/Crowell4.html); Engl.: [codoh.com/incon/incompressac.html](http://codoh.com/incon/incompressac.html)).

<sup>89</sup> R. Scholle, "Schutzraumabschlüsse", *Baulicher Luftschutz* issue 3, W. Ernst & Sohn, Berlin 1939.

<sup>90</sup> Franz Puntigam, H. Breymesser, E. Bernfus, *Blausäuregaskammern zur Fleckfieberabwehr*, Sonderveröffentlichung des Reichsarbeitsblattes, Berlin 1943.

the door panels uniformly to their frames. If this was necessary for steel doors, this goes all the more for wooden doors (cf. *illustration 7*, page 334).

None of the doors pictured met even these five criteria:

1. The doors were uniformly fastened with screws etc.
2. The doors had only two fixed points, and two bolts of limited adjustability.
3. Felt is not gas-tight.
4. The steel door straps had no adjustable axes.
5. The wooden door panels could warp. (Anyone who wishes to seriously examine this issue should at least have *read* the aforementioned study about gas chambers operated with hydrogen cyanide.)

Two photos<sup>91</sup> exist of the annex to building BW 160, belonging to the shortwave delousing facility. They prove that construction of the remaining facilities was not finished.

### 3.9. Construction Diagrams Offered As Evidence

#### 3.9.1. Observations on the Construction Diagrams Shown

We will of course restrict ourselves to points relevant to this topic. Regarding the diagrams of Crematoria II and III, therefore, it must be pointed out that the entrance door to Mortuary 1 is depicted in several different ways. There are doors which open into a room, but also such that open outwards. Further, both single and double doors are shown. The most credible diagrams are probably the status diagrams made of the completed structural shell. These diagrams are by the company HUTA of Series 109; as reproduced by Pressac,<sup>12</sup> pp. 327 and 329, they clearly show a suitable double door.

In the diagrams of Crematoria IV and V we shall only point out the depiction of the small windows/doors. The wall anchors sketched in here reveal an unusual form. They are configured in such a way that it appears that they were intended to open outwards; cf. p. 399.<sup>12</sup> Wall anchors are not generally sketched on the inside wall. How they were in fact really constructed is unknown. In the context of related documents some unusual features appear, but these are not relevant to our present topic. We have already announced a separate study on this matter.

#### 3.9.2. Comments on the Construction Diagrams Shown

As we have already stated, no indisputable findings can be based on the diagrams. However, if the doors were fashioned as double doors, then it is certain that if they were made of wood, they could not possibly have been gas-tight. The seam between the two movable panels of a double door cannot be gasketed to gas-tightness with felt. Added to this was the fact that given the shortage of skilled labor during the war, parts which were manually manufactured on-site could not have been as precisely made as industrially produced parts. This goes for the doors themselves but even more for the felt gaskets. The same goes for the windows/doors, but these are to be considered as above since in this context it is irrelevant whether they opened inwards or outwards. Most at risk is the construction shown in photos 32 and 33, p. 427, given large temperature differences between inside and outside. Aside from that, the construction shown in photos 29 and 30 is more reminiscent of a door to an ice box, of which it is known that there were some in the camps. As part of its tender of July 9, 1942, the firm of Berninghaus supplied a diagram of its door, “*Delousing Chamber Door St. 3596*”, dated March 20, 1942. Where the buildings in Auschwitz are concerned, this tender for gas-tight doors is highly significant in terms of its timing, since it had already been obtained before any

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<sup>91</sup> From the Siemens archives, Munich, for one of them see *Illustration 3*. The other was reproduced in H. Lamker, *op. cit.* (Note 5).

of the crematoria and Birkenau were being built. If, as is alleged, ‘execution gas chambers’ had been planned for these crematoria, then such doors would also have been ordered early on, but this was not done. On the other hand, such doors manufactured by the same firm were verifiably installed in the concentration camp Buchenwald, for example (note: there were *no* ‘execution gas chambers’ in Buchenwald!).

From the diagram supplied by the firm Berninghaus we present some detailed excerpts which show how great the difference was between these doors and those made by the Auschwitz-based DAW (Deutsche Ausrüstungs-Werke), which produced the allegedly gas-tight doors for the camp, largely with unskilled labor. These prove that the criteria set out in 8.2 were known:

1. Stiffer, more precise construction with the aid of steel profiles: *illustration 6* (next page)
2. More and better locking hardware: *illustration 7* (next page)
3. Free axes and wedge locks: *illustrations 8 & 9* (next page)

### 3.10. Other Documents Offered As Evidence

#### 3.10.1. Observations on the Documents Shown

Given the overall situation, we can dispense with minor points. We have already mentioned that documents are now available of which Pressac is or was not aware.

#### 3.10.2. Comments on the Documents Shown

The files contain a tender for gas tight doors for the delousing facility in BW160. It is a typical “*circulation fumigation chamber by the firm Degesch*”, about whose particular structuring and construction Pressac probably did not inform himself. For this reason he made many errors and misinterpretations here. The detailed tender and drawing, which we have in our files, was received by the Central Construction Office on July 13, 1942.<sup>95</sup> The salient point among the extensive correspondence is that these doors were not ordered until May 5, 1944.<sup>92</sup> Due to the shortwave delousing facility which had been implemented in the meantime, their number was reduced to 22.

Another important element is the May 12, 1944, letter<sup>93</sup> from the firm of Berninghaus in which they state:

“[...] *that today we no longer supply gas chamber doors of anything other than double-walled all-steel construction, since it has turned out that the doors of a construction type that economizes on steel do not meet the necessary requirements.*”

This letter was supplemented with a new offer dated May 12, 1944, including a detailed description.<sup>94</sup> The doors were ordered via registered letter of June 20, 1944.<sup>95</sup> Finally, in a letter dated November 21, 1944, the Berninghaus company asks if the ordered doors should still be delivered.<sup>96</sup> We may assume that they were not delivered.

If even the door construction types that had already been much improved in 1942 were not gas-tight, then this is an additional corroboration of our concluding position. A subject expert could not wish for better counter-evidence. A manufacturer of a much-improved but nonetheless temporary ‘gas-tight door’ who, even in times of severe steel shortage, declares only all-steel doors to be truly gas-tight and offers to supply them, can hardly be surpassed as evidence.

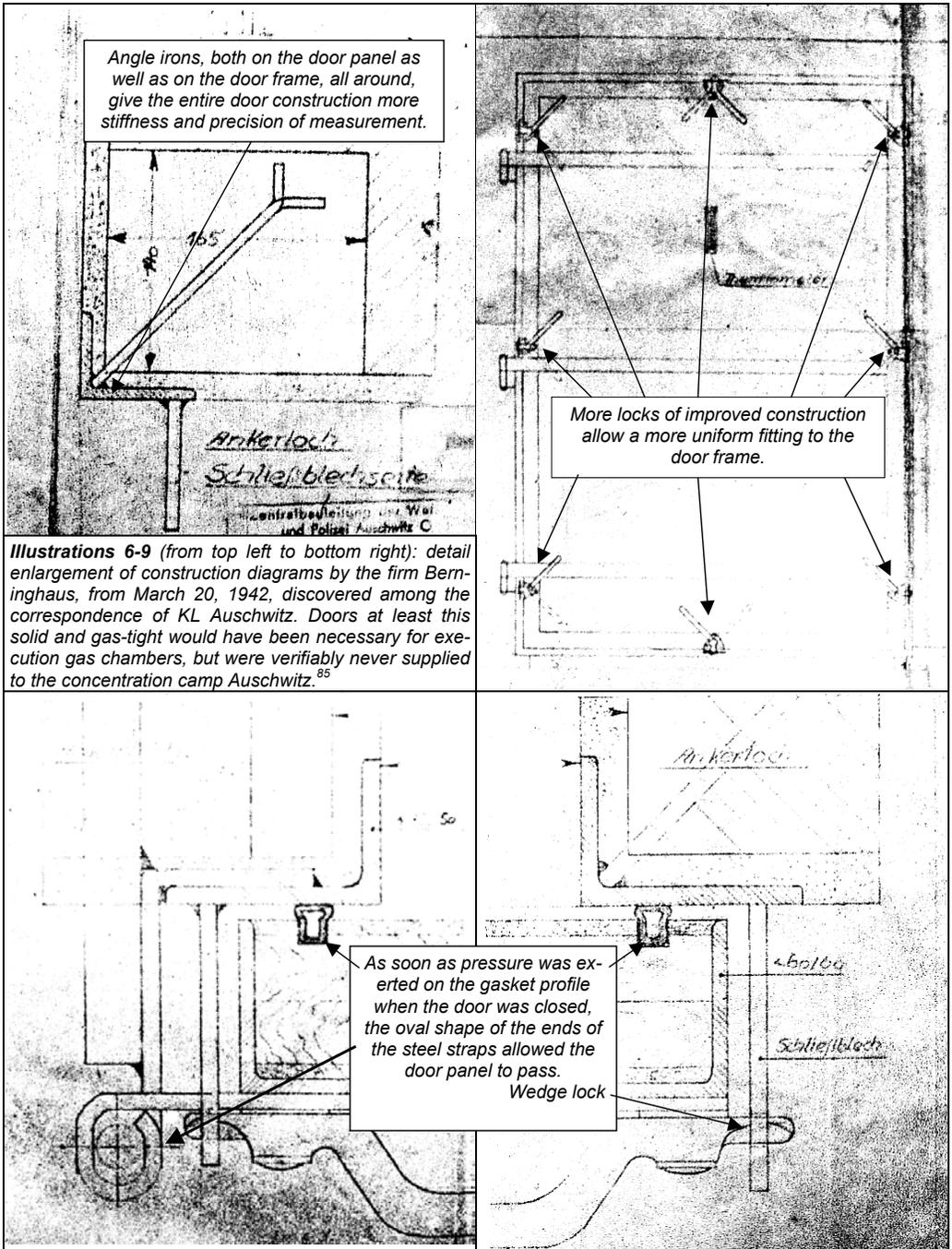
<sup>92</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-354-7; May, 5, 1944.

<sup>93</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-354-3; May 12, 1944.

<sup>94</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-354-4; 12.5.1944.

<sup>95</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-354-5; 20.6.1944.

<sup>96</sup> *RGVA* 502-1-333-2; 22.11.1944.



Illustrations 6-9 (from top left to bottom right): detail enlargement of construction diagrams by the firm Berninghaus, from March 20, 1942, discovered among the correspondence of KL Auschwitz. Doors at least this solid and gas-tight would have been necessary for execution gas chambers, but were verifiably never supplied to the concentration camp Auschwitz.<sup>85</sup>

### 3.11. J.-C. Pressac's "39 Criminal Traces"

#### 3.11.1. Observations on "39 Criminal Traces"

Completeness requires that this part of Pressac's book<sup>12</sup> also be examined. However, only those who have read and worked through this book from start to finish know what they would be getting into. To refute every nonsensical and illogical sentence and, even more so, every technically or physically incorrect statement made in this book on the subject of the gas-tight doors and windows – and unfortunately there are a great many such statements – would take an entire book.<sup>97</sup> Within the scope of the study at hand, it is impossible to provide a complete analysis of Pressac's section of 29 oversized text pages. For this reason we shall choose just one example:

1. On p. 429 Pressac writes:

*"Proposition A: A gas-tight door can be intended only for a gas chamber."*

As we shall see, this is a thoughtless and untenable claim. His further conclusions can only be correct if this statement is correct. But anyone who lived through the time in question must then conclude from Pressac's claim that Germany was full of gas chambers – for prior to the war there were legal regulations that required the construction of air raid shelters as part of new buildings, and one of the requirements was that the air locks of such shelters had to be gas-tight.<sup>88</sup> So, Pressac's proposition is false!

He claims "39 criminal traces" but offers evidence for only 34. Moreover, his 'line of reasoning' is characterized more by wishful thinking than by documented facts. Evidently he put himself (or was put?) under pressure to produce the desired evidence. There is no other way to comprehend that he turns the one point in his exposition, "gas-tight door", into 17 separate points, such as for example:

*"23. [...] 210 anchors for gas-tight door".*

We could have given him suggestions for some more, such as for example, '35 nuts for bolts in gas-tight door.' The seriousness of the topic prevents us.

#### 3.11.2. Comments on "39 Criminal Traces"

We have proved clearly and compellingly the cardinal error of not only Pressac's entire book, but 'serious' studies at large: rather than the pharmacist J.-C. Pressac, subject experts should deal with all matters that require special, *i.e.*, subject-related knowledge. A pharmacist is not the proper person to determine the presence of "gas-tight doors", just as a construction engineer would not be tolerated in a pharmacy, and rightly so.

The same, of course, also goes for the disciplines of history and law. In these cases laws even require the consultation of suitable subject experts, which are available in all fields of study. As subject expert, one must thus ask oneself: why do precisely these two disciplines continually refuse, even in violation of legal precepts, to avail themselves of such subject experts?

The section in question does not provide any evidence that other, truly gas-tight doors or windows existed. Pressac's attempt to bring evidence 'indirectly' also fails, as we shall show in a future study. The sentence which he aims at others on his p. 421 applies very much to Pressac himself:

*"There is none so blind as he that will not see."*

<sup>97</sup> Cf. also the chapter by W. Rademacher, this volume.

### 3.12. Summary

After careful examination of all photos, descriptions and documents available for analysis, we all concur in the conclusion that the ‘infamous’ gas-tight doors of Auschwitz were, in fact, not gas-tight. In particular, they lacked the following characteristics:

1. The felt used as gasketing material is not sufficiently elastic to compensate for warping of the door panel. This goes all the more for the strapped side of the door panel because here it is not possible to compensate by pressing on, since
2. there are no free axes.
3. The number of bolts is too small to fix the door panel uniformly, and there are no parts that would allow for uniform sealing pressure on the one hand and prevent distortions on the other.

The doors could not have kept gas from escaping into the buildings and the surrounding areas. Claims to the contrary of these facts are false.

However, as the correspondence from the firm of Berninghaus proves, the Central Construction Office of Auschwitz would have been able at any time to obtain solid, gas-tight steel doors, such as were manufactured by the umpteen thousands for Germany’s air raid shelters. The fact that this was not done can only be because they simply were not really needed in Auschwitz. For delousing facilities, where the aim is not to keep great numbers of people mechanically completely isolated from poison gas (as in air raid shelters) or locked into a concentration of poison gas (as in the alleged execution gas chambers), wooden doors with makeshift gaskets will do.

**There was no gas-tight door in the two camps comprising Auschwitz.**

### Abbreviations

- BA: Bauabschnitt = Building Section
- BW: Bauwerk = building
- Exterminationist: a person convinced of the theory of the extermination of concentration camp inmates
- WVHA: Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungs-Hauptamt = Economic Administrative Main Office
- RGVA: Rossiski Gosudarstvenni Vojenni Archiv, Moscow (the former *Tsentr Chranjenija Istoriko-domumental'nich Kollektzii*, Center for the Custody of Historical Document Collections, TCIDK)