

# Special Treatment in Auschwitz

Origin and Meaning of a Term

**Carlo Mattogno**



Castle Hill Publishers  
P.O. Box 243, Uckfield, TN22 9AW, UK  
2nd edition, July 2016

## **HOLOCAUST HANDBOOKS, Vol. 10:**

Carlo Mattogno:

*Special Treatment in Auschwitz: Origin and Meaning of a Term.*

Second, corrected and updated edition

Translated from the Italian by Regina Belser and Germar Rudolf

Uckfield, East Sussex: CASTLE HILL PUBLISHERS

PO Box 243, Uckfield, TN22 9AW, UK

July 2016

ISBN10: 1-59148-142-2 (print edition)

ISBN13: 978-1-59148-142-3 (print edition)

ISSN: 1529-7748

Published by CASTLE HILL PUBLISHERS

Manufactured in the United States of America and in the UK

Original Italian edition:

Carlo Mattogno: *“Sonderbehandlung” ad Auschwitz. Genesi e significato.*

Edizioni di Ar, Padua, 2000.

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Distribution: Castle Hill Publishers, PO Box 243

Uckfield, TN22 9AW, UK

shop.codoh.com

Set in Times New Roman

[www.holocausthandbooks.com](http://www.holocausthandbooks.com)

Cover Illustration: Top: arrival of Jews from Hungary at the Auschwitz-Birkenau railway ramp in spring/summer 1944, where the inmates were “selected” (foreground), and a special unit handled the deportees’ baggage (background). Left: Order for a gas-tight door for a fumigation chamber of the same kind as ordered for “special treatment of the Jews” (see Doc. 14 in the Appendix). Right: travel permit to pick up “material for special treatment” (Zyklon B for delousing Jewish deportees; see Doc. 13 in the Appendix). Bottom: the “*Zentralsauna*” in Birkenau, a large shower and disinfestation facility for the “special treatment” (cleaning) of inmates (Wiki Commons, photographer: Konrad Kurzac).

# Table of Contents

	Page
<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>PART ONE</b> .....	<b>13</b>
I. Jean-Claude Pressac's Interpretation.....	13
II. Critical Analysis of Jean-Claude Pressac's Interpretation .....	14
1. The Explanatory Reports by Bischoff.....	14
2. The Himmler Visit to Auschwitz .....	16
3. The Mystery of the Bunkers of Birkenau.....	25
4. The Four Barracks "for Special Treatment" and the Bunkers of Birkenau .....	26
<b>PART TWO</b> .....	<b>29</b>
1. The Beginning of Jewish Transports to Auschwitz.....	29
2. The Origin of "Special Treatment" in Auschwitz.....	36
3. "Special Treatment" and "Disinfestation Facility" .....	39
4. "Special Treatment" and Zyklon B: The Typhus Epidemic of Summer 1942 .....	42
5. "Special Treatment" and Disinfestation of Jewish Personal Property .....	47
6. "Special Treatment" and the New Function of the PoW Camp .....	52
7. "Special Treatment" of Jews Not Fit for Labor .....	54
8. "Special Construction Measures" .....	60
9. "Barracks for Special Measures" .....	62
10. "Special Operation" and the Erection of Sanitary Facilities .....	64
11. "Special Operations" and the Construction of Crematorium II.....	65
12. "Bathing Facilities for Special Operations" .....	70
13. "Special Operations" and the Internment of the Jewish Transports.....	76
14. "Special Operations" and the Storage of Jewish Effects.....	77
15. The "Special Operations" and Dr. Johann Paul Kremer .....	82
16. "Cremation with Simultaneous Special Treatment" .....	95
17. The Crematoria of Birkenau: "Special Facilities" and "Special Basements".....	102
18. "Special Operation Hungary" in 1944.....	105
19. "Special Operation": Interrogation by the Gestapo.....	108
20. "Special Barrack 'B'" of Auschwitz .....	109
21. "Special Units" of the Crematoria.....	111

**Conclusion ..... 115**

**Appendix ..... 117**

    Abbreviations ..... 117

    Documents ..... 118

    Bibliography ..... 151

    Index of Names..... 155

## Preface

In the anthology *Nazi Mass Murder*, Adalbert Rückerl writes of the meaning of the term “special treatment”:<sup>1</sup>

*“In all areas involving the physical extermination of people, the code word was ‘special treatment’ – Sonderbehandlung, sometimes shortened on the initials SB.”*

It cannot be disputed that in numerous documents of the Third Reich, the term “special treatment” is, in fact, synonymous with execution or liquidation,<sup>2</sup> but this does not mean that the meaning of this term *always and exclusively* had this significance. We have available to us other documents, in which “special treatment” was by no means equivalent to killing,<sup>3</sup> as well as those, in which the word described privileged treatment. Thus, for example, a document dated November 25, 1939, with the title “The Question of the Treatment of the Populace of the Former Polish Territories from a Racial-Political Standpoint” contains guidelines for the “special treatment of racially valuable children,” which consists of “exempting from resettlement” the children concerned “and rearing them in the Old Reich in proper educational institutions, according to the manner of the earlier Potsdam military orphanages, or under the care of German families.” The “special treatment of the non-Polish minorities” mentioned in the same document likewise signifies preferential treatment:<sup>4</sup>

*“The great mass of the populace of these minorities, however, is to be left in their homelands and should not be subjected to special restrictions in their daily lives.”*

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<sup>1</sup> Eugen Kogon, Hermann Langbein, Adalbert Rückerl (eds.), *Nazi Mass Murder*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1993, p. 5. The original German term is “*Sonderbehandlung*.”

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 3040-PS, from *Allgemeine Erlaßsammlung*, Part 2, A III f (treatment of foreign civilian workers), issued by the *RSHA*; as punishment for foreign civilian workers for serious crimes, the special treatment of hanging is ordered.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. for example my article “*Sonderbehandlung. Georges Wellers und der Korherr-Bericht*,” in: *Vierteljahreshefte für freie Geschichtsforschung* 1(2) (1997), pp. 71-75.

<sup>4</sup> PS-660, pp. 18, 24f.

The “special treatment” of prominent prisoners from states hostile to the Third Reich in luxury hotels with princely treatment is so well known that we need not deal with it at length.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, we have at our disposal a great number of important documents, in which the expression “special treatment” (as well as other alleged “code words” like “special measures,”<sup>6</sup> “special operation,”<sup>7</sup> or “special unit”<sup>8</sup>) exhibit an entire palette of varied meanings, which nonetheless refer to perfectly normal aspects of camp life in Auschwitz and which in no single instance indicate the murder of human beings. These documents are for the most part unknown to researchers, and those already well known have been and are given distorted interpretations by the representatives of the official historiography.

In the present study these documents are made accessible to the reader and analyzed in their historical context, and cross-references are made. In doing so, we show what the documents actually say and not what the “decipherment” and mechanistic interpretation of supposed “code words” allegedly reveal. In reality, “special treatment” was by no means a “code word,” behind which the unspeakable was concealed, but rather a bureaucratic concept, which – depending on the context of its use – designated entirely different things, all the way from liquidation to preferred treatment. This fact refutes the interpretation advocated by the official historiography, according to which “special treatment” is supposed to have *always* been synonymous with murder, with no ifs, ands, or buts.

The results of the present study of the origin and meaning of “special treatment” in Auschwitz, it should be well understood, pertain solely to the theme dealt with here. They do not extend to the existing uncontested documents – clearly not originating from Auschwitz – in which the term “special treatment” actually did refer to executions. Yet even those documents cannot alter in any way the validity of the conclusions presented here.

Carlo Mattogno  
Rome, September 5, 2003

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<sup>5</sup> *International Military Tribunal*, Nuremberg 1947, Vol. 11, pp. 336-339; first mentioned by Arthur R. Butz, *The Hoax of the 20th Century*, Historical Review Press, Brighton 1976, pp. 147-149; cf. the 4th edition, Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2015, pp. 158.

<sup>6</sup> German: “*Sondermaßnahmen*.”

<sup>7</sup> German: “*Sonderaktion*.”

<sup>8</sup> German: “*Sonderkommando*.”

## Introduction

During the investigations leading to the two Polish Auschwitz trials conducted directly after the war,<sup>9</sup> the term “special treatment” (*Sonderbehandlung*) as well as expressions related to it, such as “special operation” (*Sonderaktion*), “special measure” (*Sondermaßnahme*) etc., were systematically interpreted as “code words” for the gassing of human beings. By the end of 1946, the *Główna Komisja badania zbrodni niemieckich w Polsce* (Chief Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland) had developed the orthodox interpretation of this term that was gradually to become an unshakeable cornerstone of the orthodox narrative of Auschwitz.<sup>10</sup>

*“The real key to the decipherment of all these code words comes from the letter of Bischoff, no. 21242/43 of January 13, 1943, according to which the crematoria were indispensable facilities for carrying out the special treatment. In this document, he wrote the following verbatim:<sup>[11]</sup> ‘Above all, the doors ordered for the crematorium in the PoW camp, which is urgently required for the implementation of the special measures, are to be delivered immediately.’ The content of this letter as well as the fact that four modern crematoria with powerful gas chambers were constructed in the area of the Brzezinka [Birkenau] camp, which in the letter of December 16, 1942, are referred to as ‘special facilities’ and in the letter of August 21, 1942 (file memo no. 12115/42) as ‘bathing facilities for special operations,’ prove that the German authorities were concealing the mass-murder of millions of human beings with the code words ‘special treatment,’ ‘special measure’ and ‘special operation,’ and that the special camp, which was established for carrying out this ‘special treatment,’ was a huge extermination camp right from its inception.”*

Therefore, in order to deduce a criminal meaning from expressions beginning with “special” (*Sonder-*), the Polish commission began its “decoding” with the assumption that homicidal gas chambers were located in the crematoria of

<sup>9</sup> The Höss trial (Proces Rudolfa Hössa, March 1947) as well as the trial of the camp staff of Auschwitz (Proces Żalogi, November-December 1947).

<sup>10</sup> Jan Sehn, “*Obóz koncentracyjny i zagłady Oświęcim*,” in: *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji badania zbrodni niemieckich w Polsce*, Vol. I, Warsaw 1946, pp. 70f. The relevant section was later incorporated in the indictment of February 11, 1947, against Rudolf Höss (Höss trial, Volume 9, pp. 76f.).

<sup>11</sup> Actually, the passage cited contains an omission which has not been indicated. Cf. for this Chapter 16 of Part Two, where I analyze the document concerned.

Birkenau. Later, the official historiography switched to the converse argument: Starting from the premise that a criminal meaning was inherent in these terms, it derived from this the existence of homicidal gas chambers in Auschwitz. In this way, a pseudo-logical circular reasoning came into being which leads from expressions beginning with “special” to homicidal gas chambers, and returns back from these gas chambers to the pertinent “special” terms. In this vicious circle orthodox historiography has been trapped for decades. The term “special unit” (*Sonderkommando*) also belongs into that same “logical” framework. Orthodox historians always used this term to refer exclusively to the staff of the crematoria in order to create the illusion that criminal activities took place in these facilities.<sup>12</sup>

The opening of the Moscow Archives, despite the enormous mass of documents made accessible to researchers thereby, resulted only in insignificant corrections to the arguments developed the Poles right after the war. Jean-Claude Pressac, who was the first to study the documents of the Central Construction Office of Auschwitz, emphatically maintained:<sup>13</sup>

*“The extraordinary abundance of materials that the Soviet Army brought back permits an almost seamless reconstruction of the criminals’ inventiveness.”*

and he adds that the documentation now available makes possible

*“an historical reconstruction that does without oral or written eyewitness reports, which are ultimately fallible and become ever less accurate with time.”*<sup>13</sup>

But in Pressac’s “historical reconstruction,” his interpretation of the special treatment in Auschwitz proves to be without documentary basis. In this respect, Pressac’s method manifests enormous deficiencies.

The same applies even more to Robert Jan van Pelt, author of a 438-page expert report dedicated to a large extent to the Auschwitz camp (*The Pelt Report*). It was submitted during the libel suit of British historian David Irving against Deborah Lipstadt and her publisher Penguin Books (which ended on April 11, 2000, with Irving’s defeat). This expert report was published as a book in 2002 in a revised and expanded form.<sup>14</sup> In it, van Pelt presented a sketchy reprise of Pressac’s theses, and with regard to the topic at hand, as well as with regard to many other issues, he remained well below the quality level of the French scholar’s exposition.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> This question is discussed in Chapter 21 of Part Two.

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Claude Pressac, *Die Krematorien von Auschwitz. Die Technik des Massenmordes*, Piper, Munich 1994, p. 2. For a critique of Pressac, cf. G. Rudolf (ed.), *Auschwitz: Plain Facts*, 2nd ed., Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Robert J. van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington/Indianapolis 2002.

<sup>15</sup> See in this regard C. Mattogno, *The Real Case for Auschwitz: Robert van Pelt’s Evidence from the Irving Trial Critically Reviewed*, 2nd ed., Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2015.

According to orthodox historiography, the beginning of special treatment in Auschwitz coincided with the first “selection,”<sup>16</sup> which took place on July 4, 1942. Under this date the *Auschwitz Chronicle* notes:<sup>17</sup>

“For the first time, the camp administration carries out a selection among the Jews sent to the camp; these are in an RSHA<sup>[18]</sup> transport from Slovakia. During the selection, 264 men from the transport are chosen as able-bodied and admitted to the camp as registered prisoners. They receive Nos. 44727–44990. In addition, 108 women are selected and given Nos. 8389–8496. The rest of the people are taken to the bunker and killed with gas.”

This interpretation leads to another circular reasoning, since unregistered prisoners can be regarded as “gassed” only if one assumes *a priori* the existence of extermination facilities in the Bunkers of Birkenau, based upon mere eye-witness statements.

The new documentation mentioned by Pressac allows a complete picture to be drawn of the facilities in Auschwitz which were finished in the first half of 1942, and it permits us to verify how well-founded claims about the homicidal function of these bunkers really are.

However, instead of undertaking this verification, Pressac uncritically parroted the interpretation promoted by orthodox historiography and even attempted to round it out by referring to a document in which the expression “special treatment” appears, but which has nothing to do with the so-called bunkers. I shall examine this question more closely in Chapter 4 of Part One.

This is most certainly not the only weak point of Pressac’s method. In his “historical reconstruction,” he never even attempted to study the great abundance of recently accessible documents in which expressions beginning with “special” occur.

Despite these serious weaknesses, Pressac was the most renowned representative of orthodox historiography concerning Auschwitz.<sup>19</sup> For this reason it seemed appropriate to take his conclusions as a starting point for my investigation.

In 2014, the Auschwitz Museum published an important book containing 74 documents, many of which are pertinent to the present study and have previously been unknown or ignored.<sup>20</sup> I have dealt with this collection in detail in my book *Curated Lies: The Auschwitz Museum’s Misrepresentations, Dis-*

<sup>16</sup> The term then used by Germans was *aussortieren* (sorting out), not *selektieren*. Editor’s comment.

<sup>17</sup> Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939-1945*, H. Holt, New York 1990, pp. 191f.

<sup>18</sup> *Reichssicherheitshauptamt, RSHA* = Reich Security Main Office.

<sup>19</sup> Pressac died on July 23, 2003, at the age of 59.

<sup>20</sup> Igor Bartosik, Lukasz Martyniak, Piotr Setkiewicz, *The Beginnings of the Extermination of Jews in KL Auschwitz in the Light of the Source Materials*, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Auschwitz 2014.

*tortions and Deceptions*,<sup>21</sup> so where necessary, I will limit myself here to pointing out these new documents and referring to *Curated Lies* for further study.

\* \* \*

The purpose of the present study is the documentary examination of the hypothesis proposed by the Polish postwar commission, which was later generally appropriated by orthodox historiography, as well as the emendations made to it by Pressac. The problem of mass gassing of Jews in Auschwitz is not the immediate subject of this study, since answering the question of whether there were homicidal gas chambers in Auschwitz is not the aim here, but rather whether or not expressions beginning with “special” refer to possibly existing homicidal gas chambers or to mass gassings.

Since the analysis I proposed is of a documentary nature, the problem of the prisoners deported to Auschwitz, but not registered there, will merely be treated in passing, as I have discussed this topic in yet another dedicated study which in a way complements the present study.<sup>22</sup> After all, the documents cited in Chapters 1 and 7 of Part Two incontestably prove that in August and September of 1942 the Jews deported to Auschwitz were shipped farther to the east and that one of their destinations was a camp in Russia.

As far as possible, the discussion of the documents presented in this study follows terminological and chronological criteria, but in view of the dense interweaving of the themes treated, this is not always possible.

The references to cremation in Auschwitz come from my work dedicated to that subject,<sup>23</sup> to which I direct the reader interested in a more-detailed treatment.

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<sup>21</sup> C. Mattogno, *Curated Lies: The Auschwitz Museum's Misrepresentations, Distortions and Deceptions*, Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2016.

<sup>22</sup> C. Mattogno, *Healthcare at Auschwitz: Medical Care and Special Treatment of Registered Inmates*, Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2016 (in preparation).

<sup>23</sup> C. Mattogno, F. Deana, *The Cremation Furnaces of Auschwitz: A Technical and Historical Study*, 3 vols., Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2015.

## PART ONE

### I. Jean-Claude Pressac's Interpretation

In his book *Die Krematorien von Auschwitz*, Jean-Claude Pressac tackles the problematic nature of the term “special treatment” by explaining its documentary origin and meaning and by placing it in its historical context as follows:<sup>24</sup>

*“Himmler had simply fobbed off the horrible and criminal work on Höss, who – although a hard-boiled jailer – by no means appreciated this dubious ‘honor’ allotted to him. In order to finance this ‘program’ as well as the expansion of the camp, considerable funds were approved. Shortly before the visit of the Reichsführer of the SS, Bischoff had composed a detailed report – completed on July 15 – concerning the work underway in the main camp, according to which the projected costs would amount to 2,000,000 RM. Himmler’s visit threw the entire concept into disarray. Bischoff revised his report to conform to the wishes of the Reichsführer, who saw matters on a large, indeed even a grand scale. The costs now amounted to 20,000,000 RM, thus ten times more, and these funds were approved on September 17 by the SS WVHA.[...<sup>25</sup>]*

*Due to this unexpected windfall and because Himmler was of the opinion that the Jews undressing outdoors had a disorderly effect, Bischoff, in his second report, requested the construction of four wooden horse-stable barracks in the vicinity of the Bunkers, which were supposed to serve as undressing rooms for those ‘unfit to work.’ Each barrack cost 15,000 RM. The request was formulated as follows: ‘4 barracks, for special treatment of the prisoners in Birkenau.’ In this context, the word ‘special treatment’ surfaced for the first time at the end of July 1942. But the group of persons to whom this designation referred and its significance was precisely known only to the SS of Berlin and Auschwitz. Moreover, for the ‘special treatment,’ also referred to as ‘resettlement of the Jews,’ Zyklon B was required. These agreed-upon terms stood for the liquidation of the Jews ‘unfit for labor’ by gas in Birkenau. In order to simplify the ‘resettlement’ of the Jews, the SS of Auschwitz requested trucks. Five vehicles intended for ‘special operations’ were approved for them on September 14 by the SS WVHA in Berlin. Thus the actual act of killing was rendered as ‘special treatment’ or ‘resettlement,’ while the entire procedure (selection, transport of the ‘useless’ including their killing by poison gas) was*

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Claude Pressac, *Die Krematorien...*, *op. cit.* (note 13), pp. 56f.

<sup>25</sup> *SS Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt = WVHA SS Main Office of Business Administration.*

*designated as ‘special operation,’ an expression which did not specifically refer to a crime, since it could also have referred to a non-criminal act. The trucks actually served to bring the Jews ‘unfit for labor’ from the first ‘loading ramp’ of the Auschwitz railway station, where the selection of those ‘fit’ and ‘unfit for labor’ took place, to the Bunkers 1 and 2.”*

Later Pressac returns to this question again:<sup>26</sup>

*“Chiefly in the period from December 10 to 18, the construction office set the projected amount of material required (cement, limestone, bricks, iron, non-ferrous metals, wood, stone, gravel, etc.) for all current and future building plans in the PoW camp of Birkenau. Forty-one building sites were listed in the inventory. They were for entirely different purposes: prisoner barracks with their related sanitary facilities, sick-wards and delousing facilities, the four crematoria, barbed-wire fencing and watchtowers, facilities for the SS guard units, the commandant’s headquarters, the bakery, residential barracks for the civilian work force, roads and railway lines for the route between Birkenau and the Auschwitz railway station. All building sites, even the sauna for the SS troops, were catalogued in the following manner:*

*‘Regarding: PoW camp Auschwitz  
(Carrying out of special treatment)’*

*That represented an enormous ‘administrative’ slip, which moreover was repeated one hundred and twenty times, and which confirms quite clearly that, as of late November/early December, the PoW camp Birkenau was no longer a prisoner of war camp, but rather had become in its totality a place where ‘special treatments’ were carried out.”*

As we have seen, for Pressac “special treatment” means the “liquidation of the Jews ‘unfit for labor’ by gas in Birkenau.”

Let us now analyze the essential points of this interpretation.

## II. Critical Analysis of Jean-Claude Pressac’s Interpretation

### 1. The Explanatory Reports by Bischoff

Pressac’s reconstruction of the historical context in which he situates the origin of “special treatment” is devalued from the very start by a grave error of interpretation: He assumes that Bischoff, the chief of the Central Construction Office, had prepared an initial report on the Auschwitz camp that contained a preliminary cost estimate of 2 million Reichsmarks, and that this was rejected by Himmler on the occasion of his visit to the camp on the 17th and

<sup>26</sup> Jean-Claude Pressac, *Die Krematorien...*, *op. cit.* (note 13), pp. 77f.

18th of July 1942. Pressac bases this assumption on the claim that Bischoff revised “his report in accord with the wishes of the *Reichsführer*” and raised the proposed estimate of costs to 20 million Reichsmarks.

In reality, the first explanatory report refers to the work already carried out in the first and second fiscal year of the war.<sup>27</sup> This is established quite unambiguously at the end of the document:<sup>28</sup>

*“The enlargement of the concentration camp, described here, was carried out in the 1st and 2nd fiscal year of the war.”*

The completion dates, which applied relative to the fiscal year of the war, were so exactly adhered to that, for example, only the installation of two furnaces for the crematorium of the Main Camp (Auschwitz I) was listed, although the third had already been installed three and a half months before the report was prepared.<sup>29</sup>

Bischoff’s second report, which according to Pressac is said to have been “corrected” on the instruction of Himmler, is in reality quite simply the explanatory report extended to the *third* fiscal year of the war, as is once again clearly specified at the end of the document:<sup>30</sup>

*“Already during the 2nd fiscal year of the war, a number of building projects were carried out; the others were begun in the 3rd fiscal year of the war and pushed forward under the greatest possible exertion of the entire Construction Office<sup>[31]</sup> and with every means available to it.”*

Precisely because this report concerns the building program for the third fiscal year of the war, it mentions the installation of the third furnace (per the above-mentioned case) of the crematorium of the Main Camp.<sup>32</sup> It seems incredible that Pressac did not grasp this elementary distinction.

Just how unfounded is the claim that the new explanatory report originated in Himmler’s visit of July 17 and 18 can be seen from the fact that in its fundamental points the program had already been approved in June 1941 by the Main Office of Budget and Construction: In a letter from this office to the camp commandant dated June 18, 1941, which contains a list of construction projects approved for the third fiscal year of the war (October 1, 1941 to Sep-

<sup>27</sup> According to the protocols of Office II of the Headquarters of Budget and Buildings, the second fiscal year of the war ended on September 30, 1941.

<sup>28</sup> “*Erläuterungsbericht zum prov. Ausbau des Konzentrationslagers Auschwitz O/S.*” RGVA, 502-1-223, pp. 1-22, cited on p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6 and 16.

<sup>30</sup> “*Erläuterungsbericht zum Bauvorhaben Konzentrationslager Auschwitz O/S.*” July 15, 1942. RGVA, 502-1-220, pp. 1-52, cited on p. 19.

<sup>31</sup> The Construction Office of the Waffen SS and Police of Auschwitz, Auschwitz Concentration Camp, and Auschwitz Agriculture directed the construction project for SS quarters, the Auschwitz Concentration Camp, and the agricultural operations of Auschwitz. See Chapter 6 of Part Two.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10 and 23.

tember 30, 1942), twenty such projects are already listed.<sup>33</sup> The implementation of the construction project Auschwitz Concentration Camp was based upon three cost estimates: The first, dated October 31, 1941, foresaw an expenditure of 2,026,000 RM; the second, bearing the same date, specified a figure of 4,630,000 RM; and in the third from March 31, 1942, a sum of 18,700,000 RM was given.<sup>34</sup>

Pressac does outright violence to the text when he maintains that the relevant explanatory report was “pre-dated to the 15th of July 1942, since it was only composed at the end of July and sent to Berlin on August 3, 1942.”<sup>35</sup>

However, there is no document indicating that the report in question was written at the end of July. The single document cited by Pressac in connection with this is a letter of August 3, 1942 from Bischoff to the SS *WVHA*, in which the chief of the Central Construction Office of Auschwitz delivered to Office CV the outline of the proposals,<sup>36</sup> including the explanatory report, the cost estimate and the building development plan for the construction project of “Auschwitz Concentration Camp,” “agricultural operations,” and “Auschwitz Construction Depot.” This had been ordered by Office CV/1 of the SS *WVHA* in a letter of June 3, 1942, to which Bischoff makes explicit reference in his relevant letter.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that the explanatory report was sent to the SS *WVHA* on August 3, 1942 in no way proves that it had been “composed at the end of July” and “pre-dated to the 15th of July 1942.” Thus, Himmler’s visit did not throw anything “into disarray.” Pressac has committed a colossal blunder.

## 2. The Himmler Visit to Auschwitz

Moreover, within the framework of his “historical reconstruction,” Pressac construes a connection between the “four barracks for special treatment” of prisoners in Birkenau and the so-called Bunkers 1 and 2, in that he deduces the origin of the barracks from a personal intervention of Himmler with Bischoff; Himmler, according to Pressac, had found in particular that “the Jews undressing outdoors had a disorderly effect.” Thereupon Bischoff is supposed to have added the requisition of such barracks in his second report in order to fulfill Himmler’s wishes.

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<sup>33</sup> RGVA, 502-1-11, p. 37.

<sup>34</sup> RGVA, 502-1-24, p. 318.

<sup>35</sup> Jean-Claude Pressac, *Die Krematorien...*, *op. cit.* (note 13), p. 137, footnote 144.

<sup>36</sup> The proposals for the incorporation of the building plans in the scope of the construction capacity of Plenipotentiary Construction in the 3rd fiscal year of the war. Cf. for this the letter of Kammler to the Central Construction Office dated June 14, 1942. RGVA, 502-1-319, p. 189.

<sup>37</sup> Letter of Bischoff to the SS-*WVHA* dated August 3, 1942. RGVA, 502-1-22, page number illegible.

This interpretation starts from the hypothesis – incessantly repeated and never proven – that Himmler had attended a gassing of human beings in one of the two bunkers on his visit to Auschwitz on July 17–18, 1942. This hypothesis is supported solely on the basis of the description of the Himmler visit by Rudolf Höss, which originated in a Polish prison, and which has been adopted by Danuta Czech's *Auschwitz Chronicle*. In view of the great significance of this question, I am giving here, in spite of its length, the complete statement by Höss:<sup>38</sup>

*“The next meeting was in the summer of 1942, when Himmler visited Auschwitz for the second and last time. The inspection lasted two days and Himmler looked at everything very thoroughly. Also present at this inspection were District Leader Bracht, SS General Schmauser, Dr. Kammler, and others. The first thing after their arrival was a meeting in the officers’ club. With the help of maps and diagrams, I had to show the present condition of the camp. After that we went to the construction headquarters, where Kammler, using maps, blueprints, and models explained the planned or already progressing construction. He did not, however, keep quiet about the difficulties that existed which hindered the construction. He also pointed out those projects which were impossible not only to start, but to finish. Himmler listened with great interest, asked about some of the technical details, and agreed with the overall planning. Himmler did not utter a single word about Kammler’s repeated references to the many difficulties. Afterwards there was a trip through the whole area of concern: first the farms and soil enrichment projects, the dam-building site, the laboratories and plant cultivation in Raisko, the cattle-raising farms and the orchards. Then we visited Birkenau, the Russian camp, the Gypsy camp, and a Jewish camp. Standing at the entrance, he asked for a situation report on the layout of the swamp reclamation and the water projects. He also wanted a report on the intended expansion projects. He watched the prisoners at work, inspected the housing, the kitchens, and the sick bays. I constantly pointed out the shortcomings and the bad conditions. I am positive he noticed them. He saw the emaciated victims of epidemics. The doctors explained things without mincing words. He saw the overcrowded sick bays, and the child mortality in the Gypsy camp and he also witnessed the terrible childhood disease called noma (a gangrenous mouth disease in children weakened by disease and malnutrition). Himmler also saw the overcrowded barracks, the primitive and totally inadequate toilet and wash facilities. He was told about the high rate of illness and the death rate by the doctors and their causes. He had everything explained to him in the greatest detail. He saw everything in stark reality. Yet he said absolutely nothing. He really gave me a tongue lashing in Birkenau, when I went on and on about the terrible conditions. He screamed, ‘I don’t want to hear anymore about any existing difficulties! For an SS officer*

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<sup>38</sup> Steven Paskuly (ed.), *Death Dealer. The Memoirs of the SS Kommandant at Auschwitz*, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, N.Y., 1992, pp. 286-290.

*there are no difficulties. His task is always to immediately overcome any difficulty by himself! As to how? That's your headache, not mine!*' Kammler and Bischoff got the same answers. After inspecting Birkenau, Himmler witnessed the complete extermination process of a transport of Jews which had just arrived. He also looked on for a while during a selection of those who would work and those who would die without any complaint on his part. Himmler made no comment about the extermination process. He just looked on in total silence. I noticed that he very quietly watched the officers, the NCOs and me several times during the process. The inspection continued to the Buna Works, where he inspected the plant as thoroughly as he had done with the prisoner workers and how they did their jobs. He saw and heard about their state of health. Kammler was told in no uncertain terms, 'You complain about problems, but just look at what the I.G. Farben plant has accomplished in one year in spite of having the same problems as you!' Yet he said nothing about the fact that I.G. Farben had thousands of experts and approximately thirty thousand prisoners available at that time. When Himmler asked about the work quotas and the performance of the prisoners, the spokesmen for I.G. Farben gave evasive answers. Then he told me that no matter what, I had to increase the prisoners' output of work! Again it was up to me to find a way to accomplish this. He said this in spite of being told by the district leader and by I.G. Farben that soon the food rations for all prisoners were to be considerably decreased; even though he saw for himself the general conditions of the prisoners. From the Buna Works we went to the sewer gas installations. There was no program at all because the materials were not available. This was one of the sorest points at Auschwitz and was everyone's main concern. The almost untreated sewage from the main camp was draining directly into the Sola River. Because of the continuing epidemics raging in the camp, the surrounding civilian population was constantly exposed to the danger of epidemic infections. The district leader quite clearly described these conditions and begged Weise to remedy this situation. Himmler answered that Kammler would work on the matter with all his energy.

Himmler was much more interested in the next part of the inspection, the natural rubber plantations Koc-Sagys. He was always more interested in hearing positive reports rather than negative ones, The SS officer who was able to give only positive reports and was clever enough to show even the negative things in a positive light was both lucky and enviable.

On the evening of the first day of the inspection tour, all the guests and camp officers of Auschwitz were present at a dinner. Himmler asked all of them to introduce themselves before dinner; to those he was interested in, he asked about their families and the various duties they performed. During the dinner he questioned me more closely about some of the officers who caught his special attention. I took this opportunity and explained my needs concerning staffing. I stressed in detail the large number of officers who were unable to run a concentration camp and their poor leadership qualities concerning the guard

troops; I also asked him to replace many of them and increase the number of guard troops. 'You will be surprised,' he answered, 'to see how you will have to deal with impossible leadership types. I need every officer, NCO, and soldier that I can use on the front lines. For these reasons it is impossible to increase your guard units. Just get more guard dogs. Invent every possible technical way to save on manpower to guard the prisoners. My deputy of the dog squad will soon acquaint you with the modern, up-to-date deployment of guard dogs to illustrate how the number of guards can be reduced. The number of escapes from Auschwitz is unusually high and has never before happened to such a degree in a concentration camp. Every means,' he repeated, 'every means that you wish to use is perfectly all right with me to prevent escapes or attempts! The epidemic of escapes at Auschwitz must be stopped!'

After dinner the district leader invited Himmler, Schmauser, Kammler, Caesar, and me to his house near Katowice. Himmler was also supposed to stay there because on the following day he had to settle some important questions concerning the local population and resettlement with the district leader. Even though he had been in a very bad mood during the day and had hardly talked with civility to any of us, during the evening he was just the opposite in our small circle; He was in a very good mood that evening, charming and very talkative, especially with the two ladies, the wife of the district leader and my wife. He discussed every topic that came up in conversation. the raising of children, new houses, paintings, and books. He told about his experiences with the Waffen SS divisions at the front lines and about his front line inspection tours with Hitler. He carefully avoided mentioning, even with a single word, anything that he had seen during the day or any matters concerning official' business. Any attempt by the district leader to bring business into the conversation was ignored by Himmler. We broke up quite late. Himmler, who usually drank very little alcohol, that evening had a few glasses of red wine and smoked, which was another thing he didn't usually do. Everyone was captivated by his lively stories and cheerfulness.' I had never seen him like that before. On the second day Schmauser and I picked him up at the district leader's house, and the inspection continued. He looked at the original camp, the kitchen, and the women's camp. At that time the women were located in the first row of barracks, numbers 1 to 11, then next to the SS Headquarters building. Then he inspected the stables, the workshops, Canada, and the DAW (German armaments factories),<sup>[39]</sup> the butcher shop, the bakery, the construction units, and the planning board for the troops. He examined everything thoroughly and saw the prisoners, asked about their reasons for being there, and wanted an accurate count.

He did not allow us to lead' him around. Instead he demanded to see the things he wanted to see. He saw the overcrowding in the women's camp, the

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<sup>39</sup> This is a mistranslation of the German term *Ausrüstung*, which means equipment, not armament (the German word for armament is *Rüstung*).

*inadequate toilet facilities, and the lack of water. He demanded to see the inventory of clothing from the quartermaster, and saw that everywhere there was a lack of everything. He asked about the food rations and extra rations given for strenuous labor down to the smallest detail. 'In the women's camp he wanted to observe the corporal punishment' of a woman who was a professional criminal and a prostitute. She had been repeatedly stealing whatever she could lay her hands on. He was mainly interested in the results corporal punishment had on her. He personally reserved the decision about corporal punishment for women. Some of the women who were introduced to him and who had been imprisoned for a minor infraction he pardoned. They were allowed to leave the camp. He discussed the fanatical beliefs of the Jehovah's Witnesses with some of the female members. After the inspection we went to my office for a final discussion. There, with Schmauser present, he told me in essence the following. 'I have looked at Auschwitz thoroughly. I have seen everything as it is: all the deplorable conditions and difficulties to the fullest, and have heard about these from all of you. I cannot change a thing about it. You will have to see how you can cope with it. We are in the middle of a war and accordingly have to learn to think in terms of that war. Under no circumstances can the police actions of the roundups and the transports of the enemy be stopped – least of all because of the demonstrated lack of housing which you have shown me. Eichmann's program will continue and will be accelerated every month from now on. See to it that you move ahead with the completion of Birkenau. The Gypsies are to be exterminated. With the same relentlessness you will exterminate those Jews who are unable to work. In the near future the work camps near the industrial factories will take the first of the large numbers of able-bodied Jews; then you will have room to breathe again here. Also, in Auschwitz you will complete the war production facilities. Prepare yourself for this. Kammler will do his very best to fully support you concerning the construction program. The agricultural experiments will be pushed ahead intensively, as I have the greatest need for the results. I saw your work and your accomplishments. I am satisfied with them and I thank you. I hereby promote you to lieutenant colonel!'*

*This is how Himmler finished his important inspection of Auschwitz. He saw everything and understood all the consequences. I wonder if his 'I am unable to help you' statement was intentional? After our meeting and discussion in my office, he made an inspection of my home and its furnishings. He was very enthusiastic about it and talked at length with my wife and the children. He was excited and in high spirits. I drove him to the airport; we exchanged brief goodbyes, and he flew back to Berlin."*

In his notes written in Polish custody, Rudolf Höss returned to the subject of the Himmler visit two more times:<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Steven Paskuly (ed.), *op. cit.* (note 38), p. 126.

*“Then came Himmler’s visit in July 1942. I showed him every aspect of the Gypsy camp. He inspected everything thoroughly. He saw the overcrowded barracks, the inadequate hygienic conditions, the overflowing infirmaries, and the sick in the isolation ward. He also saw the cancer-like illness in children called ‘Noma,’ which always gave me a chill because this illness reminded me of the lepers I had seen in Palestine a long time before. The emaciated bodies of children had huge holes in their cheeks, big enough for a person to look through; this slow rotting of the flesh of the living made me shudder. Himmler learned about the death rate, which, compared to the whole camp, was still relatively low, even though the death rate among the children was exceptionally high. I do not believe that many of the newborns survived the first weeks. Himmler saw everything in detail, as it really was. Then he ordered me to gas them. Those who were still able to work were to be selected, just as was done with the Jews.”*

In his manuscript *Die Endlösung der Judenfrage*, Höss relates:<sup>41</sup>

*“During his visit in the summer of 1942, Himmler very carefully observed the entire process of annihilation. He began with the unloading at the ramps and completed the inspection as Bunker II was being cleared of the bodies. At that time there were no open-pit burnings. He did not complain about anything, but he didn’t say anything about it either. Accompanying him were District Leader Bracht and SS General Schmauser.”*

The *Auschwitz Chronicle* provides the most important passage of Höss’s description of the Himmler visit as follows:<sup>42</sup>

*“Inspecting Birkenau, Himmler observes the prisoners at work, tours accommodations, kitchens, and infirmaries and sees the emaciated victims of the epidemic. After touring Birkenau, he takes part in the killing of one of the newly entered transports of Jews. He attends the unloading, the selection of the able-bodied, the killing by gas in Bunker 2, and the clearing of the bunker. At this time, the corpses are not yet being burned but are piled up in pits and buried.”*

That the *Reichsführer* SS, as claimed by Höss, participated “in the killing of one of the newly entered transports of Jews,” is categorically refuted by means of an unassailable and unquestionably authentic source, namely Himmler’s own diary. With respect to the two days of interest to us here, it says there in particular:<sup>43</sup>

*“Friday, July 17, 1942  
1200 trip, Friedrichsruh airport, Lötzen  
1245 takeoff Lötzen  
RFSS, Prof. Wüst, Kersten, Grothmann, Kiermeier*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32f.

<sup>42</sup> Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, *op. cit.* (note 17), p. 199.

<sup>43</sup> Himmler’s diary, NA, RG 242, T-581/R 39A, July 17 and 18, 1942. See Document 1 in the Appendix.

*1512 landing, Kattowitz*

*Pick up Gauleiter Bracht, O'Gruf. Schmauser  
and Stubaf. Höss*

*Trip to Auschwitz*

*Tea in the officers' quarters*

*Talk with Stubaf. Caesar and O'Stubaf. Vogel,  
Stubaf. Höss*

*Inspection of the agricultural operations*

*Inspection of the prisoners' camp and of the FKL<sup>[44]</sup>*

*Dining in the officers' quarters*

*Auschwitz-Kattowitz trip*

*to the residence of*

*Gauleiter Bracht*

*Evening at Gauleiter Bracht's*

*Saturday July 18, 1942*

*900 breakfast with Gauleiter Bracht and wife*

*Trip to Auschwitz*

*Talk with O. Gruf. Schmauser*

    "    Stubaf. Caesar

    "    the Commandant of the FKL<sup>[45]</sup>

*Inspection of the factory grounds of the Buna*

*trip Auschwitz-Kattowitz*

*1300 flight, Kattowitz-Krakow-Lublin*

*1515 landing, Lublin*

*Pick up O. Gruf. Krüger and*

*Brigf. Globocnik. Tea with Globocnik*

*Talk with Staf. Schellenberg*

*Trip to the Jastrow fruit farm*

*2100 talk at Globocnik's with SS O'Gruf. Krüger, SS O'Gruf. Pohl, SS Brigf.  
Globocnik, SS O'Stuf. Stier."*

It needs to be emphasized that Himmler's plan for the visit mentions only an "Inspection of the prisoners' camp and of the FKL." The "prisoners' camp" referred to the Main Camp, Auschwitz I, in which at that time the women's concentration camp (FKL) was located. On the other hand, Birkenau was called "*Kriegsgefangenenlager*" (prisoner-of-war camp), and thus it is clear that Himmler did not visit it. How is it that there is no indication of an inspection of the PoW camp anywhere in his plan for the visit?

The lack of any such reference is easily explained: Due to the typhus epidemics as well as other infectious diseases raging at that time in Birkenau, the

<sup>44</sup> *Frauen-Konzentrationslager* = FKL women's concentration camp.

<sup>45</sup> The gender of the noun indicates that the Commandant was female; translator's remark.

hygienic and sanitary conditions there were far more threatening than in the Main Camp.

Moreover, the time schedule of Himmler's visit categorically excludes the claim that he participated "in the killing of one of the newly entered transports of Jews."

The Dutch Red Cross has published the copy of an excerpt from the original roll book which shows the number of inmates held in the men's camp in the year 1942. For July 17–18, the excerpt shows the following data:<sup>46</sup>

ROLL CALL	JULY 1942	STRENGTH	DEAD	REGISTERED	RELEASED AND ESCAPED	ORIGIN OF TRANSPORT	REG.-NOS.
Morning	16	16,246	40	22			
Evening	16	16,277	100	131			
Morning	17	16,848	30	601		Westerbork	47087-47687
Evening	17	16,950	83	185		Var. nation.	47688-47842
Morning	18	17,902	25	977		Westerbork	47843-48493
Evening	18	17,846	18	24	1	Slovaks	48494-48819
Morning	19	17,852				Var. nation.	48820-48901

These data are entirely confirmed by the original muster book. In particular, the muster book shows identical changes in camp numbers:<sup>47</sup>

MUSTER	JULY 1942	STRENGTH	DEAD	REGISTERED	RELEASED AND ESCAPED
Morning	16	16,246	40	22	
Evening	16	16,277	100	131	
Morning	17	16,848	30	601	
Evening	17	16,950	83	185	
Morning	18	17,902	25	977	
Evening	18	17,846	18	24	1
Morning	19	17,852			

Thus, the documents reveal that prisoners registered from the Jewish transport which departed from Westerbork in the Netherlands on July 14, 1942 had

<sup>46</sup> Nederlandsche Roode Kruis (ed.), *Auschwitz*, Vol. II: "De Deportatietransporten van 15 juli tot en met 24 augustus 1942," 's-Gravenhage 1948, p. 11. See Document 2 in the Appendix.

<sup>47</sup> APMO, *Stärkebuch*, D-Aul-3/1/5, Vol. 2, pp. 163-176. See Document 3 in the Appendix.

been received into the Auschwitz camp population during the morning muster of July 17. Therefore, the transport arrived between the evening muster of July 16 and the morning muster of July 17.

Likewise, the prisoners registered from two transports from Westerbork and Slovakia were received into the camp population at the morning muster of July 18, which means that both these transports must have arrived between the evening muster of July 17 and the morning muster of July 18.

At that time, a work day from 6 am to 7 pm, with an hour's break for lunch, was in force for prisoners, as ordered by Rudolf Höss in his special order of April 17, 1942.<sup>48</sup> Taking into consideration the time needed for the outside work crews to return to the camp, one can assume with certainty that the evening muster did not take place before 8 pm. From this it can be inferred that the first transport cannot have arrived at Auschwitz before 8 pm, July 16, nor after 6 am, July 17. Likewise, the two other transports cannot have arrived at Auschwitz before 8 pm, July 17, nor after 6 am, July 18.

Himmler landed at Kattowitz airport at about 3:15 pm on July 17 and therefore cannot have seen the first transport of Dutch Jews, assuming that they were gassed before 6 pm, as claimed. In all probability, Himmler's visit to Auschwitz ended at about 8 pm with a dinner with higher camp functionaries in the officers' quarters.<sup>49</sup> After dinner, Himmler was accompanied to Kattowitz, where he spent the night as the guest of *Gauleiter* Bracht. On the 18th, he was still at Bracht's house at 9 am and drove back to Auschwitz only after breakfast. Therefore, he also cannot possibly have seen the other two transports if these – as is claimed – were gassed between 8 pm of July 17 and 6 am of July 18.

For these reasons Himmler cannot have attended any homicidal gassing at Auschwitz on July 17–18, 1942.

The description of Himmler's visit to Auschwitz furnished by Rudolf Höss is unreliable in other important regards as well. He inverted the sequence of Himmler's inspections, writing that Himmler visited the factories at Monowitz on the 17th and the Main Camp, including the women's camp, on the 18th, whereas in reality it was reverse: On the 17th Himmler visited the Main Camp and the women's camp; on the 18th he inspected Monowitz.<sup>50</sup>

Höss commits a blatant anachronism in his description of the Gypsy camp (and of the noma disease, which attacked the Gypsy children), since in July 1942 the Gypsy camp had not yet been established. The first Gypsy transport

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<sup>48</sup> “*Sonderbefehl für KL und FKL*” of April 17, 1942. RGVA, 502-1-36, p. 121.

<sup>49</sup> In Himmler's diary the time of the evening meal is not indicated. However, during a visit of Oswald Pohl to Auschwitz on the 23rd of September 1942, the evening meal was served at 8 pm. RGVA, 502-1-19, p. 86.

<sup>50</sup> At least 30 photos were taken on this occasion, which were introduced at the Höss trial as dating from July 18, 1942 (Volume 15, pp. 21-30).

arrived at Auschwitz only at the end of February 1943.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, Höss makes no mention that Himmler – as Pressac claims – “was of the opinion that the Jews undressing outdoors had a disorderly effect,” but on the contrary writes that the *Reichsführer* SS “didn’t say anything about it,” so that Pressac’s claim is obviously an invention.

Pressac’s interpretation of the four “barracks for special treatment of the prisoners” is thus historiographically false as well.

### 3. The Mystery of the Bunkers of Birkenau

Pressac claims to be able to deduce the existence of the Bunkers 1 and 2 as facilities equipped as homicidal gas chambers *documentarily* from the reference to four barracks for “special treatment,” which figure as *BW* 58 in the second explanatory report of Bischoff of July 15, 1942 – but if that is so, then why are the two bunkers not mentioned at all in this report? How does one explain that the main facilities are not considered worthy of mention, while the auxiliary facilities are recorded with precise designation of the construction sector? For what reason are the bunkers also missing in the “Cost Estimate for the Construction Project PoW Camp Auschwitz,” in which the expression “Carrying out of the special treatment” is said to officially assign the function of extermination to the Birkenau camp? And finally, why is there not even *a single* document in the files of the Central Construction Office with even *the slightest* reference to these bunkers?<sup>52</sup>

As suggested in the Introduction, Pressac does not even address this problem, which speaks volumes. Yet the problem remains, and it is significantly more serious than might appear at first glance.

By March 31, 1942, each construction site of the construction project “Auschwitz Concentration Camp” was assigned an identification number, which was preceded by the abbreviation *BW* (*Bauwerk* = structure or building). Every administrative act relating to a structure had to carry the notation “*BW* 21/7b (*Bau*) 13,” in which “21/7b” stood for the costs of a structure’s details and “(*Bau*) 13” for its total costs. It was obligatory that for every structure a construction expense book be kept in which all labor performed on that

<sup>51</sup> Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle*, *op. cit.* (note 17), p. 339.

<sup>52</sup> I have dedicated a separate study to these phantasmagorical gassing facilities: *Debunking the Bunkers of Auschwitz: Black Propaganda versus History*, 2nd ed., Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2016.

A letter by the SS Garrison Administration to the Central Construction Office as well as that office’s reply show that a certain “Bunker I” did exist in March of 1944 at Birkenau, but nothing indicates that this was a gassing facility. (The legendary gassing facility Bunker 1 is said to have been dismantled roughly a year earlier). Hence it remains true that the files of the Central Construction Office do not contain any document on these legendary gassing bunkers. See in this regard my study *Curated Lies*, *op. cit.* (note 21), pp. 79-83.

structure as well as all expenditures for it were recorded. In a way, this document represented the administrative biography of a structure.<sup>53</sup> Under these circumstances, already the fact that no building number whatsoever existed for the two alleged bunkers means that, administratively speaking, they did not exist; if one is familiar with the manner in which the Central Construction Office functioned, this by itself is already a decisive argument.

Although there is no documentary evidence whatsoever for the existence of these bunkers as homicidal facilities, I shall not begin my analysis by assuming their non-existence, but rather explain the meaning of the documents by putting them into their historical context.

#### 4. The Four Barracks “for Special Treatment” and the Bunkers of Birkenau

Let us now consider how Pressac interprets the passage relating to the four barracks “for special treatment.” Pressac claims:

*“Bischoff, in his second report, proposed the construction of four wooden horse-stable barracks in the vicinity of the Bunkers, which were supposed to serve as undressing rooms for those ‘unfit to work.’”*

First it needs to be emphasized that the words I have underlined above do not appear in the document in question; they were arbitrarily added by Pressac. The full text of the passage cited by Pressac reads as follows:<sup>54</sup>

*“BW 58 5 Barracks for special treatment and lodging of prisoners, horse-stable barracks type 260/9 (O.K.H.)  
4 pieces barracks for special treatment of prisoners in Birkenau  
1 pc. barrack for the lodging of prisoners in Bor  
Cost for 1 barracks: RM 15,000,-  
therefore for 5 barracks: total cost approx. RM 75,000.”*

Pressac’s interpretation is thus clearly arbitrary. Not only does this text give no support to the thesis of the criminal purpose of the four “barracks for special treatment,” but, on the contrary, it entirely excludes it: The mention of the barracks for the lodging of prisoners in Bor,<sup>55</sup> which belonged to the same structure and, together with the other four, was allegedly destined for the Jews unfit to work, was listed under the same heading. This shows that the term “special treatment” can have no criminal meaning in this document.

<sup>53</sup> On this, see my study *The Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police Auschwitz*, 2nd ed., Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2015, pp. 32 and 38.

<sup>54</sup> “*Kostenvoranschlag für das Bauvorhaben Konzentrationslager O/S*,” RGVA, 501-1-22, p. 36. Cf. Document 4 in the Appendix.

<sup>55</sup> The Bor-Budy area – two villages about 4 km south of Birkenau – was the location of the so-called “*Wirtschaftshof Budy*,” a secondary camp, in which chiefly agricultural tasks were performed. The actual camp (men and women’s secondary camp) was located in Bor.

Quite obviously, by citing only part of the document, Pressac sought to prevent the reader from drawing this conclusion.

The correctness of my conclusion can be proven by other documents, of which Pressac had no knowledge, and which enable us to reconstruct the origin of the term “special treatment” in Auschwitz and to illuminate its actual meaning. The second part of this study is dedicated to this *constructive* aspect of the camp’s history.