

Auschwitz: Open-Air Incinerations

Carlo Mattogno



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Introduction

In 1979, two CIA agents, Dino A. Brugioni and Robert G. Poirier, published for the first time a selection of air photos of Auschwitz-Birkenau taken by the U.S. Air Force in 1944. They argued that these photographs demonstrated the reality of the mass extermination of Jews perpetrated at Birkenau, but because of their incompetence both in the field of air photography and in history the result was a superficial and fanciful interpretation.¹

From that moment on, however, the air photos of Birkenau became part of the argumentative tools of holocaust historiography. On the one hand, these photos led to a heated debate among orthodox historians about the reason why the Allies did not bomb Auschwitz and thus destroy the “factory of death.”² On the other hand, the question moved increasingly into the center of the debate whether the alleged introduction holes for Zyklon B in the roofs of the semi-underground morgues of Crematoria II and III are visible on some of these photographs. Already in 1989 Danuta Czech had claimed that this is the case for the photograph of August 15, 1944.³ The most important of these photographs were published and discussed as late as 1992 by revisionist scholar John C. Ball.⁴

¹ The authors based their “historical” analysis on two strongly propagandistic works: Jan Sehn’s article “Concentration and extermination camp at Oświęcim (Auschwitz-Birkenau),” in: Central Commission for Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, *German Crimes in Poland*, Warsaw 1946, vol. I, pp. 25-92, and the book by Ota Kraus and Erich Kulka, *The Death Factory*, Pergamon Press, Oxford-New York 1966.

² One of the first books of this trend was *Warum Auschwitz nicht bombardiert wurde* by Heiner Lichtenstein (Bund-Verlag, Köln 1980), which contains the reproductions of six air photos.

³ D. Czech, *Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau 1939-1945*. Rowohlt Verlag, Reinbek bei Hamburg 1989, p. 862.

⁴ J.C. Ball, *Air Photo Evidence. Auschwitz, Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, Bergen Belsen, Belzec, Babi Yar, Katyn Forest*. Ball Resource Services Limited, Delta, B.C. Canada, 1992; 3rd ed.: *Air Photo Evidence: World War Two Photos of Alleged Mass Murder Sites Analyzed*, Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2015.

The thesis of the “proof” of the Zyklon B apertures was further developed until it reached its climax with Michael Shermer and Alex Grobman⁵ as well as with Robert Jan van Pelt.⁶ This thesis has, however, no foundation and has been radically refuted by revisionist scholars.⁷ Perhaps for that very reason John C. Zimmerman tried to redirect the focus of the debate to the alleged incineration pits which according to him constitute a proof of the alleged mass extermination. Zimmerman has devoted many pages to this topic in a book he published in 2000.⁸ Even though he based himself on two “experts” on air-photo grammetry, Mark van Alstine and Carroll Lucas, his conclusions are even farther off the mark than those of Brugioni and Poirier.

In this matter, the most surprising aspect is that in spite of the enormous probative value which orthodox historians attribute to the air photos of Birkenau, none of them has ever produced a general study of these documents. Although Zimmerman has presented a – rather fanciful – analysis of these photos, he abstains from confronting them with the corresponding testimonies. Since the claim that Jews were extermination *en masse* at Auschwitz is based solely on self-styled eyewitnesses, a proper historiographic method requires a comparison of the statements by these witnesses with what can actually be seen in the air photos. Only if the photographs confirm the testimonies, can the latter be accepted as proof for the reality of the extermination.

And if they do not? In that case they relegate these testimonies into the realm of fairy tales. It is easily understandable why Zimmerman did not want to risk such a comparison, but any scholar adhering to proper historiographic methods has no choice but to conduct such a comparison. The first part of this study is therefore dedicated to this approach.

In addition to the air photos, orthodox Holocaust historiography also proffers other documentary “evidence” for the extermination of the Jews at Auschwitz in 1944. The increase in the workforce of the Birkenau crema-

⁵ M. Shermer, A. Grobman, *Denying History. Who Says the Holocaust Never Happened and Why Do They Say It?* University of California Press, Berkeley 2000 (First paperback printing 2002, p. 145).

⁶ R.J. van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz. Evidence from the Irving Trial*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2002, pp. 174f.

⁷ Cf. my articles “‘No Holes, No Gas Chamber(s),’” *The Revisionist*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (2004), pp. 387-410; “‘Denying History?’ – Denying Evidence!,” *The Revisionist*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (2005), pp. 9-44; all reprinted in a slightly revised version in Germar Rudolf, Carlo Mattogno, *Auschwitz Lies*, 3rd ed., Castle Hill Publishers, Uckfield 2016, pp. 283-393 and 201-268, respectively.

⁸ John C. Zimmermann, *Holocaust Denial. Demographics, Testimonies and Ideologies*, University Press of America. Lanham, New York, Oxford 2000, pp. 208-253 and 275-301.

toria in line with the arrival of the Hungarian Jews at Birkenau is claimed to demonstrate that these Jews were for the most part gassed and then cremated in those crematoria. In the second part of this study, I will therefore discuss the available documentation (which is much more abundant than the orthodox Holocaust historians might think) in an effort to decide on whether this interpretation is, in fact, correct or whether there is another, quite innocuous explanation for the fact that the number of inmates working at the crematoria increased considerable during the time when the Hungarian Jews were deported to Auschwitz.