

Expert report

The Van Pelt Report

Electronic edition

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Irving v Penguin Books & Lipstadt

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Preface

1. The purpose of this report

This report is prepared for the purposes of assisting the Court in providing an expert opinion on the issue of David Irving's statements about Auschwitz, its gas chambers and incineration facilities, and its role in the so-called Final Solution of the Jewish Problem, pursuant to the Order of Master Trench dated 15 December 1998 directing that each party may adduce expert evidence to address relevant issues in the proceedings

3. Material instructions

This report has been prepared on the instructions of Davenport Lyons and Mishcon de Reya, the First and Second Defendants solicitors respectively (my "Instructing Solicitors"). I received both written and oral instructions which consisted of a conversation held at the offices of Mishcon de Reya on 24 February, 1998, a letter received from Mishcon de Reya dated June 9, 1998, and a letter received from Davenport Lyons dated August 21, 1998.

In the letter from Mishcon de Reya, my task was described as follows: "You will be submitting a report on the gas chambers and exterminations at Auschwitz which will show that what Irving says about the camps in this respect is untrue." The contract for my work on the matter, which took the form of a letter from Davenport Lyons dated August 21, 1998, stated that there were five points of contention, two of which--(i) and (ii)-- directly concern my own expertise: The Defendants seek to justify the following:-- "(i) That Irving has on numerous occasions denied the Holocaust -ie the systematic extermination of Europe's Jewish population by the Nazis -and denied that gas chambers were used by the Nazis as a means of carrying out that extermina-

tion; (ii) That he holds extremist views and has allied himself with others who do so, including individuals such as Dr Robert Faurisson, and Ernst Zündel; ” After having established that the “[t]he burden of proof is on the defendants,” the letter continued as follows: “We would like to engage you to be one of the Defendants’ team of experts. Your role will be to provide a written report on the aspect(s) of the case within your area of expertise as instructed by us. You will obviously liaise with Richard Evans who is co-ordinating the expert team. You are specifically asked to provide a report in relation to the true numbers of Jews killed by gassing at Auschwitz and elsewhere, demonstrating that these numbers have been falsified by Irving and that Irving’s denial of mass gassings and of the existence of gassing facilities at Auschwitz and elsewhere is a falsification or distortion of history. Also to show that the supposed “scientific” evidence presented by Irving is false or misleading.” I accepted this description of my task by countersigning the two copies of the letter, returning one to Davenport Lyons.

This report addresses the issues raised in the letters of Mishcon de Reya and Davenport Lyons. It particularly addresses the core issues under dispute listed under sections 1 and 2 of the “Defence of the Second Defendant,” and in Irving’s “Reply to Defence of Second Defendant.” It will demonstrate that there were gas chambers in Auschwitz, that there is wartime archival evidence for this, that the silence in the SS ciphers about the gassings does not mean they did not take place, and that the absence of “one million cadavers ...produced by killing operations at Auschwitz” does not point at the absence of the crime--as Irving argues in his “Reply to Defence of Second Defendant”--but to the efficiency of the crematoria.

4. Relevant documentation in the action

I have been given access to the following documents which have come into the Defendants 'possession in the course of this litigation or have been created for the purposes of this litigation:

- (a) The pleadings:
 - (i) the Statement of Claim served on 5 September 1996;
 - (ii) the Defences of the First and Second Defendants served on the 12 February and 18 April 1997 respectively;
 - (iii) the Reply to both Defences served on the 19 April 1997.
- (b) Documents disclosed by the Plaintiff pursuant to his discovery obligations: various documents from the Plaintiff's various Lists of Documents as referred to in the footnotes to this report.

5. Relevant material and opinions

- (a) The relevant material on which I have based my report and conclusions is detailed in the footnotes to my report.
- (b) The material relating to the history of Auschwitz is derived from various evidential historical sources which can be categorized as follows:
 - (i) contemporaneous documents such as letters, blueprints, minutes of meetings held in the Auschwitz Central Construction Office, budgets, contractors' bids, requests for material allocations, invoices, and so on, which are found in the archive of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oswiecim, the Osobyi archive in Moscow (this collection has been microfilmed, and is available in microfilm format at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.), and the German Federal Archive in Koblenz;
 - (ii) unpublished transcripts of the trials of (a) Rudolf Höss, held in Warsaw in 1947; (b) the Auschwitz architects Walther Dejaco and Fritz Ertl, held in Vienna in 1972;
 - (iii) published transcripts of the trials of (a) Josef Kramer and others held in Lüneburg in 1945; (b) Hermann Goering and others held in Nuremberg in 1945 and 1946; (c) Adolf Eichmann held in Jerusalem in 1961; (d) Mulka and others held in Frankfurt in 1963, 1964 and 1965;
 - (iv) contemporary newspaper articles, magazine articles and other publications reporting on the situation in the concentration camps;
 - (v) contemporary documents and reports, such as the Vrba-Wetzlar report or the transcripts of the Höss interrogations in Nuremberg, published after the war in edited collections;

- (vi) memoirs, such as the autobiography of Rudolf Höss, written and published after the war;
 - (vii) academic historical studies published after the war.
- (c) The material relating to Holocaust Denial in general, the Faurisson Affair, the Zündel Trial and the Leuchter Report is derived from various evidential historical sources which can be categorized as follows:
- (i) contemporaneous documents such as letters that became available in Irving's Further Discovery;
 - (ii) unpublished transcripts of the trials of Ernst Zündel held in Toronto in 1985 and 1988;
 - (iii) the published writings of Holocaust deniers like Paul Rassinier, Robert Faurisson, Arthur Butz, Thies Christophersen, Wilhelm Stäglich, and Fred Leuchter;
 - (iv) contemporary newspaper articles, magazine articles and other publications reporting on Holocaust denial;
 - (v) published academic studies of Holocaust denial.
- (d) The material relating to David Irving's engagement with Auschwitz, the Holocaust, Holocaust Denial in general, the Zündel Trial, and the Leuchter report is derived from various evidential historical sources which can be categorized as follows:
- (i) contemporaneous documents such as letters, audiotapes and videotapes that became available in Irving's Further Discovery;
 - (ii) unpublished transcripts of the trial of Ernst Zündel held in Toronto in 1988;
 - (iii) the published writings of Irving;
 - (iv) contemporary newspaper articles, magazine articles and other publications reporting on Irving;
 - (v) published academic studies of Holocaust denial. In my research, I have considered that there is a hierarchy of reliability in respect of these categories of sources which I have taken into account when preparing this report. The most important reliable source is contemporaneous documents and the published and unpublished trial transcripts. The reliability of the rest of the categories depends on the context in which they have been produced, organized or extracted. I have avoided any over reliance on one evidential source.

I have taken into account the fact that archival records are invariably organized and structured in a particular way when they are first put together and are necessarily set up to serve a particular purpose. The re-

liability of oral evidence depends on their distance in time from the event they are recalling, their role in the particular event, the interests of the witness in giving his or her account of the event and of the interlocutor in recording the account. I know that historians may be predisposed to accept the information uncritically in order to show that they have made a new discovery, and have tried to consider the evidence in its context, having put aside all political or personal persuasions.

INTRODUCTION

Jean Cayrol, "Night and Fog," in Robert Hughes ed., *Film: Book 2--Films of Peace and War* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 234f.

(In color): *We are moving at a walking pace across a verdant landscape; a blue sky filled with fluffy clouds.*

[Narrator:] “A peaceful landscape ...”

Barbed wire nailed to high wooden posts. Then moving along another field; a cottage on the horizon; birds take wing.

“An ordinary field with flights of crows, harvests, grass fires.”

Moving along another fence, the wires severed and limp.

“An ordinary road where cars and peasants and lovers pass.”

Moving past abundant grass in bright sunlight. Two walls of wire appear, weeds growing high between them, a watchtower in the distance.

“An ordinary village for vacationers--with a marketplace and a steeple--can lead all too easily to a concentration camp.”

A camp today, surrounded by wires and posts cutting across the field.

“Struthof, Oranienburg, Auschwitz, Neuengamme, Belsen, Ravensbruck and Dachau were names like any others on maps and in guidebooks.”

Still moving, a closer view of the maze of wires, with weeds growing around the fence posts.

“The blood has dried, the tongues are silent. The blocks are visited only by a camera. Weeds have grown where the prisoners used to walk. No footstep is heard but our own.”

The following pages aim to assist the Court in gaining insight in the complex spectrum of issues embodied in the proper name “Auschwitz,” and the nouns “Holocaust,” and “Holocaust Denial,” and seek to establish the way David Irving has engaged this nexus, concentrating on the decade 1987 to 1997. The report attempts to provide material and a consideration of that material that can allow us to answer

what I see to be the central issue at stake in the complaint of the plaintiff against the defendants where it concerns my own expertise. This can be summarized in the following 10 questions:

- (i) Has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that Auschwitz was equipped with homicidal gas chambers, and has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that these gas chambers were systematically used?
- (ii) Has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that Auschwitz functioned between the summer of 1942 and the fall of 1944 as an extermination camp for Jews?
- (iii) Has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that most of the Jews who arrived in Auschwitz were murdered shortly after their arrival in the aforesaid gas chambers?
- (iv) Has it been established beyond reasonable doubt how many Jews were killed in the gas chambers upon arrival in Auschwitz, how many Jews were killed or died from the effect of incidental cruelty, general deprivation, exhaustion or disease whilst in the camp, and how many others died in the camp as the result of various causes?
- (v) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny that Auschwitz had homicidal gas chambers and that these gas chambers were systematically used?
- (vi) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny that Auschwitz functioned between the summer of 1942 and the fall of 1944 as an extermination camp for Jews?
- (vii) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny that most of the Jews who arrived in Auschwitz were murdered shortly after their arrival in the aforesaid gas chambers?
- (vii) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny, without having done any serious research in the matter, the results of studies into the number of people who died in Auschwitz done by responsible scholars?
- (ix) Did David John Cawdell Irving ally himself with well-known Holocaust deniers, including individuals such as Dr Robert Faurisson, and Ernst Zündel?
- (x) Was David John Cawdell Irving, by the time Deborah Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust* went to press, a Holocaust denier?

The report seeks to contribute material that allows us to answer these questions. To that end, it is organized in five distinct parts.

Part One, entitled “Concerning History,” seeks to introduce the reader to the most important elements that shape current knowledge of the Auschwitz extermination camp, and discuss the great complexity of the camp’s history and the way this occasionally creates confusion for the uninitiated and opportunity for those who seek to deny the Holocaust. In this section of the report, I will discuss why Auschwitz became the symbol of the Holocaust, and the attempts by modern scholarship to come to an assessment of the number of victims.

Part Two, entitled “Concerning Evidence,” presents and reviews the blinding evidence of the use of the camp as a site for mass extermination as it became slowly available during the war as the result of reports by escaped inmates, as it was narrated in the eye-witness accounts by former Auschwitz inmates immediately after their liberation in other concentration camps, as it was confirmed in forensic investigations undertaken in 1945 and 1946, and as it was corroborated by confessions of leading German personnel employed at the camp during its years of operation. In this section of the report it will become clear that it is highly implausible that knowledge about Auschwitz was a war-time fabrication by British propagandists, as Irving has claimed. Instead it will be shown how our knowledge about Auschwitz emerged from a convergence of independent accounts, how it emerged cumulatively, in geometrical progression, acquiring an epistemological status located somewhere in the realm framed on the one hand by a judgement that knows a fact “beyond reasonable doubt,” and on the other hand by the always receding horizon that promises unqualified certainty. It will be shown that, in the words of John Wilkins, we may assert as “moral certainty” the statement that Auschwitz was an extermination camp where the Germans killed around one million people with the help of gas chambers, and where they incinerated their remains in crematoria ovens.

Part Three, entitled “Concerning Documents,” discusses the few surviving German documents, produced during the war, that confirm the use of Auschwitz as an extermination camp, and allow us to gain an insight into the course of development that changed an “ordinary” concentration camp designed to incarcerate (political) opponents into an extermination camp for a whole ethnic group. Only a few documents survived the general systematic destruction of evidence which took place as the Final Solution unfolded in Auschwitz, and which was completed with the burning of the archives of the Auschwitz Kommandantur in January 1945. Together, the first three parts will amply establish beyond reasonable doubt that Auschwitz was an extermination camp that claimed by means of purposefully designed crematoria equipped with gas chambers the deaths of at least a million people, most of whom were Jews.

Part Four, entitled “Concerning Denial,” analyzes why Auschwitz became the focus of Holocaust denial, and reviews the most important aspects of the so-called “Faurisson Affair” which brought Holocaust denial into the public eye. It reviews the false dichotomy that forces everything that cannot be established as absolute truth into the rubbish-bin of manufactured falsehood, and refutes the hermeneutical and pseudo-scientific arguments created by various Holocaust deniers such as Paul Rassinier, Arthur Butz, Thies Christophersen, Wilhelm Stäglich, Fred Leuchter and, most importantly, Robert Faurisson to cast doubt or even reject the use of Auschwitz as an extermination site. Since the late 1980s, David Irving has made eclectic use of the trumpery produced by Rassinier, Faurisson, Butz, Christophersen, Stäglich and Leuchter. In his endorsement and subsequent publication of the Leuchter Report, Irving embraced the form of hard-core Holocaust denial developed, refined and propagated by Faurisson in the preceding years--a position that centered on the thesis that the gas chambers of Auschwitz did not work. Irving’s position regarding Auschwitz, in other words, is not one of his own invention. He very much

adopted Faurisson's line, and therefore one may legitimately claim that the resulting developments--the publicity Irving generated at the time of the trial when he was quoted as saying that as few as 100,000 Jews may have been killed, the account of Irving's participation in the trial given in Lipstadt's *Denying the Holocaust* and the present legal case--are to be considered aftershocks of the original Faurisson Affair.

Part Five, entitled "Concerning Irving," finally discusses the way David Irving has used his contacts with Holocaust deniers, and arguments derived from their writings, to further his own ends. It will demonstrate how in the early 1990s he became, as a publisher and a public speaker, the most effective evangelist of the negationist gospel wrought by Rassinier, Faurisson and others, and how he changed his tactics, but not his strategy, in the mid 1990s.

The Conclusion will raise these questions again, and provide my answers.

Whilst having been commissioned by the lawyers for the defendants, I have written this report *salvo jure* towards the plaintiff. I do not believe that questions of history belong in the courtroom, and have opposed in the past the prosecutions of Holocaust deniers like Zündel in Canada, Faurisson in France, and Irving in Germany. If Irving had been the defendant in this case, I would not have consented to give, under instructions of a prosecuting attorney, the questions raised by the nexus of "Auschwitz," "Holocaust," "Holocaust Denial," and "David Irving" much thought.

Yet while I set out without prejudice to the plaintiff or the defendants, I did and continue to have a commitment to those who cannot speak for themselves. With Edith Wyschogrod, I believe that the primary responsibility of the historian is not to the living--may they be right or wrong, good or evil --but to the dead. The historian must be the spokesman for those who have been silenced.

“The promise to convey the truth about the past presupposes that the presentation of that which was is always already implicated in a pre-discursive ethics before it is a conveying of facts. But this space prior to historical description is one in which signs disappear, of designing. The historian when bound by a responsibility toward the dead for whom she claims to speak becomes what I call the “heterological historian.” She assumes liability for the other, feels the pressure of an Ethics that is prior to her construal of the historical object. Responsibility thus interpreted is Janus-faced: its moral authority is expressed in its disinterestedness, but its psychological force is experienced as a sense of inescapable urgency. The heterological historian is driven, on the one hand, by an impassioned necrophilia which would bring to life the dead others for whom she speaks. On the other hand, as “objective,” she consciously or otherwise assumed responsibility for a dispassionate relation to events.”

I believe that no historian can responsibly touch the world of Auschwitz without, in some way or another, becoming a “heterological historian.” I believe, too, that the first question one should ask about any historian’s attempt to deal with the history of an extermination camp--or for that matter any other atrocity-- is the way he or she either accepts or rejects the ethical responsibility that comes with all history, but especially with the history of Auschwitz. No historian should ever play games with the past--especially not a past such as that marked by the word “Auschwitz,” a past marked by the massive betrayal of human solidarity.

And so, while I wrote this report as an *amicus curiae* without prejudice for the defendant and against the plaintiff, I do declare my loyalty with the victims of Auschwitz and against their murderers. And with that, I declare my purpose to ensure that the aim of the men who conceived, constructed and operated the camp will not come to be--an aim sadly shared by most civilized people, because there is a fundamental collusion between the wish of the murderer to deny the crime, and the wish of the bystander not to bear witness. Alexander Donat, who ascribed his survival of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and his subsequent deportation to Maidanek Auschwitz to his sense of having been “charged with the sacred mission of carrying the Ghetto’s history through the flames and barbed wire until such time as I could hurl it

into the face of the world,” recorded in his *The Holocaust Kingdom* how a fellow inmate in Maidanek, Dr Schipper, anticipated the difficulties the survivors would have in preserving their story. Even if some were to survive, and

“write the history of this period of blood and tears--and I firmly believe we will-- who will believe us? Nobody will *want* to believe us, because our disaster is the disaster of the entire civilized world..... We’ll have the thankless job of proving to a reluctant world that we are Abel, the murdered brother....”

The Italian survivor Primo Levi recorded in his *The Drowned and the Saved* the following admonishment that the SS guard enjoyed to give to the prisoners.

“However this war may end, we have won the war against you; none of you will be left to bear witness, but even if someone were to survive, the world will not believe him. There will be perhaps suspicions, discussions, research by historians, but there will be no certainties, because we will destroy the evidence together with you. And even if some proof should remain and some of you survive, people will say the events you describe are too monstrous to be believed: they will say that they are exaggerations of Allied propaganda and will believe us, who will deny everything, and not you. We will be the ones to dictate the history of the Lagers.”

I believe that both Dr Schipper, Alexander Donat, and Primo Levi saw the central historiographical problem facing anyone who approaches the history of Auschwitz--historian, lawyer, survivor, bystander, perpetrator. And they touched on a metaphysical problem which, in the early 1980s, the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard subjected to his rigorous analysis.

“It’s not for nothing that Auschwitz is called the ‘extermination camp.’” [Auschwitz physician Dr. Kremer in his diary entry of October 3, 1942] Millions of human beings were exterminated there. Many of the means to prove the crime or its quantity were also exterminated.[....] What could be established by historical inquiry would be the quantity of the crime. But the documents necessary for the validation were themselves destroyed in quantity. That at least can be established. [....] But the silence imposed on knowledge does not impose the silence of forgetting, it imposes a feeling. Suppose that an earthquake destroys not only lives, buildings and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes directly and indirectly. The impossibility of quantitatively measuring it does not prohibit, but rather inspires in the minds of the survivors the idea of a very great seismic force. The scholar claims to know nothing about it, but the common person has a complex feeling, the one aroused by the negative presentation of the indeterminate. *Mutatis mutandis*, the silence that the crime of Auschwitz imposes upon the historian is a sign for the common person.[....] The silence that surrounds the phrase, *Auschwitz was the extermination camp* is not a state of mind, it is the sign that something remains to be phrased which is not, something which is not determined. This sign affects a linking of phrases. The indetermination of meanings left in abeyance, the extermination of what would allow them to be determined, the shadow of negation hollowing out reality to the point of making it dissipate, in a word, the wrong done to the victims that condemns them to silence-- it is this, and not a state of mind, which calls upon unknown phrases to link onto the name of Auschwitz.--The “revisionist” historians understand as applicable to this name only the cognitive rules for the establishment of historical reality and for the validation of its sense. If justice consisted solely in respecting these rules, and if history gave rise only to historical inquiry, they could not be accused of a denial of justice. In fact, they administer a justice in conformity with the rules and exert a positively instituted right. Having placed, moreover, themselves in the position of plaintiffs, who need not establish anything, they plead for the negative, they reject proofs, and that is certainly their right as the defense. But they are not worried by the scope of the very silence they use as an argument in their plea, by this does one recognize a wrong done to the sign that is this silence and to the phrases it invokes. They will say that history is not made of feelings, and that it is necessary to establish the facts. But, with Auschwitz, something new has happened in history (which can only be a sign and not a fact), which is that the facts, the testimonies which bore the traces of here’s and now’s the documents which indicated the sense or the senses of the facts, and the names, finally the possibility of various kinds of phrases whose conjunction makes reality, all this has been destroyed as much as possible.”

Therefore Lyotard defined the task of the historian of Auschwitz as one that forced him or her not only to look at positive evidence, but also to venture forth “by lending his or her ear to what is not presentable under the rules of knowledge.” This, of course, applied to every fact of

history, in which one moves from the evidential to what it implies. Only in the case of Auschwitz, this applies even more. And Lyotard concluded that “Auschwitz is the most real of realities in this respect.”

Given this context, the question of whether Holocaust Denial serves some current purpose seems to me irrelevant compared to the question if it serves the historic interest of the men who conceived of Auschwitz and who operated with the aim of destroying not only countless human beings, but also the evidence of their own acts--men like Himmler, Heydrich, and Höss.

PART ONE *CONCERNING HISTORY*

I Auschwitz.

“The concentrationary universe shrivels away within itself. It still lives on in the world like a dead planet laden with corpses.”

“Normal men do not know that everything is possible. Even if the evidence forces their intelligence to admit it, their muscles do not believe it. The concentrationees do know....They are set apart from the rest of the world by an experience impossible to communicate.”

The great majority of people who know anything about the Second World War know that Auschwitz played a pivotal role in the National Socialist attempt to exterminate European Jewry--a deed which the perpetrators euphemistically called the *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (“Final Solution to the Jewish Question”), which the victims experienced as a *Sho’ah* or *Hurban* (“Catastrophe”), and which today is commonly known as the “Holocaust.” Since the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army (January 27, 1945), forensic reports and historical studies, undertaken by many different people from different backgrounds living in different countries, have resulted in an increasingly detailed and sophisticated understanding of the origin, context and development of

Auschwitz, and the way it assumed, as a result of often contingent circumstances and evolving ambitions, different and seemingly contrary functions during the almost 57 months of its existence.

In my own work, based on careful study of the site, primary archival sources and secondary studies, conducted in collaboration with Deborah Dwork over a period of ten years, I have distinguished ten functions.

1. A concentration camp to serve local German security needs (1940-45). After the fall of Poland Hitler incorporated large areas of Poland into the Reich--amongst them the former Duchy of Auschwitz, located in eastern Upper Silesia. Hitler charged *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler with the task to Germanize the annexed territories by deporting the local Slav and Jewish populations to the occupied territories, the so-called Government General, and by moving in ethnic Germans from territories promised to the Soviet Union in the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. As *Reichskommissar für den Festigung deutschen Volkstums* (Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of the German Nation), Himmler initially considered Auschwitz to be just one of the many towns in the annexed territories to be emptied of Poles and Jews and filled with Germans. But that formula did not work in Auschwitz. Due to the unique demographic and economic conditions in the German-annexed territory of eastern Upper Silesia, the Germans were unable to use mass-scale deportations of Poles into the adjacent Government General as a tool of repression. Some of the local Polish population could not be deported as they were employed in industry, and there were no skilled ethnic German workers to replace them. Therefore the SS created in 1940 a concentration camp in a suburb of Auschwitz to terrorize the Polish population of Upper Silesia's industrial area.

2. A production site for gravel and sand (1940-44). Through its subsidiary DEST (German Earth and Stone Works), the SS had been heavily involved in the production of building materials since the late 1930s. Auschwitz, famous for the high quality gravel and sand from the Sola river, became one of the production sites of DEST.

3. An execution site for the Gestapo Summary Court in Kattowitz (1940-44). Providing security, killing and cremation facilities, Auschwitz became an execution site for Poles condemned by the Gestapo Summary Court in Kattowitz. Those executed in the camp on orders of the Gestapo Summary Court (3,000 in total) were not registered in the camp.

4. An experimental farm (1940-45). The area around Auschwitz became the focus of a massive ethnic cleansing operation in 1940. In order to service the incoming ethnic Germans with expertise and livestock and facilitate German agricultural development of the area, Himmler decided to create a large experimental farm in Auschwitz, using concentration camp labour. The camp claimed increasingly larger territories for this new function, and Himmler began to see that its future might be different from what he had originally envisioned. As a concentration camp it was assumed to be a temporary facility; as an agricultural estate it claimed permanence.

5. A forced labour pool for the construction of the IG Farben Plant at Monowitz (1941-45). Himmler slated Auschwitz to be the jewel in his crown of the German East. From a small compound surrounded by a double barbed-wire fence the camp had grown into a 15-square mile SS "Zone of Interests." A huge influx of money and building materials was needed to develop this zone. In 1941 the camp became a pawn in Himmler's attempt to attract the huge chemical giant to Auschwitz. The terms of the bargain were that the camp was to supply inmate labour to construct Farben's synthetic rubber or Buna plant. In return, IG Farben was to finance and supply Himmler's Germanization project in the area with building materials.

6. A forced labour pool for the construction of an IG Farben company town (1941-43). In order to convince IG Farben to move to Auschwitz in Upper Silesia and not to Rattwitz in Lower Silesia, Himmler promised the IG Farben management that he would initiate the construction of a new company town to house the employees. One hundred thousand Soviet prisoners-of-war were to be concentrated in Auschwitz to provide labour for that project of urban (re)construction. When in early 1942 the promised 100,000 Soviet prisoners-of-war did not materialize, Himmler decided that Jews were to take their place. He had by then assumed full authority over the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem, and could dispose of the Jews within German-controlled Europe as he pleased.

7. An execution site for certain categories of Soviet prisoners (1941-42). In the summer of 1941 the SS, in agreement with the German army, began to separate various categories of prisoners (communist cadres, Jews, and so on) from the prisoner-of-war camps housing Soviet soldiers. Auschwitz became one of the execution sites for these selected prisoners.

8. A selection and extermination site for Jews (1941/2-1944). When large-scale mass murder of Jews began in the summer and fall of 1941 in the wake of Operation Barbarossa, the SS in Auschwitz was still fully committed to Himmler's project to develop the town and the region. It was when Göring directed Soviet prisoners of war from Auschwitz to German armament factories in January 1942 that Himmler began to consider the systematic use of the slowly emerging program for the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem within the context of what he called "The Auschwitz Project." In early 1942 Himmler was still very much committed to make Auschwitz the centerpiece of his racial utopia. Only now this was not to be created on the backs of Soviet prisoners-of-war: Jewish slave labourers were to take their place. The Wannsee Conference gave Himmler (through Heydrich) the power he needed to negotiate with German and foreign civilian authorities for the transfer of Jews to his SS empire. The first transports of Jews fit for labour started to leave Slovakia for Auschwitz-Birkenau soon thereafter. When the Slovak government suggested that Himmler also take Jews unfit for labour in exchange for cash payments, Himmler decided to transform a peasant cottage in Birkenau into a gas chamber. Two months later, on July 4, 1942, the first transports of Jews from Slovakia were submitted to selection. Those who could work were admitted to the camp. Those who could not were killed in the peasant cottage, now known as Bunker I. At that time, selected categories of Jews were killed at Auschwitz, but the camp still had not become the epicentre of the Holocaust. The main purpose of Auschwitz, *at this time*, remained construction (of a plant, a city, and a region), and not destruction (of Jews). The systematic extermination of Jews was still an auxiliary function of the camp. Around mid July 1942, Himmler increased his authority as Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of the German Nation, and acquired the responsibility for German settlement in Russia--an authority that he had coveted for more than a year. His view of Auschwitz and his plans for Auschwitz changed rapidly and dramatically. The "Auschwitz Project," was no longer of interest to him--at least not for the duration of the war. The camp could be used to serve the systematic killing of Jews. In Auschwitz the by then well-established practice of mass-killing became policy. The camp architects got the order to design crematoria (4 and 5) equipped from the outset with homicidal gas chambers on 20 August, 1942. The two crematoria under development (2 and 3), were retro-actively fitted with homicidal gas chambers.

9. A forced labour pool for various German factories built in the surrounding region (1942-45). Following the precedent set by the agreement between the SS and IG Farben, the camp became a labour pool for other German factories, moved from the West to the Auschwitz area because of the threat of bombing. By 1944, the *Stammlager* Birkenau, and 27 satellite camps served these industries.

10. A transfer station for Jews selected for work in the Reich (1944). *In the Spring of 1944 the Germans, faced with a great shortage of workers, reversed their earlier policy not to allow any Jews within the boundaries of the German Reich. Hungarian Jews were sent to Auschwitz; those considered “unfit for work” were killed conforming to existing policy; many of those considered “fit for work” were temporarily held in transit until they could be transported to concentration camps in the Reich as slave labour.*

These different functions show that Auschwitz was a very complex place with a tangled, complex, and confusing history. In a sense, it would be possible to write ten histories of Auschwitz: Auschwitz as a concentration camp for Poles, Auschwitz as a production site for gravel and sand, and so on. Each of these histories has their own political, institutional and financial context, each its own unique spatial impact on the site and temporal regularities, variabilities, and times of crisis and change. At times these histories run at cross-purposes, at times parallel without interfering with one another, at times they communicate, converge, and unite. As a result, a historian who desires to make a judgement about any aspect of the history of Auschwitz must take into account an often labyrinthine context, which is made even more difficult to negotiate because of intentional camouflage of certain aspects of the camp's history during the war and the willful destruction of archival and other material evidence at the end of the war.

The following example, using extensive quotes from the book on Auschwitz that Debrah Dwork and I co-authored, will suffice to show some the problems. As I have observed above, in early 1941, the promise to build a camp at Birkenau (Auschwitz II) served as a tool of negotiation between Himmler and the IG Farben management. At the time that IG Farben engineers identified Auschwitz as one of two possible sites for

the establishment of a large synthetic rubber plant, Himmler had great financial and political interest in the area, and he believed that the influx of money and building materials, which would follow the establishment of the plant, would enable him to realize his own project to quickly Germanize the eastern part of Upper Silesia. "The creation of the camp at Birkenau, which by the end of 1942 had become a major center for the annihilation of Europe's Jews, was directly connected to Himmler's program to transform Auschwitz into a paradigm of German settlement in the East. To convince IG Farben that Auschwitz was the place to go, Himmler had to do more than make promises. On his first visit to the camp in March 1941 he therefore proposed not only to increase the camp population to 30,000, but also to establish a huge satellite camp of 100,000 prisoners in the agricultural estate area. Himmler "discussed this," Höss recalled, "and pointed out the approximate area that he wanted me to use." If Höss was surprised, the provincial authorities were chagrined. Upper Silesia was poor in water and they had identified the wetlands around Birkenau as a major water supply. Furthermore, they realized immediately that 100,000 prisoners would create a massive sewage problem. "Himmler just smiled and disposed of their objections saying, 'Gentlemen, this project will be completed; my reasons for this are more important than your objections.'" Himmler's visit to Auschwitz and Birkenau and his instructions to build what later became the site where more than one million Jews were killed was a carefully staged event to impress the directors of IG Farben. He had no intention of beginning construction right away--that order came more than six months later--but wanted to declare his commitment to the future of Auschwitz. By ordering the establishment of a 100,000-inmate camp Himmler had taken care of labour availability, which (as we have seen) was key to the development of the region. Furthermore, the precedent of using inmates for municipal projects had been established in December 1940 when the camp and the town had agreed that chain-gangs of prisoners would improve the dikes along the Vistula and the Sola, and the trajectory of the two rivers; a

few months later crews were put to work at demolition sites in the town. Himmler's gesture in Birkenau was to impress on the rest of the entourage that the camp would be able to service the town reconstruction project. All those present--IG Farben officials, Provincial Governor Fritz Bracht and other civic authorities, the SS liaison with IG Farben, Karl Wolff, and the SS head of agricultural affairs, Heinrich Vogel, as well as the camp officials--heard him, as did SS leaders a year later. The deployment of a massive army of slaves was a simple necessity in the cause of laying a stable foundation for a German future in the East, Himmler told his men. "If we do not create the bricks here, if we do not fill our camps with slaves--in this room I state these things precisely and clearly--with work slaves who will build our cities, our villages, and our farms, irrespective of losses, then, after a long war, we will not have the money to create settlements that will allow a truly Germanic people to live with dignity and to take root within one generation."

In early 1941 Himmler was not in a hurry to commit resources to the construction of the camp. When the IG Farben managers made the decision to establish the large synthetic rubber plant in Auschwitz, the immediate purpose of Birkenau, which was at that time a mere promise, had been fulfilled. Yet six months later IG Farben called Himmler's bluff, and the latter was forced to make good on his promise given at March 1, 1941. He negotiated the transfer of 100,000 Soviet prisoners-of-war from the army to his own SS, and ordered the construction of a camp in Birkenau to house them. Yet in the end only 10,000 of the 100,000 were to arrive in Auschwitz. By December 1941, the deal with the army fell apart. "No more Soviet prisoners-of-war arrived. As it became increasingly clear that Operation Barbarossa had failed as a Blitzkrieg, Germany had to mobilize all its resources to continue the war. With more men called up for service and more demands on German industry--especially the armaments industry--even the Soviet prisoners-of-war became a resource too precious to be wasted. "The lack of workers is becoming an increasingly dangerous hindrance for

the future of the German war and armament industry,” Field Marshal Keitel informed various military agencies and ministries on 31 October. “The *Führer* has now ordered that the labour of the Russian prisoners-of-war also should be utilized to a great extent by large-scale assignment for the requirements of the war industry.” A week later Reich Marshall Hermann Göring gained control over all prisoners-of-war and he promptly announced that the Russians would be primarily employed in mining, railroad maintenance, armaments industry, and agriculture. Building was given a low priority. Göring charged the Labour Allocation Division of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Four Year Plan with the creation and execution of a policy to exploit the labour potential of the Soviets. On 8 January the Division issued a decree. All prisoners-of-war were assigned to the armaments industry and to a selected number of other activities such as agriculture, forestry and mining. None could be employed for construction work. The decree of January 8 brought an end to Himmler’s plan to amass a large Soviet labour force to build the town of Auschwitz. He had to look elsewhere, and his eye fell on the Jews.”

Initially Birkenau was going to be filled with young and healthy Jews whom the SS considered to be fit for work. The SS decided to find these Jews in Slovakia, and in February 1942 the German and Slovak governments reached a deal that included the immediate deportation of Jews to Auschwitz. Yet once the agreement was signed, the Slovaks realized that with the deportation of the young and healthy Jews they were left with those “not fit for work”: the very young and old people. Unwilling to feed and shelter them, the Slovaks once more approached the Germans, in the person of Adolf Eichmann. Initially Eichmann refused to discuss the matter, but quickly someone in the SS realized that it would be possible to make some money out of the deal by charging the Slovak government 500 *Reichsmark* per Jew to be deported (and the Slovaks would be allowed to recover this expense by expropriating the deportees belongings). Slovakia was close to Auschwitz, and if the

camp was to be equipped with some discretely camouflaged extermination installation, the SS could take all the Slovak Jews, conduct a selection in Birkenau, admit those who could work, and kill the rest in an adjacent forest. “The Germans had a few practical problems to work out. As the Slovak Jews were to be brought to Birkenau and not to Auschwitz, and as killing them in crematorium 1 would interrupt the life of the main camp, they considered building an extermination installation close to the new satellite camp. [SS construction chief] Hans Kammler arrived in Auschwitz on Thursday 27 February to meet with [Kommandant] Höss and [camp architect] Bischoff. There are no minutes of this conference, but its content can be ascertained from a letter Bischoff wrote to Topf a week later. Kammler had decided to cancel their order for the back-up incinerators included in the Birkenau plan of 6 January, Bischoff explained. The large crematorium with five triple-muffle incinerators that had been designated for the main camp was to go to Birkenau instead. Obviously Kammler wanted construction to proceed quickly. Those furnaces had been ordered almost four months previously and he expected they would be available soon. Furthermore, the designs for the crematorium that was to house these incinerators had been both completed and approved. On paper, at least, everything was ready for the crematorium they had agreed upon the previous October. A blueprint of the prisoner-of-war camp shows that Kammler decided to locate the new crematorium in the north-western corner of Birkenau, adjacent to an abandoned cottage that had belonged to a Polish peasant named Wiechuja. The interior of this cottage, known as “the little red house,” was converted into two gas chambers within a few weeks... There is no doubt that Kammler’s visit led to the Germans’ reversal of their decision about the mass deportation of Slovak Jewry. Once Kammler had organized the construction of the crematorium in Birkenau, the Reich Security Main Office permitted the German Foreign office to negotiate seriously. On 3 March [Slovak Prime Minister]Tuka announced in the Slovak State Council that, pending certain financial arrangements, the Germans had agreed to

take the remaining 70,000 Jews. The Germans were doing them a favour and were to be compensated at the rate of 500 marks for every Jew deported. For this sum, however, the Slovak government was guaranteed that “the Jews accepted as part of the de-Judaization of Slovakia will remain permanently in the Eastern territories and will not be offered any possibility of re-immigrating into Slovakia. “The state was free to seize Jewish property left behind .”

With the creation of the gas chamber of “the little red house,” also known as “Bunker 1,” the mass murder of Jews mass became a fixture of life in Auschwitz, but it was not yet the camp’s primary purpose. It was, in a sense, what the Germans so aptly term a *Verlegenheitslösung* an emergency solution. Only later, when the construction of the town came to a halt and Birkenau lost its purpose as a labour pool for that project, did killing cease to be an auxiliary activity and became one of the main purposes of Birkenau. *But even then it competed with other functions.*

Each changing use the SS had for Birkenau deposited its own archival and physical sediment, creating a superimposed set of historical layers which, in the end, were to be disturbed in the cataclysmic upheaval of the genocide that occurred at that site. To make matters worse, the speed with which the various deposits settled was not the same, so that the ultimate consequences of earlier events were to appear sometimes after the effects of later events had already become apparent. For example: the transformation of the little red house into a gas chamber only took a matter of days, but the design and construction of crematoria 2 and 3 took more than 18 months, and in this long period the function of Birkenau shifted and changed numerous times. Many of the intended purposes of these crematoria were obsolete even before the blueprints were completed.

The historian of Auschwitz must not forget the Russian proverb that one cannot drive straight on a twisted lane. Anyone who seeks to make a contribution to our understanding of the history of Auschwitz must account for and contend with the historical complexity of the site. If, in the words of the historian Schleunes, the road to Auschwitz proved twisted, so did the road in Auschwitz. This implies that one should be very careful in assessing the evidence and the conclusions drawn on the basis of it. Irving, for example, has argued that “since documents have now been found in the Auschwitz files held in former Soviet archives indicating that Auschwitz prisoners were actually released to the outside world,” the camp was not an extermination camp because the documented release “seems incompatible with the character of a top-secret mass extermination centre.” Irving’s conclusion is the result of the combination of the following two syllogisms: “Released prisoners are free to divulge information. Prisoners were released from Auschwitz. Therefore Auschwitz was not a top-secret place. Mass extermination is a top secret-operation. Auschwitz was not a top secret place. Therefore Auschwitz was not a top-secret mass extermination center ”

Yet the syllogism is fallacious when applied to Auschwitz because the term Auschwitz covers a very manifold and complex reality. If Auschwitz had only been a (top-secret)mass extermination center, located in one place, such an argument may have been conclusive. Yet Auschwitz encompassed many different sites, and as an institution was engaged in many different functions, and furthermore functioned as a (top-secret)mass extermination center for only part of its history. If the released prisoners had included the so-called *Sonderkommando* who operated the crematoria, Irving would have a point. They did not. In fact, no Jews were ever included in the category of *Erziehungshäftlinge* or “re-education inmates,” the only prisoner category from which releases did occur. Most of the *Sonderkommando* were put to death after a few months on the job--to protect secrecy. The few who survived did so because they either escaped from the death march that concluded the

camp's history, or because, amidst the chaos of Germany's collapse, they were able to merge (after the death march) in the general camp population in the receiving] concentration camps in the West.

Given the dichotomy between the very complex nature and history of Auschwitz and the habit of many to consider the camp only as a "top-secret mass extermination center," many people, including bona-fide historians, survivors, and not so bona-fide holocaust deniers, often commit the fallacy of composition: they reason from the properties of the part of Auschwitz that was engaged with mass extermination to the properties of Auschwitz as a whole. A favourite example of the negationists is the so-called swimming pool in Auschwitz I. They argue that the presence of a swimming pool, with three diving boards, shows that the camp was really a rather benign place, and therefore could not have been a center of extermination. They ignore that the swimming pool was built as a water reservoir for the purpose of firefighting (there were no hydrants in the camp), that the diving boards were added later, and that the pool was only accessible to SS men and certain privileged Aryan prisoners employed as inmate-functionaries in the camp. The presence of the swimming pool does not say anything about the conditions for Jewish inmates in Auschwitz, and does not challenge the existence of an extermination program with its proper facilities in Auschwitz II.

Auschwitz is a prime example of a place where, in the words of Alexander Pope, "fools rush in where angels fear to tread." The labyrinthine history and the resulting intricacy of the evidence demands careful attention to both detail and circumstance. No Holocaust denier has ever come close to the level of historic professionalism that the study of Auschwitz demands. Least of all David Irving. Beyond that, of course, is another issue that transcends the simple issue of "professionalism." It is the recognition that anyone who seeks to understand Auschwitz must do so with a sense of humility in face of the evidence and diffidence in face of our own inability to truly grasp the historical reality that

was Auschwitz. As early as 1946 Hannah Arendt observed in a review of *The Black Book: The Nazi Crime Against the Jewish People*--an account of the Nazi destruction of European Jewry--that any attempt to write a history what a later generation was to define as "The Holocaust " was to end in failure. "The facts are: that six million Jews, six million human beings, were helplessly, and in most cases unsuspectingly, dragged to their deaths. The method employed was that of accumulated terror. First came calculated neglect, deprivation, and shame, when the weak in body died together with those strong and defiant enough to take their own lives. Second came outright starvation, combined with forced labor, when people died by the thousands but at different intervals of time, according to their stamina. Last came the death factories--and they all died together, the young and the old, the weak and the strong, the sick and the healthy: not as people, not as men and women, children and adults, boys and girls, not as good and bad, beautiful and ugly--but brought down to the lowest common denominator of organic life itself, plunged into the darkest and deepest abyss of primal equality, like cattle, like matter, like things that had neither body nor soul, nor even a physiognomy upon which death could stamp its seal. It is in this monstrous equality without fraternity or humanity--an equality in which cats and dogs could have shared--that we see, as though mirrored, the image of hell. *Beyond the capacities of human comprehension* is the deformed wickedness of those who established such equality. But equally deformed and beyond the reach of human justice is the innocence of those who died in this equality. The gas chamber was more than anybody could have possibly deserved, and in the face of it the worst criminal was as innocent as the newborn babe. Nor is the monstrousness of this innocence made any easier to bear such adages as "better to suffer ill than do ill. "What mattered was not so much that those whom an accident of birth condemned to death obeyed and functioned to the last moment as frictionlessly as those whom an accident of birth condemned to life (this is so well known, there is no use hiding it). Even beyond that was the fact

that innocence and guilt were no longer products of human behavior; that no possible human crime could have fitted this punishment, no conceivable sin, this hell in which saint and sinner were equally degraded to the status of possible corpses. Once inside the death factories, everything became an accident completely beyond control of those who did the suffering and those who inflicted it. And in more than one case, those who inflicted the suffering one day became the sufferers the next. Human history has known no story more difficult to tell. The monstrous equality in innocence that is its *leitmotif* destroys the very basis on which history is produced--which is, namely, our capacity to comprehend an event no matter how distant we are from it."

Thirty-five years later, philosophers were still grappling with the impossibility to grasp the world of the camps. "There is something in the nature of thought--its patient deliberateness and care for logical order--that is alien to the enormity of the death camps," the late Arthur A. Cohen wrote in his short but magisterial *The Tremendum: A Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust* (1981). "There is something no less in the reality of the death camps that denies the attentions of thought. Thinking and the death camps are incommensurable. The procedures of thought and the ways of knowing are confounded. It is to think the unthinkable--an enterprise that is not alone contradictory but hopeless--for thought entails as much as moral hope (that it may be triumphant, mastering its object, dissolving the difficulties, containing and elucidating the conundrum) as it is the investment of skill and dispassion in a methodic procedure. The death camps are a reality which, by their very nature, obliterate thought and the humane program of thinking. We are dealing, at the very outset, therefore, with something unmanageable and obdurate--a reality which exists, which is historically documented, which has specific beginnings and ends, located in time, the juncture of confluent influences which run from the beginnings of historical memory to a moment of consummating orgy, never to be forgotten, but painful to remember, a continuous scourge to

memory and the future of memory and yet something which, whenever addressed, collapses into tears, passions, rage. The death camps are unthinkable, but not unfelt. They constitute a traumatic event and, like all decisive trauma, they are suppressed but omnipresent, unrecognized but tyrannic, silted over by forgetfulness but never obliterated.”

Cohen’s insight must, in the end, apply to anyone who has seriously tried to understand the Holocaust in general, or Auschwitz in particular. Elie Wiesel recorded that, after the end of the Eichmann Trial, he met by chance one of the judges, a “wise and lucid man, of uncompromising character.” “He refused to discuss the technical or legal aspects of the trial. Having told him that side was of no interest to me, I asked him the following question: “Given your role in this trial, you ought to know more about the scope of the Holocaust than any living person, more even than those who lived through it in flesh and in their memory. You have studied all the documents, read all the secret reports, interrogated all the witnesses. Now tell me: do you *understand* this fragment of the past, those few pages of history?” He shuddered imperceptibly, then, in a soft voice, infinitely humble, he confessed: “No, not at all. I know the facts and the events that served as their framework; I know how the tragedy unfolded minute by minute, but this knowledge, as if coming from outside, has nothing to do with understanding. There is in all this a portion which will always remain a mystery; a kind of forbidden zone, inaccessible to reason. Fortunately, as it happens. Without that ...” He broke off suddenly. Then, with a smile a bit timid, a bit sad, he added: “Who knows, perhaps that’s the gift which God, in a moment of grace, gave to man: it prevents him from understanding everything, thus saving him from madness, or from suicide.”

Having studied for years the evidence this judge had to consider, it is difficult not to agree with him. For all our knowledge, the world of the camps continue to offer an ever-receding horizon that seeks to escape our understanding every time we seek to close in on it. It is with this in

mind that I present at the end of this first chapter the end of the last chapter of *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present*. The main protagonist, Sarah Grossman-Weil, is a very dear friend of mine, and an aunt of my co-author Debrah Dwork. Her testimony was one of the invaluable gifts that allowed us to write and complete our book--a gift that somehow helped us to negotiate that gap between knowledge and understanding. "In August 1944, as the Hungarian Action came to an end and the crematoria stood idle, Sara Grossman-Weil, her husband Menek, her mother and father-in-law Feigele and Wolf, her brother-in-law Adek, his wife Esther, their adolescent daughter Regina, and their little girl Mirka were herded into a train of cattle cars in Lodz, the last of the hundreds of ghettos the Germans had established to cleanse the German East of Jews. The ghetto of Lodz, which had been organized in early 1940 as a holding pen for the Nisko project, had survived at the expense of most of its inhabitants as a vast workshop. The German-appointed Eldest of the Jews, Chaim Rumkowski, had developed a policy to make the ghetto indispensable to the German war effort. If work would not set Jews free, it should at least guarantee survival. The Germans agreed, with a caveat: if the ghetto were an enormous workshop, only those who were capable of work could stay. Selections were instituted, and Sara put rouge on her gaunt cheeks to look healthy. "You would try to look straight, not to look sick. You would not bend, because this would suggest that you're not capable of doing the work you're doing. You would walk straight, or as well as you could, to show them that you are fit to remain." But there were those who could not be saved by all the rouge and posture in the world. In early September, 1942, the Germans decreed that those who could not work--children under ten and old people over sixty-five--would have to leave. Forcing Rumkowski, his Jewish Council and the Jewish ghetto police to share moral responsibility, the Germans ordered them to execute the order. Their families would be exempt. When the decree was made known, it seemed that the nadir of perdition had been reached. "The sky above the ghetto is unclouded," Josef Zelkowicz recorded. "Like yesterday and the day be-

fore, the early autumn sun shines. It shines and smiles at our Jewish grief and agony, as though someone were merely stepping on vermin, as though some one had written a death-sentence for bedbugs, a day of Judgement for rats which must be exterminated and wiped off the face of the earth.” Like Josef Zelkowicz and everyone else, Sara witnessed dragnet operations to catch infants, toddlers and elementary school children. “The children were taken away; thrown, literally thrown, on to the wagon. And when the mother objected, either she was taken with them, or shot. Or they tore the child away from her and let her go. And all the children, small children, little ones, five-, six-, four-, seven-year-old ones were thrown, literally thrown, into this wagon. The cries were reaching the sky, but there was no help, there was no one to turn to, to plead your case, to beg.” Mirka Grossman was one of the few children to survive the selection. With the action against the children and the elderly, the two-year death knell of the last Jewish community on Reich territory had begun. It ended on Wednesday, 2 August 1944 when the German mayor of Lodz informed Rumkowski that the ghetto would be resettled, workshop by workshop. “Factory workers will travel with their families,” Rumkowski’s final proclamation read. Sara Grossman-Weil left with her husband’s family. They were herded to the train station and ordered on to the cattle cars. “You couldn’t throw a pin in, one was sitting on top of the other, with the bundles. We were in this cattle car, this wagon, and we were riding, riding, riding. There was no end to it. And the little one asked, in Polish, ‘Daddy, isn’t it better that today it’s a bad day, but tomorrow it will be better?’ She was five years old. And her father said, ‘Today doesn’t matter, tomorrow will be much better.’” Tomorrow proved him wrong. The train with the survivors of the Lodz ghetto passed by Kattowitz and Myslowitz, and crossed the Vistula at Neu-Berun. They arrived at the station of Auschwitz. The train turned into a spur and stopped. When the sun began to set, the train backed onto another spur, through a gate, and entered the enormous compound of Birkenau. It came to a halt. The bolted doors were opened. Sara Grossman, her relatives, and the rest of the

people on the train were hauled out and told to form two columns, one of men, and one of women and children. I was standing there not knowing what's going on, overwhelmed with the amount of people around us, not believing that they threw us all out from these wagons in the manner they did. How they pushed and shoved and screamed. And these SS men with the dogs in front of us. I lost sight of what was going on. It's crazy. And I was standing with my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law with her little girl, when someone approached us, and said, "give this child to the grandmother." And my sister-in-law gave the child to my mother-in-law. They went to the left, and we went to the right. "

Sara and the other women considered fit for work entered the camp. "As we were marching, I saw columns of women marching on the other side in the opposite direction who were half naked, shaven heads, stretching out their arms. 'Food, food. Give me your bread!' Screaming, shouting. I was overwhelmed. I thought that I found myself in an asylum, in a madhouse, in a place with only crazy people." This was the place she had heard about, always in whispers and always with dread. "They always called it Auschwitz, but we didn't know what it meant."

They arrived at the delousing station, were registered, shaved and showered, and handed some rags and wooden shoes. "From there they gathered us again in columns, in rags like the people whom I had seen an hour ago in the columns marching in the opposite direction. We had the same look, except we weren't shouting. We looked like crazy people, just like the rest of them. We were led to a lavatory where we had to take care of our needs, and from there we went to a barrack, which was the house where we would be staying. In this barrack we were given a bunk. The size of the bunk was approximately the size of not quite a twin bed, I would say considerably smaller. And on this bunk bed, five people had to find their sleeping quarters. And this was our new home."

Sara remained in Birkenau for ten days, and then she was brought on another transport to a munitions factory at Unterlöss, 18 miles north-east of Celle. Most of the inmates were Hungarian women. Sara recalled that sulphur was everywhere, “in the air, and in the bread that you were given as a ration at work, and in your mouth, eyes, hands, fingers, everything turned yellow. I was sick with the smell.”

Production at Unterlöss came to an end in March 1945. The satellite camp was closed, and the inmates were sent to Bergen-Belsen where Sara was put in a barrack with hundreds of other women. “On the outside were hundreds of women dying of thirst, thirst, and thirst again.” “It was a sight that is beyond any description or understanding or imagination. You cannot, because when you see the pictures of the dead bodies, you just see pictures. You don’t see the bodies, the eyes that talk to you and beg you for water. You don’t see the mouths quietly trying to say something and not being able to utter a word. You see and you feel as I did, the agony of these people for whom death would be a blessing. They are just dying and can’t die.”

All around the camp were mounds of bodies, and Sara was ordered to move corpses to a large pit. “These mounds that you see on some of the pictures that are being shown about the Holocaust, they were real people. They were living, breathing, eating, feeling, thinking people, thousands upon thousands of them. Mothers and daughters and children. These pictures are real. And I saw it, I smelled it, I touched them. They were very, very real. This was Bergen-Belsen in March and the beginning of April in 1945.” Sara survived, and was liberated on her birthday, the 15th of April.

There were no mounds of corpses in Auschwitz. The crematoria took care of that. “I was standing with my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law with her little girl, when someone approached us, and said, ‘Give this child to the grandmother.’ And my sister-in-law gave the child to my mother-in-law. They went to the left, and we went to the right. And I

said, 'Why?' My mother-in-law took the little one and went to the left." None of the new arrivals knew what "left " meant, and no one who went to the left survived to give testimony. It is from the accounts and reports of the slave or willing workers, and from documents and drawings, that we can follow the route that Feigele and Mirka took. They went to the left, crossed a train track, and came to a road parallel to the rails, running from the gate building at their left to two relatively large buildings at their right. An SS man directed them to the right, towards the two buildings. Another SS man 500 yards down the road told them to turn left, into a compound surrounding one of the two identical brick buildings with their square, squat chimneys. They were not led to the large entrance below the chimney, but walked past the building and then, beyond, along a 70-yard-long terrace. At the end of the paved asphalt they were told to take a sharp turn to the left, and descend a staircase ending at a door leading into a basement.

Today, in 1995, that underground space, and a room connected to it at right angles, are shallow pits overgrown with grass. In 1944 this place, originally designed as a mortuary, served as the penultimate stage in a process of destruction that had begun with the identification of Feigele and Mirka as Jews, and had continued with their incarceration in the Lodz ghetto, their deportation to Auschwitz, and their selection at the station. Robbed of their home and financial assets in 1939, of most of their other property during the four long years in the ghetto, and of their suitcases at the Auschwitz station, they now were to surrender the last things they owned: the clothes they wore. The basement they entered served as the undressing room.

Very few of the hundreds of thousands people who entered that basement survived. One of them was Filip Müller. "At the entrance to the basement was a signboard, and written on it in several languages the direction: *To the baths and disinfecting rooms*. The ceiling of the changing room was supported by concrete pillars to which many more notices were fixed, once again with the aim of making the unsuspecting people

believe that the imminent process of disinfection was of vital importance to their health. Slogans like *Cleanliness brings freedom* or *One louse may kill you* were intended to hoodwink, as were numbered clothes hooks fixed at a height of 1.50 meters.”

Feigele, Mirka and the other Jews who had survived the Germans’ abuse until that point were told to undress, and then herded into a small vestibule. Someone pointed to the right, to the doors of an oblong white-washed room resembling the one they had just left. But, as Filip Müller knew, there were some important visible, and even more important invisible differences between the two rooms. “Down the length of the room concrete pillars supported the ceiling. However, not all the pillars served this purpose: for there were others, too. The Zyklon-B gas crystals were inserted through openings into hollow pillars made of sheet metal. They were perforated at regular intervals and inside them a spiral ran from top to bottom in order to ensure as even a distribution of the granular crystals as possible. Mounted on the ceiling was a large number of dummy showers made of metal. These were intended to delude the suspicious on entering the gas chamber into believing that they were in a shower-room.” Feigele, Mirka and the others were crammed in, the doors closed, and the lights were turned off.

While Feigele and Mirka were driven into the underground room, a van marked with a Red Cross sign parked along its side, which projected 1.5 feet above ground. Two “disinfecting operators “ climbed on the roof of the basement, carrying sealed tins manufactured by the Degesch Company. They chatted leisurely, smoking a cigarette. Then, on signal, each of them walked to a one foot high concrete shaft, donned a gas mask, took off the lid, opened the tin, and poured the pea-sized contents into the shaft. They closed the lids, took off their masks, and drove off.

Müller witnessed everything from a short distance. “After a while I heard the sound of piercing screams, banging against the door and also moaning and wailing. People began to cough. Their coughing grew worse from minute to minute, a sign that the gas had started to act. Then the clamor began to subside and to change to a many-voiced dull rattle, drowned now and then by coughing.” Ten minutes later all was quiet.

An SS man ordered Müller and the rest of the death squad workers to take the lift down into the basement. There they waited for the ventilating system to extract the gas from the room and, after some twenty minutes, unbolted the doors to the gas chambers. Contrary to Höss’s assertion that he had adopted Zyklon-B as a killing agent because it offered an easy death, the victims showed the marks of a terrible struggle.

This is the place where and the method by which Germans killed Feigele, Mirka, and countless other human beings. Within hours of their arrival in Auschwitz nothing of the Jews remained but smoke, ashes, and our memory of them. Their bodies were brought to the ground floor with the same lift that Müller had used to go down to the basement, and there they were cremated in one of the five incinerators with three muffles each in the center of the crematorium.

Today we know where Feigele and Mirka died: in a town the Germans always called Auschwitz. We know they built the town in 1270, and a Polish king bought it in 1457. We know the town declined under Polish rule. We know it had a modest existence along a major railway line in the nineteenth century. We know that the region became the object of German rage in the 1920s. We know the National Socialists annexed the town to the Reich in 1939. We know that they intended to repeat the initiatives of the middle ages.

Today we know that Feigele and Mirka died in a camp originally created as a labour exchange, that then served as a Polish army base, and that the Germans adapted into a concentration camp to terrorize a local population too useful to deport. We know that the camp accrued one function after another: it became a production site for sand and gravel, an execution site for the Gestapo in Kattowitz, the center of a large agricultural estate to support ethnic German transplantees, a labour pool to construct a synthetic rubber plant and a new town. We know that, throughout these transformations, Auschwitz remained the centerpiece of Himmler's ambitions in the recovery of German history in this one-time area of German settlement. We know that it became a centre of extermination when he lost interest in the town and the region, and that it also served as the heart of a network of satellite camps to service various industries in the region, and that it finally became a labour exchange again, only this time the labourers were Jewish slaves.

Today we know who designed the building: Georg Werkmann, Karl Bischoff and Walther Dejaco. We know who constructed the furnaces: the Topf and Sons Company in Erfurt. We know the power of the forced-air system (over 4 million cubic feet per hour) to fan the flames. We know the official cremation capacity (32 corpses) per muffle per day. We know that it was Bischoff who took the decision to change the larger morgue into an undressing room, and the smaller one into a gas chamber. We know that Dejaco drafted the plan that transformed a mortuary into a death chamber. We know the specifications of the ventilation system that made the room operable as a site for mass extermination: seven horsepower is required to extract the Zyklon-B from the gas chamber in 20 minutes. We know that the building was brought into operation on 13 March 1943 and 1,492 women, children and old people were gassed. We know about the difficulties the Germans had getting everything just the way they wanted. We know who paid the bills and how much was paid.

We know all of that. But we understand very little about many issues central to this machinery of death. Research about the history of the region, the intended future of the town, the development of the camp, and the changing design of the crematoria has been useful, but is not the whole story about the Holocaust at Auschwitz. It is the questions of the victims and the survivors which loom large.

When Sara Grossmann faced selection upon arrival at Auschwitz in August 1944, “I lost sight of what was going on. It’s crazy. And I was standing with my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law with her little girl, when someone approached us, and said, give this child to the grandmother. And my sister-in-law gave the child to my mother-in-law. They went to the left, and we went to the right. *And I said, ‘Why?’* My mother-in-law took the little one and went to the left. Regina, Esther, and I went to the right. To the left were all the people who were led to the gas chambers, crematorium, however you call it.”

“Gas chambers, crematorium, however you call it.” Half a century later, Sara Grossman was not precise. What mattered was that the men were separated from the women, and that the grandmother Feigele and the little girl Mirka went to the left, and the adolescent Regina, and the two sisters-in-law Esther and Sara to the right. And she is correct. That process of selection is the core and moral nadir of the horror of the Holocaust--the selection, and not the gas chambers and crematoria. The Germans and their allies had arrogated to themselves the power to decide who should live and who would die. “As though,” Hannah Arendt accused Eichmann, “you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world.”

Mirka, Sara, and hundreds of thousands of other deportees lined up for selection by a physician. Had he worked alone, he could have done little harm. But he did not. His work was but a small part of a system envisioned by ideologues, organized by bureaucrats, financed by in-

dustrialists, serviced by technocrats, operated by ordinary men, and supported by millions of Germans whose daily lives were improved by the goods shipped home to the Reich for their use.

And Sara's question remains: "And I said, 'Why?'"

II Auschwitz and the Holocaust

Our turn came. My mother, my sons, and I stepped before the "selectors." Then I committed my second terrible error. The selector waved my mother and myself to the adult group. He classed my younger son Thomas with the children and the aged, which was to mean immediate extermination. He hesitated before Arvad, my older son.

My heart thumped violently. This officer, a large man who wore glasses, seemed to be trying to act fairly. Later I learned that he was Dr. Fritz Klein, the "Chief Selector." "This boy must be more than twelve," he remarked to me.

"No," I protested.

The truth that Arvad was twelve, and I could have said so. He was big for his age, but I wanted to spare him from labors that might prove too arduous for him.

"Very well," Klein agreed amiably. "To the left!"

I had persuaded my mother that she should follow the children and take care of them. At her age she had the right to the treatment accorded to the elderly and there would be someone to look after Arvad and Thomas.

"My mother would like to remain with the children," I said.

"Very well," he again acquiesced. "You'll all be in the same camp."

"And in several weeks you'll all be reunited," another officer added, with a smile.

“Next!”

Auschwitz is the central site of the Holocaust. This is attested by the fact that, at least since the year 1951 when Theodor Adorno stated that “to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric,” the word Auschwitz has become a synecdoche for the Holocaust in general.

There are various reasons why Auschwitz is legitimately seen as the center of the Holocaust. First of all, it is the site where the single largest group of Jews were murdered. According to Raul Hilberg’s rather conservative figures, which I hold to be the most reliable estimate of total Jewish deaths, the Holocaust claimed 5.1 million Jewish lives. Of this number, over 800,000 Jews died as the result of ghettoization and general privation, over 1.3 million were murdered in open-air shootings, and up to 3 million died in the camps. Of these, Auschwitz had the highest mortality with 1 million Jews, followed by Treblinka and Belzec with 750,000 and 550,000 Jews respectively.

Theodor Adorno, “Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft,” *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I: Prismen. Ohne Leitbild* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 33. Adorno’s “after Auschwitz” became a popular figure of speech to denote the great historical rupture wrought by the Holocaust. See, for example, Ignaz Maybaum, *The Face of God after Auschwitz* (Amsterdam: Polak and Van Gennep, 1965); Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966); André Neher, *L’exil de la Parole: du silence biblique au silence d’Auschwitz* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970); Hans Jansen, *Christelijke theologie na Auschwitz: Theologische en kerkelijke wortels van het antisemitisme* (The Hague: Boekencentrum, 1982); Peter Mosler, ed., *Schreiben nach Auschwitz* (Cologne: Bund Verlag, 1989); David H. Hirsch, *The Deconstruction of Literature: Criticism after Auschwitz* (Hanover and London: Brown University Press, 1991).

It is important to note here that at least one prominent Jewish philosopher, the late Arthur A Cohen, protested against the use of “Auschwitz” as a synecdoche of the Holocaust, which he denoted with the term *tremendum* a word that denotes a vast terror. “Note that I have not referred to Auschwitz as the name by which to concretize and transmit the reality of the *tremendum*,” Cohen wrote. “Auschwitz was only one among many sites of death. It was not even the largest death camp, although it may well have claimed the largest number of victims. Auschwitz is a particularity, a name, a specific. Auschwitz is the German name for a Polish name. It is a name which belongs to *them* It is not name which commemorates. It is both specific and other.” Arthur A. Cohen, *The Tremendum: a Theological Interpretation of the Holocaust* (New York: Crossroads, 1981),11.

Second of all, Auschwitz is seen as the central site because the camp became the destination to a greater variety of Jews than any other. From at least twelve European countries Jews were deported to Auschwitz, and as such Auschwitz testifies to the pan-European character of the Holocaust.

Then Auschwitz may be seen as a particularly pointed attempt to destroy not only Jews, but also the soul of Judaism. As the great Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig reminded the generation that was to succumb in Auschwitz, the Jews were the first to understand that the son is born so that he may bear witness to his father’s father “The grandson renews the name of the forebear. The patriarchs of old call upon their last descendant by his name--which is theirs.” Thus God planted eternal life in the midst of the Jewish people. Rosenzweig observed how the Jewish concept of a linked sequence of everlasting life which goes from grandparent to grandchild will know its eternity to be present in the child of its child. Because of this, Jews could forego to claim its eternity by means of the possession of land. In the grandchild, the Jewish nation knew itself to “begin again.” As Elie Wiesel wrote in a commentary on the new beginning Adam and Eve made

after they had been thrown out of Paradise, “it is not given to man to begin.” This, so he argues, is God’s privilege. “But it is given to man to begin again--and he does so every time he chooses to defy death and side with the living.” This, in a nutshell, is the eternal foundation of a people which defines itself in the relationship between the old and the young. In Auschwitz the Germans annulled this link, and with that tried to destroy the very basis of Jewish existence: on arrival the old and the young, the grandparents and the grandchildren, were immediately sent to the gaschambers. And thus the linked sequence of the everlasting life which, for the Jews, goes from grandparent to grandchild, was to be destroyed from the very beginning. The generation in between was allowed to live for somewhat longer, in the barracks adjacent to the ramps where the selection took place, under the smoke of the crematoria. Auschwitz was, in the testimony of a survivor Yehiel Dinur given during the Eichmann Trial, a different planet. “Time there was not like time on earth. Every fraction of a minute there passed on a different scale of time. And the inhabitants of this planet had no names, they had no parents nor did they have children. There they did not dress in the way we dress here; they were not born there and they did not give birth; they breathed according to different laws of nature; they did not live--nor did they die--according to the laws of this world.”

In this world, the old covenants between people were destroyed--not only at the moment of selection, but also for those “lucky” enough to survive their initial confrontation with Auschwitz. The whole camp system was designed to make fathers strangers to their sons, mothers strangers to their daughters, to set brother against brother and sister against sister. Primo Levi commented in his *The Drowned and the Saved* that in Auschwitz “almost everybody feels guilty of having omitted to offer help.” “The presence at your side of a weaker--or less cunning, or older, or too young--companion, hounding you with his demands for help or with his simple presence, in itself an entreaty, is a constant in the life of the Lager. The demand for solidarity, for a human word, ad-

vice, even just a listening ear, was permanent and universal but rarely satisfied. There was no time, space, privacy, patience, strength; most often, the person to whom the request was addressed found himself in his turn in a state of need, entitled to comfort.” Those whose ancestors had given the world knowledge of a God who had created a good world from nothing were confronted with the truth of Auschwitz--the revelation that “man, the human species--we, in short--had the potential to construct an infinite enormity of pain, and that pain is the only force created from nothing, without cost and without effort. *It is enough not to see, not to listen, not to act.*” Therefore Auschwitz has remained such an enormous challenge to survival of Judaism, a religion that centers on a covenant of life between God and Abraham, a covenant that stipulates that the stronger will bear witness to the suffering of the weaker in a world that God acknowledged to be “good.”

Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly for those concerned with the general cultural-historical impact of Auschwitz, the camp may be considered the center of the Holocaust because it was in its technology and organization thoroughly “modern.” For Henry Feingold, Auschwitz marked the juncture where the European industrial system went awry. “[I]nstead of enhancing life, which was the original hope of the Enlightenment, it began to consume itself.” Therefore Auschwitz was “a mundane extension of the modern factory system.” “Rather than producing goods, the raw material was human beings and the end product was death, so many units per day marked carefully on the manager’s production charts. The chimneys, the very symbol of the modern factory system, poured forth acrid smoke produced by burning human flesh. The brilliantly organized railroad grid of modern Europe carried a new kind of raw material to the factories. It did so in the same manner as with other cargo. In the gas chambers the victims inhaled noxious gases generated by prussic acid pellets, which were produced by the advanced chemical industry of Germany. Engineers designed the crematoria; managers designed the system of bureaucracy that

worked with a zest and efficiency more backward nations would envy. Even the overall plan itself was a reflection of the modern scientific spirit gone awry.”

As the nexus of technological prowess, bureaucratic discipline and ideological determination, Auschwitz was not only thoroughly modern, but also “civilized.” As Franklin H. Littell observed, the death camps were not planned, built and operated by illiterate, unschooled savages. “The killing centres were, like their inventors, products of what had been for generations one of the best university systems in the world.” The architect who designed Birkenau was a Bauhaus graduate. Dr. Josef Mengele had a degree in philosophy from the University of Munich, and a degree in medicine from the University of Frankfurt am Main, and believed himself to be a herald of a new era. Inspired by Mengele, the German dramatist Rolf Hochhuth had the camp doctor state in his controversial play *The Deputy* that Auschwitz marked the end of the old and the beginning of a new age. “The truth is, Auschwitz refutes creator, creation, and the creature. Life as an idea is dead. This may well be the beginning of a great new era, a redemption from suffering. From this point of view only one crime remains: cursed be he who creates life. I cremate life. That is modern humanitarianism--the sole salvation from the future.”

As Hochhuth’s doctor declares, the modernity of Auschwitz was partly embodied in the crematoria, which offered in their logical arrangement of undressing rooms, gas chambers, and crematoria ovens a carefully thought-out production facility of death. Yet the modernity of this technology of mass destruction is not merely embodied in the statistics that state that the gas chambers could kill so-many people in so-many minutes, and the ovens could reduce to ashes so-many corpses in so-many hours. It is also embodied in the anonymity of the killing procedure itself. Ancient German law, going back to the pre-Christian era, stipulated that sentences of death should be pronounced in the midst of the community in the open air, and the judges who had

condemned a person to death should be present at the execution, which likewise had to take place in full view of the community, and the gods. All of this embodied a profound sense that when humans decide to take the life of another human being on behalf of society, they inflict a wound in the created world, and should accept public responsibility of this. In the modern world, issues of personal responsibility and accountability tend to become diffused. At no point has this become so clear as in the case of Auschwitz, where Jews were executed without having been subjected to a clearly established judicial procedure, and where the killing itself took place hidden from the world, in (mostly) underground gas chambers.

It is at this point useful to quote the following consideration by Pierre Vidal-Naquet “In what way do the gas chambers have a specificity, not only in relation to the Gulag (which is obvious) or in relation to other methods of state sponsored terror, but also in relation to the Nazi concentration camp system as a whole, and even in relation to the collective murders carried out by the Einsatzgruppen in the USSR? Between death by gas and death by bullets, or even death by exhaustion or by the action of exanthematous typhoid, is there a difference in kind? My personal response is that there is a difference in kind. What, in the context of the SS State, do the gas chambers actually *represent* Not only, not essentially, do they represent the industrialization of death--by which I mean the employment of industrial techniques for purposes of killing and not for production (which was still being carried out, moreover, just besides the slaughterhouses). While the “crematory ovens” of Auschwitz were highly refined tools, the techniques used to operate the gas chambers were of a very low level. The essential issue does not lie there. The key point is the *negation of a crime within the crime itself*. The problem has been posed very well by a German lawyer, Attorney Hans Laternser, during the course of the Auschwitz trial (1963-1965). Starting from the moment the order to kill was given, those who *selected*, not--as is often said and as I myself once happened

to say--in order to separate those fit for work from those unfit but in order to separate those who would be sent to replace the disappeared work force from those who would be killed right away, were in reality not killers of Jews but saviors of Jews. This lawyer was expressing in his own way something real: the reality of the diffusion of responsibility, the reality of the near-disappearance of responsibility. Who, then, was the killer at Auschwitz? Was it the person who put the Zyklon B tablets under the lid that led into the gas chambers? All the operations from the directing of victims as they left the trains to the undressing and cleaning of bodies to their placement inside the crematoria were basically under SS control, of course. But all this was done through the intermediary of members of the *Sonderkommandos* who, in the end, were the only ones placed in direct contact with death." In other words, the very modernity of Auschwitz--that is the anonymity of the killing--is embodied in the uniquely modern phenomenon that has arisen from it: the fact of Holocaust Denial. As Vidal Naquet noted, "[t]he crime can be denied today because it was anonymous."

The American theologian Richard L. Rubenstein explored some other dimensions of the "modern humanitarianism" of Auschwitz. Rubenstein defined Auschwitz as the supreme example of absolute domination that, thanks to technology and bureaucracy, has become possible in the modern age. As a place which combined extermination with slave labour, Auschwitz constituted a new kind of society which allowed, so Rubenstein believes, a prophetic vision of a future increasingly confronted with the assumed problem of "surplus populations." "The death-camp system became a society of total domination only when healthy inmates were kept alive and forced to become slaves rather than killed outright. To repeat, as long as the camps [Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, Chelmno] served the single purpose of killing prisoners, one can speak of the camps as places of mass execution but not as a new type of human society. Most of the literature on the camps has tended to stress the role of the camps as places of execution. Regret-

tably, few ethical theorists or religious thinkers have paid attention to the highly significant political fact that the camps were in reality a new form of human society. Only when the doomed inmates were kept alive for some time did the new society develop. It was at Auschwitz that the most effective system of extermination, mass gas chambers using Zyklon B coupled with on-the-spot crematoria, was first put to use. It was also at Auschwitz that the most thorough going society of total domination in human history was established. Much has been written about the infamous Dr. Joseph Mengele, the physician at Auschwitz, who used to meet the new arrivals and separate those who were to be killed immediately from those who were to be worked to death as slaves. Such a selection process did not take place at camps like Treblinka because they functioned only as killing centers. At Auschwitz, the camp served two seemingly contradictory purposes: Auschwitz was both a slave-labor and an execution center. Given the nature of slavery as practised by the Germans, only doomed slaves could successfully be dealt with as things rather than as human beings.”

Rubenstein believed that, as things are going, Western urban civilization is doomed to end in Necropolis, the new city of the dead. As the Holocaust was to him “an expression of some of the most significant political, religious and demographic tendencies of Western civilisation in the twentieth century,” so Auschwitz was the terminal expression of the chalice of modernization: the city. “At Auschwitz, the Germans revealed new potentialities in the human ability to dominate, enslave, and exterminate. They also revealed new areas in which capitalist enterprise might profitably and even respectably be employed. The camps were thus far more of a permanent threat to the human future than they could have been had they functioned solely as an exercise in mass killing. An extermination center can only manufacture corpses, a society of total domination creates a world of the living dead.”

As not all deportees were killed on arrival, many more survived Auschwitz than any other of the death camps. Of the 1.1 million Jews who were deported to Auschwitz, some 100,000 Jews left the camp alive. Many of those survivors were to succumb during the death march to the West, or during their stay during the Spring of 1945 in concentration camps like Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen. Yet tens of thousands saw liberation, and testified after the war about their ordeal. And some even did so during the war. The most important war-time report on the German genocide of the Jews, sponsored by the War Refugee Board, was written by two escapees from Auschwitz, and described the extermination installation in some detail. And of the 100,000 gentile survivors of Auschwitz, of whom the Poles, with 75,000, were the largest group, all who could did bear witness to the use of the camp as an extermination center for Jews.

The technology of mass destruction as it existed in Auschwitz also points at another important issue: the significance of the so-called Final Solution of the Jewish Problem as a state-initiated, state-sponsored, and state-controlled program of genocide. Like any major historical problem, there has been, is, and probably will remain legitimate disagreement between historians about various aspects of the history of the Holocaust. Yet there has been, is, and probably will remain a general consensus that the German destruction of at least five and possibly as many as six and half million European Jews was *not* the result of countless individual initiatives taken, as Irving phrased it in 1984, by “Nazi criminals, acting probably without direct orders from above.” The evidence of the operations of the Einsatzgruppen in the German-occupied parts of the Soviet Union, of the ghetto-clearings in Poland with the subsequent mass-killings in the Operation Reinhard death camps, and of the deportations of Jews from many countries over long distances to the killing centres in Poland reveals a high level of organization involving many state officials. Furthermore Auschwitz was constructed in the middle of the war, in a time that there was a

general building stop in Germany, with public funds. Many levels in the German bureaucracy were involved in the process, providing special construction permits and rationed building materials. The German state railways cooperated when it gave after careful consideration permission for the construction of a railway spur connecting the existing railway tracks at Auschwitz to the crematoria in Birkenau. As Dwork and I have shown in our book *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present* the concentration camp at Auschwitz was originally not intended as an extermination center for Jews. Yet its staged transformation from a prison camp for Poles to a death camp for Jews occurred on the initiative of, and under control of, the state--primarily as it was embodied in *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler in his capacity as Chief of the German Police.

Finally, Auschwitz is considered the center of the Holocaust because enough of at least the two most important parts, the *Stammlager* and Birkenau, still remain to give the visitor a sense of the nature and scale of the operation. Treblinka, Belzec, and Sobibor, which together hosted the murder of 1.5 million Jews, were small camps demolished by the Germans at the end of 1943. Very little to nothing of the original arrangement can be seen. Only recently in Belzec, with the uncovering of the enormous mass graves, has it become possible to acquire, at the location of the massacre, some visual sense of the atrocities that passed there.

In Auschwitz I, and more importantly in Auschwitz II, this is different. When the SS evacuated the camps, they had been able to dismantle the gas chambers and blow up the crematoria. But the Soviets found the rest of the *Stammlager* and Birkenau largely intact. In 1947 the Polish Parliament adopted a law "Commemorating the Martyrdom of the Polish Nation and other Nations in Oswiecim," and the Minister of Culture included both Auschwitz I and II in the new State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Given the many remains of the death camps--the guard towers, the barbed wire fences, the gatehouse, the tracks, the barracks, the ruins of the crematoria, and so on--it is not surprising that in a largely visual culture dominated by photography, film and television, the landscape of Auschwitz became an icon of the Holocaust. Alain Resnais' and Jean Cayrol's 1955 magnificent movie *Night and Fog* was largely shot in and around Birkenau. The opening scenes showed the banal, seemingly innocent fields around the camp. Filming the remains at Birkenau, Resnais allowed the horror to slowly emerge from the midst of banality. As the camera panned the empty barracks in Birkenau, the narrator immediately warned us not to take the image of the present for the reality of the past. "No description, no picture can restore their true dimension: endless, uninterrupted fear. We would need the very mattress where scraps of food were hidden, the blankets that was fought over, the shouts and curses, the orders repeated in every tongue, the sudden appearance of the S.S., seized with a desire for a spot check or for a practical joke. Of this brick dormitory, of these threatened sleepers, we can only show you the shell, the shadow." Resnais tries to evoke an impression of the deportations by filming what remained of the deportees, in the showcases of the museum at Auschwitz I. As he filmed their contents, the narration which until then had so quietly recalled and probed, become halting, as the unimaginable and unspeakable is brought home. Finally it stops -as if there is nothing more to say about the world of the camp. Resnais constantly returned to the fields of Birkenau, and with every scene he confirmed the factuality of the events that happened there, and the centrality of Auschwitz for the modern understanding of the world.

Revolutionary in its visual language, and brilliant in its counterpoint of image and sound, past atrocity and present landscape, *Night and Fog* simultaneously established and confirmed the central role of the landscape of Auschwitz in the modern imagination of atrocity. It is not surprising that, ever since, Auschwitz has become one of the world's most

important places of pilgrimage. The recollections of the American Konnilyn Feig stand for the experience of many. When she first visited Auschwitz, she was not very impressed with the place, which turned out to be the *Stammlager*: “It is truly like visiting just another museum.” Later that day, Feig discovered Birkenau-- by accident. “We left Auschwitz when it was dark, but a full orange Polish moon stood in the sky. Wrong turn, and suddenly, silhouetted starkly against the sky, the strangest, eeriest sight I had ever seen. No one was around. It was silent. We got out, walked to the gates, and then peered through the fences. I did not know what I was looking at, but it frightened me to my depths--a young American girl standing with a friend in Poland in the deserted countryside, at Birkenau. I felt an overwhelming sense of evil--not horror, as in the Auschwitz warehouses, but evil. God, it was awful. I stood with my eyes wide and my mouth open, speechless. I had no idea what it was, but I felt evil, and that moment, that time, has never left me.”

This brings me to an autobiographical note. Seeing *Night and Fog* as a high school student in the early 1970s, and reading Feig’s Hitler’s *Death Camps* as a doctoral candidate in the early 1980s, I became interested in Auschwitz as a symbolic landscape. I travelled there in order to make a pilgrimage to the central site of the modern world. Yet walking around Auschwitz, and noting not only the camp grounds, but also the substantial German wartime civic construction in the town of Auschwitz, I had to revise my view of the camp. I realized that having grown up in a culture that had defined itself as one “after Auschwitz,” I had also “mythified” Auschwitz, ignoring descriptions of historical contingency for the sake of assertions about some unchanging nature of the site, subsuming, in the case of Auschwitz, my general understanding as a historian for the complexity of human acts in a belief in the simplicity of essences, and taking statements of fact as explanations. Remembering Ronald Barthes dictum that the critique of a mythified object begins when we recall *that it once was made*, I began to

investigate the archives in Poland, and found evidence that increased my confusion. The camp in Auschwitz had been not merely built right next to an existing town, but one that the same men who had ordered the construction of the camp had designated as a centre of growth. National Socialist Auschwitz was to become the German capital of a German district, and the site of massive German industrial activity. It became clear that the mythification of Auschwitz, in which I had participated unwittingly, had blinded me for a more complex reality in which seemingly opposing things such as the design for a utopia and the construction of a dystopia existed alongside each other. I became a truly “revisionist” historian when, with the help of my friend and colleague Deborah Dwork, I decided to strip away the myth, to lay bare the place, and reconstruct the where, how, when, and finally why of Auschwitz. In our work, it became clear that while Auschwitz did become the largest death camp for Jews, it was not pre-ordained to become the major site of the Holocaust. Reclaiming the many different and contrary intentions the Germans had for Auschwitz, we became able to square the way Auschwitz became the central site of the Holocaust with the ways of the world--a world in which the mysterious, mythifiable forces of malevolence seem often so ludicrously irrelevant compared to the profane, utterly intelligible and very effective tendencies of insufficiency and expediency. As a result, our book, *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present* recovers the ambiguous and often paradoxical realities that are at the bottom of the crisp, consistent and in many ways convenient scheme earlier historians accepted as the war-time history of Auschwitz.

The history of Auschwitz is not carved in stone, but like all accounts of the past it is subject to revision. Contrary to what Holocaust Deniers assert, serious historians who accept that Auschwitz was a central site of the Holocaust do not turn-off their critical faculties when they consider the topic. They do not consider the inherited history of the camp a religious dogma. At no point is this so clear as in the way the historical community has accepted and endorsed a major revision of the death

count of Auschwitz from 4 million to 1.1 million. I would like to review here, in some detail, the way and manner in which the responsible revisionist scholarship of Dr. Franciszek Piper, chief historian of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, has established these numbers.

Before we begin, it is important to note that the Germans did not keep any records as to the number of people killed in the gas chambers. There are many German testimonies to that effect. One of them is from SS-Unterscharführer Pery Broad, who worked in the Political Department at Auschwitz--the office that served among other things as a liason between Berlin and the camp for the purpose of the Final Solution. Immediately after the war, Broad gave some valuable information regarding record keeping. "When information was requested by the Reich Main Security Office concerning a past transport, as a rule nothing could be ascertained. Former transport lists were destroyed. Nobody could learn anything in Auschwitz about the fate of a given person. The person asked for "is not and never has been detained in camp," or "he is not in the files"--these were the usual formulas given in reply. At present, after the evacuation of Auschwitz and the burning of all papers and records, the fate of millions of people is completely obscure. No transport or arrival lists are in existence any more." Broad's statement was confirmed by Commandant Rudolf Höss, who wrote after the war in a document that was submitted and accepted as evidence in the Eichmann Trial that he had not been allowed to keep records. Eichmann was "the only SS officer who was allowed to keep records concerning these liquidation operations, according to the orders of the Reichsführer-SS. All other units which took part in any way had to destroy all records immediately." And Oswald Pohl, who ran the central administration of the SS, testified during his trial that while he received regular information about the mortality of registered prisoners, he was not informed about the number of deportees killed in the gas chambers upon their arrival in Auschwitz.

The first post-war attempt to establish within the context of a forensic investigation the total number of dead was undertaken by the “Extraordinary State Committee For the Ascertaining and Investigation of Crimes Committed by the German-fascist Invaders and Their Associates On Crimes Committed by the German-fascist Invaders in the Oswiecim Death Camp.” The committee came to the conclusion that four million people had been killed in Auschwitz. Their conclusion was based on an assessment of the capacity of the crematoria. The five crematoria would have been able to burn, at least in theory, 5,121,000 bodies. Added to that was the extra capacity provided by the pyres. “Making allowances for possible undercapacity operation of the crematoriums and stoppages, however, the Commission of technical experts established that during the existence of the Oswiecim camp the German executioners killed in it no less than four million citizens of the USSR., Poland, France, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary, Holland, Belgium, and other countries.”

Apart from the engineering approach to the question how many people had died in Auschwitz a second method emerged to establish the number of victims. It was based on an analysis of the number of deportations to the camp. As early as 1946, Nachman Blumental, using this method, came to an informed guess that the number of victims ought to have been somewhere between 1.3 and 1.5 million. In the early 1950s, Gerald Reitlinger also tried to make a rough guess of the number of victims on the basis of the number of deportees. “As to the total number of Jews brought to the selection place at Auschwitz, it is possible to estimate fairly closely for the Western and Central European countries and the Balkans but not for Poland. There is no real guide to the percentage gassed. It was low before August, 1942, and generally low again after August, 1944, but in the meantime gassings might vary between fifty and nearly a hundred per cent. The following list makes allowances for a number of French and Greek transports sent to Majdanek and 34,000 Dutch Jews who went to Sobibor: Belgium 22,600

Croatia 4,500 France 57,000 Greater Reich [...direct transports only] 25,000 Greater Reich [via Theresienstadt] 32,000 Greece 50,000 Holland 62,000 Hungary (wartime frontiers) 380,000 Italy 5,000 Luxembourg 2,000 Norway 700 Poland and Baltic States 180,000 Slovakia (1939 borders) 20,000 840,800 (*uncertain) Of this total, 550,000 to 600,000 may have been gassed on arrival and to this must be added the unknown portion of the 300,000 or more, missing from the camp, who were selected. ”

It is important to note that Reitlinger systematically chose, if confronted with different estimates about the number of victims, the lowest one. The first reason was that exaggeration would serve those who wished to deny the Holocaust. The second one must be located in his unusually cheerful disposition vis-a-vis the whole story, which was rooted in his very bleak assessment of human nature: as he wrote the book, he always reminded himself that it could have been worse--a sentiment few have shared.

Finally there were different assessments made by witnesses. The most important of these was, without doubt, Commandant Rudolf Höss. During his initial interrogations, Höss seems to have confirmed an initial assessment done by his interrogators that three million people had been killed in Auschwitz. In Nuremberg, he gave different numbers at different occasions. During his interrogations he gave detailed list of numbers for each nationality that came to over 1.1 million deportees. In his affidavit, however, he stated that “at least 2,500,000 victims were executed and exterminated [in Auschwitz] by gassing and burning, and at least another half million succumbed to starvation and disease, making a total dead of about 3,000,000.” He confirmed this number in a conversation with the prison psychologist Dr. Gilbert. “He readily confirmed that approximately 2 1/2 million Jews has been exterminated under his direction.” In a short memorandum which he wrote for Gilbert later in April Höss returned to the lower number. He now stated that the number of 2.5 million referred to the technical potential. “[T]o

the best of my knowledge, this number appears to me much too high. If I calculate the total of the mass operations which I still remember, and still make allowance for a certain percentage of error, I arrive, in my calculation, at a total of 1.5 million at the most for the period from the beginning of 1941 to the end of 1944.” Finally, in Poland, Höss re-affirmed that the number of victims had been most likely less than 1.2 million persons, commenting that “I regard the number of 2.5 million as far too high. Even Auschwitz had limits to its destructive capabilities.”

Thus, by the beginning of the 1950s, there were basically three estimates of the number of victims, each based on different sources: a high one of 4 million based on the assumed capacity of the crematoria, a low one of around 1 million based on the number of transports and Höss’s final assessment given to Dr. Gilbert in Nuremberg and Dr. Jan Sehn in Cracow, and a middle one of around 2.5 million, based on Eichmann’s number as related by Höss, and as initially substantiated by Höss in his Nuremberg affidavit.

Until the early 1980s no original scholarship was undertaken to come to a resolution of the unacceptably great range between the lowest and highest estimate. The Cold War was largely to blame: the figure of 4 million had been established by the Soviets, and the figure of 1 million had been first proposed in the West. As relations between the East and West deteriorated, with the largest part of Germany becoming part of NATO and with that country refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the post-war Polish annexation of the former German territories of East Prussia, Pomerania, and Silesia, the issue of the number of victims became an object of politics. The communist rulers of Poland were unwilling to give an inch on their claims against Germany as long as the Bonn government did not recognize the territorial integrity of the People’s Republic of Poland, and therefore they continued to maintain, as a matter of policy, that 4 million people had been killed in Auschwitz. In the West, most historians of the Holocaust who, given the

political climate, were unable to do original research in the matter tended to accept, with reservations, the middle figure of 2.5 million. Initially only Raul Hilberg, who did important statistical analysis into the number of victims of the Holocaust, supported the lower figure of 1 million. He reasoned--with justification--that given the total number of victims of the Holocaust (5.1 million in his conservative estimate), and given more or less reliable assessments about the number of Jews who died of general privation in the ghettos, who were executed in open-air shootings, and who died in other extermination and concentration camps, the total number of Auschwitz victims could not have been more than 1 million.

The advent of Solidarity and the election of the Pole Karol Wojtyla as Pope John-Paul II (1978) changed the intellectual climate in Poland. While the government was still committed to the official figure of 4 million victims, Dr. Piper of the Auschwitz Museum, who had been banned until then from researching the issue, began to focus his attention on the question of how many people had died in the camp. A catalyst for his research were new figures produced in France by Georges Wellers, who had come to the conclusion that 1,613,455 persons had been deported to Auschwitz (of whom 1,433,405 were Jews) and that 1,471,595 of them had died (of whom 1,352,980 were Jews).

Piper, brought his work to a first completion in 1986. Given the fact that he largely endorsed the figures that had been proposed in the West by Reitlinger and Hilberg, he decided to proceed carefully--a smart move considering that Poland was in the mid 1980s subjected to military rule. He first subjected his conclusions to a process of internal review within the museum, and then to a thorough external review by the leading Polish research institute on the Nazi era, the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland. In 1990, after endorsement of his findings (and with the first post-communist government in power), Piper made his new estimate of 1.1 million victims known to the international community. This figure has been endorsed

by all serious, professional historians who have studied the complex history of Auschwitz in some detail, and by the Holocaust research institutes at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem and at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.

When he began work, Piper realized that the remaining papers of the camp administration, which the SS had largely destroyed before they abandoned the camp, would provide little help in establishing the total number of people deported to and killed in the camp. All the deportees who had been selected for the gas chambers on arrival had never been registered as inmates, and so about them no administrative record within the camp had ever existed except for reports made by the head of the labour allocation of the inmates to his superiors in Berlin, stating that of such-and such transport that contained so many deportees a certain number had been selected as “fit for work,” while the rest, judged to be “unfit for work,” had been subjected to “Special Treatment” (“*wurden sonderbehandelt*”) or had been “specially lodged” (“*gesondert untergebracht*”)—an obvious euphemism for killing as firstly there was no accommodation in the camp to provide “special lodging” for those declared “unfit for work,” and secondly these people subsequently disappeared without a trace. Three of such reports survive. According to the SS man Pery Broad, who worked in the Political Department of Auschwitz, similar reports were sent by his department to Eichmann at the nerve center of the whole operation to kill the Jews: the Reich Security Main Office. None of these survive. As we have seen above, Broad declared that, immediately after the numbers had been dispatched to Berlin, the Political Department was under instruction to destroy all records.

Piper also decided not to make use of the estimates of the number of people murdered made by eyewitnesses. With one exception—Kommandant Rudolf Höss—none of the German personnel who confessed after the war, and none of the survivors of the camp, belonging either to the resistance organization within the camp, or who had worked in

administrative offices, or as *Sonderkommando* in the crematoria, had been in a position to gather sufficient aggregate data over the whole period of the camp's history to establish a credible figure.

Piper also discarded the early attempts, made by Soviet and Polish forensic investigators in 1945, to establish the total number of victims on the basis of the incineration capacity of the crematoria. As we have seen, the experts had decided that, over the period of their existence, the crematoria could have incinerated up to 5,121,000 corpses. To be on the safe side, they had assumed that the crematoria had operated on four-fifths of capacity, and therefore they finally assumed a number of four million. Given the fact that the investigators probably over-estimated the incineration capacity of the crematoria (on the basis of a multiplication of the official German figures for each crematorium and the time they were in operation, one would come to a figure of 2.6 million corpses) and underestimated the sometimes considerable time that the crematoria had been idle, Piper also concluded that it would be difficult to reach conclusions on that basis alone.

The best approach, so he argued, was to follow Nachman Blumental's method and proceed on the basis of research on the numbers of people who had been deported from the various countries to Auschwitz. Analysis of the transports had been the basis for Reitlinger's guestimate that some 900,000 people had died in the camp, and Wellers's conclusion that 1,471,595 people had died in Auschwitz.. Yet Piper was sceptical of Wellers's figures. Wellers, so he argued, had used some arbitrary premises, not considered data of great importance, and combined approximate figures with precise numbers. Failing to take into account transfers of inmates to other camps, inmates who had been released and who had escaped, he had underestimated the number of survivors by 80,000. Added to that, Wellers had overestimated the number of deportees to Auschwitz by around 320,000 people, chiefly by overcalculating the number of Polish Jews brought to the camp (622,935 instead of 300,000).

On the basis of archival research done by scholars in various countries, and especially the three-decade long project known in the Auschwitz archive as the “Kalendarium,” and undertaken by the Polish scholar Danuta Czech, Piper was able to come to an estimate of the number of Jews deported to Auschwitz. The Kalendarium--a day-by-day, fully annotated chronicle of the history of the camp--is a massive reference work which has been since 1956 the core of the long-term research policy of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Early instalments of the Kalendarium were published in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Work continued, however, throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, with constant refinements as more source material became available. Finally, in 1989, the German publishing house Rowohlt published the massive German edition of the Kalendarium, followed a year later by the English-language edition entitled *Auschwitz Chronicle: 1939-1945*. This work includes, after twelve pages of introductory remarks, 805 pages chronicling the pre-history of the camp from the outbreak of the war to the establishment of the camp in the Spring of 1940, and almost every day of the camp’s operation until its liberation on January 27, 1945. Added to that are 19 pages with short biographies of the major perpetrators, a four-page glossary, and an eight-page bibliography that includes 152 individual entries.

A typical entry, randomly chosen, reads as follows:

“ November 14 [1942]

- Prisoner No.69656 is shot at 5:40 A.M. By the SS sentry on duty at Watchtower B of the main camp “while escaping.”
- The standby squad is ordered to the unloading ramp at 1:45 A.M. to take charge of a transport.
- 2,500 Jewish men, women and children arrive with an RSHA transport from the ghetto of the Zichenau District. After the selection, 633 men and 135 women are admitted to the camp and receive Nos. 74745 -75377 and 24524 -24658. The remaining 1,732 are killed in the gas chambers.
- 1,500 Jewish men, women and children arrive with an RSHA transport from the ghetto in the Bialystok District. After the selection, 282 men and 379 women are admitted to the camp and receive Nos. 75378 -75659 and 24659 -25037. The remaining 839 deportees are killed in the gas chambers.
- 71 male and two female prisoners sent to the camp by the Sipo and SD for the Krakow District receive Nos. 75660 -75730, 25038, and 25039.
- The SS Camp Doctor makes a selection in the prisoners’ infirmary. He selects 110 prisoners, who are taken to Birkenau and killed in the gas chambers. ”

The Kalendarium must be regarded as the basis of any research into the history of deportations to Auschwitz, but it must be pointed out that it is not perfect. Especially with regards to the final liquidation of the Lodz ghetto, and the subsequent deportation of its remaining population to Auschwitz, the absence of a clear indication of the size of 11 of the 12 listed transports is troublesome. The transport of September 18, 1944 had a size of 2,500 deportees. If this was a typical transport, this would mean that the ten listed transports account for a total of 25,000 deportees. However, the Statistical Office of Lodz shows that in August and September 73,563 Jews were deported from Lodz, most of them were sent to Auschwitz. This means that all record of a maximum of 20 transports (some 50,000 people) are lost, at least in the account of the Kalendarium. This “disappearance” of up to 20 transports seems, in my opinion, to be the single greatest anomaly in the Kalendarium.

Using both the Kalendarium and the research done by historians in various countries on the precise number of Jews of each national group deported--in the case of France the total number of victims was established by Jacob Letschinsky in early 1947, in the case of the Netherlands all deportation lists were found intact and included in the Parliamentary Report on the German occupation, and so on--Piper was able to come to precise estimates of deportations to Auschwitz of Jews from the following national groups (rounded up or down to the next thousand for all numbers larger than 10,000):

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- (i) France: 71 transports between March 27, 1944 and August 22, 1944; transport lists total to a number of some 69,000 deportees.
- (ii) The Netherlands: 68 transports between July 15, 1942 and September 3, 1944; transport lists total to a number of 60,000 deportees.
- (iii) Greece: 22 transports between March 20, 1943 and August 16, 1944; railway tickets show the deportation of some 49,000 Jews from Saloniki to Auschwitz, and transport lists show the deportation of another 6,000 Jews from Athens and Corfu to Auschwitz.
- (iv) Bohemia and Moravia: 24 transports between October 26, 1942 and October 1944; transport lists total a number of some 46,000 deportees.
- (v) Slovakia: 19 transports between March 26, 1942 and October 20, 1942; various other transports in the fall of 1944; transport lists total a number of some 27,000 deportees;
- (vi) Belgium: 27 transports between August 4, 1942 and July 31, 1944; transport lists total a number of some 25,000 deportees;
- (vii) Italy: 13 transports between October 18, 1943 and October 24, 1944; transport lists total a number of some 7,500 deportees;
- (viii) Norway: 2 transports between December 1, 1942 and February 2, 1943; transport lists total a number of 700 deportees.”

This brings a sub-total of some 290,000 deportees based on relatively straightforward archival information. All the deportees were either killed on arrival, and therefore not registered, or admitted to the camp, and registered.

The figures concerning the Jews from various other countries demanded more involved analysis. In one case there are precise figures for the number of deportees, but a significant number of those *not* killed on arrival were *not* admitted or registered in the camp. These so-called *Durchgangs-Juden* (transit Jews) were kept temporarily in transit, to be dispatched to concentration camps in the Reich.

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(ix) Hungary: according to a telegram dated July 11, 1944, sent by the German ambassador in Budapest to the Foreign Ministry in Berlin, a total of 437,402 (438,000) Jews were deported to Auschwitz. The total number of transports was 148. Of the 438,000 Jews, as much as 25,000 could have been qualified as *Durchgangs-Juden*. ”

This brings a revised sub-total of 728,000 deportees--all Jews--from nine countries. In all the foregoing cases, Piper's numbers came close to those of Wellers.

Finally there are the countries for which the data, for various reasons, proved less straightforward, or for which, at one point or another, there has been substantial disagreement between scholars.

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(x) Poland: there is relatively reliable information, based on records kept by the camp resistance movement, about the number of regular transports with Polish Jews (except those from Lodz) that arrived in Auschwitz between May 5, 1942 and August 18, 1944 (142). These transports averaged some 1,500 people each, with three going as high as 5,000 people (June 1942 from Bielsko-Biala, August 1942 from Bendzin, September 1943 from Tarnow), three exceeding 4,000 people (June 1942, January 1943 from Lomza, November 1943, from Szebnie), and thirteen transports of between 3,000 and 4,000 people. The usual size of Polish transports was either 1,000 or 2,000 people. Thirty-six transports counted less than 1,000 people. The total number of deportees from these transports were some 221,000 people. Added to this number should be the transports that liquidated the Lodz ghetto in August and September 1944. Of these ten transports are listed. In July 1944 the ghetto counted a little below 74,000 people. By the end of September there were none. Most of the transports went to Auschwitz. Hence the total number of Polish Jews deported to Auschwitz was between 280,000 and 290,000. Piper rounded this up to 300,000 people to accommodate possible discrepancies. This round figure of 300,000 Polish Jewish deportees to Auschwitz seems also confirmed by a consideration of the fate of all the Jews of prewar Poland. Before the war, some 3.1 million Jews lived in Poland. After the Polish Campaign of 1939, the Germans gained control of some 1.8 million Polish Jews. With Operation Barbarossa, another million Polish Jews came under German control, which brings a total of 2.8 million Jews. Of these 100,000 survived. The Polish historian Czeslaw Madajczyk determined that of these some 200,000 were executed through shooting by *Einsatzgruppen* or police units, and 500,000 died in the ghettos. Some two million Polish Jews were killed in the German camps. Madajczyk estimated that between 1.6 million and 1.95 million Jews were killed in Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor and Chelmno; Hilberg estimated the number at 1.7 million. Of these 1.7 million, 100,000 victims came from Germany, the Netherlands, and Czechoslovakia, and the rest (1.6 million) from Poland. Which leaves (2 million - 1.6 million =) 400,000 Polish Jews unaccounted for at this point in our calculation. Between 50,000 and 95,000 Polish Jews were killed in Maidanek, from which one may conclude that at least 300,000 and possibly as much as 350,000 Polish Jews died in Auschwitz. This figure is roughly half the figure of 622,935 Polish Jews assumed by Wellers.

(xi) Germany and Austria: according to research done by the German Federal Archive in Koblenz, 38,574 German Jews were killed in Auschwitz. Of these, a number had, before the war, found refuge in France, Belgium and Holland, and were included in transports from those countries to Auschwitz. Others were first deported to Poland, or Bohemia and Moravia (Theresienstadt), and were included in transports from those places. In order not to count these people twice, their number (some 15,000) must be deducted from the 38,574. As a result some 23,000 German Jews were deported directly from Germany to Auschwitz.

(xii) Yugoslavia: the data for Yugoslav Jews is confusing. Between 60,000 and 65,000 Yugoslav Jews were killed during the war. Most of them were killed in Yugoslavia, either through public executions, pogroms, or in camps organized by Croats or Serb fascists. From some of these camps Germans deported groups of Jews to Auschwitz--some 5,000 in total. After the Italian capitulation in 1943 the 4,000 remaining Jews in Croatia were deported to Auschwitz in May 1943. Adding in some smaller transports in 1944, Piper estimates the total number at around 10,000."

This brings a revised sub-total of 1,061,000 Jews deported to Auschwitz.

Finally, a number of Jews, some 34,000 in total, arrived in Auschwitz from other concentration camps (not including Theresienstadt, or the transit camps in the various countries mentioned above). This brings a final total of 1,095,000 (1.1 million) Jews deported to Auschwitz.

How many of these deportees were killed on arrival? There are precise data for the number of registered inmates. The registration numbers ran consecutively, and once a number had been issued, it was never re-issued again. In total 400,207 numbers were issued for six categories of prisoners:

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- a. General number system, given to gentiles and Jews (May 1940 and later): 202,499 men and 89,325 women. Total: 291,824 inmates.
- b. Jews, A series (May 1944 and later): 20,000 men and 29,354 women.
- Total: 49,354 inmates.
- c. Jews, B series (May 1944 and later): 14,897 men.
- d. Re-education prisoners: 9,193 men and 1,993 women. Total 11,186 inmates
- e. Soviet prisoners of war: 11,964. Total 11,964 inmates.
- f. Romani: 10,094 men and 10,888 women. Total 20,982 inmates.
- Total: 400,000 registered inmates. ”

Groups b and c total 64,251 Jewish inmates. On the basis of calculations taking into account the fact that virtually no Jews were registered in the camp before March 1942, and that after that date all the transports sent by the Reich Security Main Office contained exclusively Jews, Piper came to the conclusion that slightly less than half of the 291,824 inmates registered under the general number system were Jews. This brings a total of some 205,000 (64,000 +141,000) registered Jews.

Given the fact that 1,095,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz, and 205,000 were registered as inmates in the camp, it follows that 890,000 Jews who arrived were not registered. Of these some 25,000 would have been *Durchgangs-Juden*, which leads to the conclusion that 865,000 Jews were killed on arrival.

The mortality of the registered Jews is more difficult to determine. It is clear that, of the registered inmates, 190,000 were transferred to other concentration camps--most of them after the death marches of January 1945. A total of 8,000 inmates were liberated by the Red Army on January 27, 1945, some 1,500 inmates were released, and some 500 escaped. This means that some 199,500 inmates, or roughly half of all the registered inmates, are accounted for. The rest, or 200,000, must have died in the camp. According to Piper, the mortality rate for the

general camp population (mainly Poles and Jews), was around 50 per cent over the life of the camp--for the Soviet prisoners- of-war and the Romani it was much higher. As a result Piper came to a rough estimate of 100,000 registered Jews that died in the camp. The result is that the total mortality of Jews in Auschwitz was 960,000.

Added to this number are a number of other victim groups, such as un-registered Poles sent for execution to Auschwitz by the Gestapo Summary Court, registered Polish inmates, unregistered Romani, registered Romani, unregistered Soviet prisoners-of-war sent for execution, registered Soviet Prisoners-of-war, and others (Czechs, Russians, Belorussians, Ukrainians, Yugoslavs, Frenchmen, Germans, Austrians and so on):

1. Jews: 860,000 unregistered and 100,000 registered inmates. Total 960,000 victims.
 2. Poles: 10,00 unregistered and 64,000 registered inmates. Total 74,000 victims.
 3. Romani: 2,000 unregistered and 19,000 registered inmates. Total 21,000 victims.
 4. Soviet prisoners-of-war: 3,000 unregistered and 12,000 registered. Total 15,000 victims.
 5. Others: 12,000 registered inmates. Total 12,000 victims.
- Total: 1,082,000 victims.

Since its publication, Piper's assessment that some 1.1 million people died in Auschwitz has found only one substantial challenge. In 1993 the French researcher Jean-Claude Pressac came to the substantially lower figure of around 800,000 dead in a five page appendix to his *Les Crématoires d'Auschwitz*. The major reason for Pressac's disagreement with Piper is in the former's belief that both the number of Hungarian and Polish Jews killed in the camp were substantially lower than Piper assumed. Pressac agreed with Piper that 438,000 Hungarian Jews had been deported to Auschwitz, yet assumed that 118,000 of these had been *Durchgangsjuden* who had been transferred to other camps imme-

diately after selection. Piper had assumed that only 25,000 of these Hungarian Jews had been *Durchgangsjuden* which meant that Pressac felt justified to reduce, on the basis of this assumption alone, the mortality of Auschwitz with $(118,000 - 25,000 =) 93,000$ people. Pressac also assumed, on the basis of a very quick and rough calculation that instead of 300,000 only 150,000 Polish Jews had been deported to Auschwitz. As a result, Pressac came to a total number of 945,200 Jews deported to Auschwitz, of whom 118,000 were *Durchgangsjuden* (Piper's number is 1.1 million, of whom 25,000 were *Durchgangsjuden*, and subtracting from that number 200,000 registered Jews, Pressac assumed that 630,000 Jews were gassed on arrival (Piper's number is 860,000). Because Pressac also assumed a lower mortality for registered inmates (130,000 instead of 200,000) whilst assuming the same numbers for the Soviet prisoners-of-war (whilst "forgetting" the Romani!), he arrives at a total mortality of $(630,000 + 130,000 + 15,000 =) 775,000$ dead (or roughly 75 % of Piper's numbers.

In the German translation of *Les Crématoires d'Auschwitz* which appeared in 1994 under the title *Die Krematorien von Auschwitz: Die Technik des Massenmordes*, Pressac had changed his mind. Now he presented in an eleven-page appendix a substantially lower figure of at least between 631,000 and 711,000 dead. This new range of figures was the result of a new assumption that the number of Hungarian Jews deported to Auschwitz was substantially lower than both Piper and Pressac himself had assumed. Instead of 438,000 Hungarian Jews, Pressac now used a number of between 160,000 and 240,000. As a result, Pressac came to a total number of between 667,200 and 747,200 Jews deported to Auschwitz (Piper's number is 1.1 million), and subtracting from that number 200,000 registered Jews, Pressac assumed that between 470,000 and 550,000 Jews were gassed on arrival (Piper's number is 860,000). Because Pressac also assumed a lower mortality for registered inmates (126,000 instead of 200,000) whilst assuming

the same numbers for the Soviet prisoners-of-war and the Romani, he arrives at a total mortality of between 630,000 and 710,000--or roughly between 57% and 65% of Piper's number.

Are Pressac's challenges to Piper's numbers to be taken seriously? Let us first consider the general credibility of his research. There is no doubt that Pressac has rendered important service to the historiography of Auschwitz through his research on the development of the gas chambers and the crematoria. Yet it is also true that, having achieved a deserved recognition through the study of one aspect of the history of Auschwitz, Pressac did not hesitate to pronounce himself, at least in my own presence, not only the ultimate expert in all matters relating to the history of Auschwitz, but even to claim expertise in all matters relating to the Holocaust. As a result, Pressac did not hesitate to make far-reaching claims on issues he had not studied, and which were beyond his judgement. His desire to "escape" the narrow perspective of his study of the gas chambers by offering his contribution to the question of the number of victims is a case in point. His lack of true expertise becomes clear when one considers how he radically changed his assessment of the number of people murdered in Auschwitz from one edition to the next.

Reviewing his arguments, it seems to me that Pressac could have a point, which he however fails to prove, when he claims that Piper was too low in his assessment of the number of Hungarian Jews who were qualified as *Durchgangsjuden* on arrival in Auschwitz. Given the German policy during the Hungarian Action to use Auschwitz as a selection station, I have always had some problem with Piper's number--but would have no data to prove him wrong. If Pressac were to be right, or somewhat right on this issue, then it could be that the total number of Jewish people murdered in Auschwitz would be lower than 960,000, and that the total number of victims would be closer to 1 million than the 1.1 million people which Piper calculated. Pressac's argument that 150,000 and not 300,000 Polish Jews were deported to Auschwitz is,

however, based on some very arbitrary observations regarding the liquidation of the ghetto of Bendin and Sosnowitz in early 1943. It is clear that, in the first week of August, more than 30,000 Jews from these ghettos arrived with convoys of either 2,000 or 3,000 people in the camp, and that more than 22,000 of them were killed in the gas chambers. Pressac reasons that the average killing and incineration rate should have been close to 4,000 per day during this period. Theoretically, this should have been possible, given the fact that the official daily incineration capacity of the crematoria was 4,756 corpses. Pressac reasons, however, that in the first week of August the total incineration capacity of the camp had been less than halved because of problems with crematoria 2 and 5, and that as a result the camp incinerators could not have “accommodated” within the given period the (close to) 22,000 victims. Hence, Pressac assumes that because the incineration capacity of the crematoria was half during this period, the number of victims was half, and that therefore the number of Bendin and Sosnowitz Jews deported to Auschwitz was half--ignoring the fact that there was independent confirmation from the chief of police of Sosnowitz of the number of 30,000 deported Jews. Undeterred by this, Pressac reasons that because the number of deportees was half, the size of each of the transports was half (that is 1,000 or 1,500 people per transport and not 2,000 or 3,000 people per transport) and, committing the fallacy of composition, he now assumes that all transport of Polish Jews were half of what they were supposed to have been, and that therefore the total number of Polish Jews had been half of the 300,000 people Piper assumed. Thus a potentially legitimate observation that during the first week of August 1943 half of the ovens were out of order led Pressac to conclude that, over the whole history of the camp, only 150,000 and not 300,000 Polish Jews had been deported to the camp. And he “saves” these 150,000 Polish Jews in an argument that takes a little over a page.

It will be clear that Pressac's methodology, and hence his revision of the number of Polish Jews deported to Auschwitz, is not to be taken seriously. As a result, Piper's numbers remain the only ones that are supported by substantial investigation into the matter. As a scholar working on the history of Auschwitz, I reviewed Dr. Piper's methodology and his conclusions both in conversation, through study of his writings, and by considering the evidence he has presented, and I fully join the scholarly consensus that he has put the matter to rest. And while it is not impossible that at some future date they could be revised if, for example, more information becomes available about the number of Hungarian *Durchgangsjuden* I do not expect such a revision to be beyond a range of about 10 per cent. Even if the total number of Jewish victims of Auschwitz were to be closer to 900,000 than 1,000,000, Auschwitz was to remain the center of the Holocaust, and as such the likely focus of Holocaust denial.

PART TWO *CONCERNING EVIDENCE*

III Intimations, 1941–1945

“We do not exactly know how things have happened, and the historian's embarrassment increases with the abundance of documents at his disposal. When a fact is known through the evidence of a single person, it is admitted without much hesitation. Our perplexities begin when events are related by two or by several witnesses, for their evidence is always contradictory and always irreconcilable.”

More than fifty years after the liberation of Auschwitz, serious scholars have reached a consensus that some 1.1 million people died in Auschwitz. If it has taken considerable research to establish the number of victims, it has been relatively easy to establish the manner in which these people were brought to their deaths: while epidemics may have caused some 10,000 deaths in Auschwitz, and the violence of the guards and the deprivation of the inmates may have caused ten times

as many victims, the vast majority of people who died in Auschwitz were murdered in gas chambers, and their bodies were incinerated in crematoria. Knowledge about the existence and operation of the gas chambers as the main means of mass-extinction was already wide-spread before the liberation of Auschwitz, and was confirmed and further detailed through forensic investigations of the site and study of the remaining documentation, and through post-war statements by witnesses and confessions by perpetrators alike.

I will now present some of the most important pieces of evidence for our knowledge of the genocidal function of Auschwitz. My discussion consists of two parts: in this and the following two chapters, organized as Part Two, I seek to establish the historiographical context within which this evidence became available. In Part Three, I seek to discuss one particular class of evidence: the documents and blueprints which the Germans produced during the war, and which were preserved in the archive of the *Zentralbauleitung der Waffen SS und Polizei, Auschwitz O/S* (Central Building Authority of the Waffen SS and the Police, Auschwitz in Upper Silesia)--the construction office that oversaw the building of the gas chambers and the crematoria. By means of both accounts, I seek to establish, beyond reasonable doubt, that there is substantial and positive evidence that Auschwitz was a site where gas chambers and crematoria operated as instruments of genocide. I will not offer the evidence for the historical and institutional context for the development of Auschwitz as an extermination camp. In our book *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present*, Debórah Dwork and I reconstructed this dynamically evolving context in great detail, and presented both the direct and circumstantial evidence for our reconstruction in our end-notes.

Before we begin with an account of the slow development of our knowledge about Auschwitz, it is good to consider the context of that development. A basic argument of Irving, expressed for example at the press conference convened on June 23, 1989, to celebrate the launch

of the so-called Leuchter Report, is that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek were a piece of atrocity propaganda. The flyer that announced the press conference claimed that “[b]y writing the introduction to the U.K. Edition of The Leuchter Report, [Irving] has placed himself at the head of a growing band of historians, world-wide, who are now sceptical of the claim that at Auschwitz and the other camps there were ‘factories of death’ in which millions of innocent people were systematically gassed to death.”

“Irving has a record of exposing fakes and swindles: he once used City of London fraud laboratories to discredit cleverly-faked “diaries” of Hitler’s Intelligence chief Wilhelm Canaris that had been offered to William Collins Ltd., and in April 1983 he was the first to unmask Adolf Hitler “diaries” as fraudulent, creating a sensation at *Der Stern*’s Hamburg press conference until the magazine had him evicted. Now he is saying the same thing about the infamous “gas chambers” of Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek. They did not exist--ever--except, perhaps, as the brainchild of Britain’s brilliant wartime Psychological Warfare Executive (PWE).” The gas chambers were a piece of allied atrocity propaganda which, after the war, no-one had ever wanted to correct. During the press conference, Irving discussed this issue in some detail, changing his accusation against the Psychological Warfare Executive insofar that he dropped the explicit charge that the accounts of mass gassings were instances of atrocity propaganda manufactured by a British government agency to bolster morale to replace it with the thesis that propagandists presented unproven rumors about the gas chambers as proven facts

“I think that, as I have said often before, that in wartime governments produce propaganda. The propaganda flywheel starts to spin, [and] nobody at the end of the war has a motive to stop the propaganda flywheel spinning. It should be the job of the historians, but the historians have become themselves part of the propaganda process. Now we find in the British archives a lot of evidence that we willingly propag-

ated the gas chamber story because it was a useful propaganda line for us to take. However it was based on such tenuous evidence, as you can see from the document in the press pack, that the people who themselves spread the lie then urged that Her Majesty's Government should not even attach their name because for fear that eventually it should be shown up."

Whatever the particular elements of Irving's shifting position of what the Psychological Warfare Executive actually did, the core of his thesis --which he shares with most other Holocaust deniers--remains constant: the idea that the gas chamber story belonged to a genre of official disinformation that took its inspiration from the well-documented atrocity stories from the First World War. In the following pages I will show that this is highly implausible: during the Second World War the general public showed a great reluctance to believe accounts of atrocities because they remembered how they had been fooled by wild stories and outright lies of a quarter-century earlier.

Many of the English who went to war in 1939 remembered Arthur Ponsonby's best-selling 1928 study *Falsehood in War-Time*. Chapter 28, entitled "The Manufacture of News," consists of only one page, and offers an account of five short newspaper clippings recording the fall of Antwerp.

| "The Fall of Antwerp *November*1914"

By the end of the 1930s Ponsonby's account of the living clappers had become the staple of textbooks, and his more general conclusions, such as that "in war-time, failure to lie is negligence, the doubting of a lie a misdemeanour, the declaration of the truth a crime," had become part and parcel of common parlance. The overall effect of the relentless exposure of the atrocity stories was, however, a general resentment of the public against those who had roused its passion, inflamed its indignation, exploited its patriotism, and desecrated its highest

ideals by government initiated concealment, subterfuge, fraud, falsehood, and trickery. Significantly in the context of the history of Auschwitz, the most notorious symbol of the atrocity story was the gruesome account of the *Kadaververwerkungsanstalt* (corpse exploitation establishment), operated behind the front lines by the *DAVG-Deutsche Abfall-Verwertungs Gesellschaft* (German Offal Utilization Company inc.). This is the manner in which George Sylvester Viereck described the origin of the story in his *Spreading Germs of Hate* (1930) “By Jove!” Brigadier General J.V. Charteris exclaimed. He whistled softly. The Chief of the British Army of Intelligence was fingering a series of photographs. Chuckling to himself he summoned his orderly. A uniformed youth answered the summons. “Bring me,” the Chief asked, “a pair of shears and a paste pot.” Charteris, his face one broad grin, was comparing two pictures captured from Germans. The first was a vivid reproduction of a harrowing scene, showing the dead bodies of German soldiers being hauled away for burial behind the lines. The second picture depicted dead horses on their way to the factory where German ingenuity extracted soap and oil from the carcasses. The inspiration to change the caption of the two pictures came to General Charteris like a flash. When the orderly arrived, the General dexterously used the shears and pasted the inscription “German cadavers on Their Way to the Soap Factory” under the picture of the dead German soldiers. Within twenty-four hours the picture was in the mail pouch for Shanghai. This is the genesis of the most perfect specimen in our collection of atrocity stories. The explanation was vouchsafed by General Charteris himself in 1926, at a dinner at the National Arts Club, New York City. It met with diplomatic denial later on, but is generally accepted. General Charteris dispatched the picture to China to revolt public opinion against the Germans. The reverence of the Chinese for the dead amounts to worship. The profanation of the dead ascribed to the Germans was one of the factors responsible for the Chinese declaration of war against the Central Powers. General Charteris did not believe that the story would be taken seriously anywhere outside China.”

In fact, it was taken seriously. Charteris's account of the *Kadaververwerkungsanstalt* appeared in *The Times* on 17 April 1917. Its source, so the editorial introduction claimed, was a Belgian newspaper published in England, which in turn had received it from another Belgian newspaper published in neutral Holland. "The factory is invisible from the railway. It is placed deep in forest country, with a specially thick growth of trees about it. Live wires surround it. A special double track leads to it. The works are about 700 ft. long and 110 ft. broad, and the railway runs completely around them. In the north-west corner of the works the discharge of the trains takes place. The trains arrive full of bare bodies, which are unloaded by workers who live at the works. The men wear oilskin overalls and masks with mica eye-pieces. They are equipped with long hooked poles, and push bundles of bodies to an endless chain, which picks them with big hooks, attached at intervals of 2 ft. The bodies are transported on this endless chain into a long, narrow compartment, where they pass through a bath which disinfects them. They then go through a drying chamber, and finally are automatically carried into a digester or great cauldron, in which they are dropped by an apparatus which detaches them from the chain. In the digester they remain for six to eight hours, and are treated by steam, which breaks them up while they are slowly stirring the machinery. From this treatment result several procedures. The fats are broken up into stearin, a form of tallow, and oils, which require to be redistilled before they can be used. The process of distillation is carried out by boiling the oil with carbonate of soda, and some of the by-products resulting from this are used by German soap makers. The oil distillery and refinery lie in the south-eastern corner of the works. The refined oil is sent out in small casks like those used for petroleum, and is of yellowish brown colour."

It was a lie, but it was plausible, and it was incapable of complete refutation during the war. In the weeks that followed *The Times* published many letters that seemed to corroborate the account. On April 25 the

satirical magazine *Punch* included a cartoon entitled “Cannon-Fodder--and After,” showing the Kaiser and a German recruit. Pointing out of a window to a factory with smoking chimneys and the signs “*Kadaververwerkungs[anstalt]*,” the Kaiser tells the young man: “And don’t forget that your Kaiser will find a use for you--alive or dead.” On April 30 the issue was raised in the House of Commons, but the government refused to endorse the news. In the months that followed, the account of the *Kadaververwerkungsanstalt* gained international circulation but, remarkably enough, never expanded beyond the few lines printed in *The Times*. No eye-witnesses ever appeared, nor did any report amplify the original report. By the end of the war, the story of the *Kadaververwerkungsanstalt* died, only to be revived by General Charteris in an after-dinner speech at the National Arts Club in New York. On his return to Great Britain, Charteris denied that he had claimed authorship for the story, but enough passions were raised to make the story once more a topic of discussion in the House of Commons. On December 2, 1925, Sir Austen Chamberlain declared in Parliament that “the Chancellor of the German Reich has authorized me to say, on the authority of the German Government, that there was never any foundation to it. I need scarcely add that on behalf of His Majesty’s Government I accept this denial, and I trust that this false report will not again be revived.” Finally, in 1928, the legend of the corpse factories was put to rest in Ponsonby’s *Falsehood in War-Time*.

The long term effect of stories that told of human clappers in Belgian towers or human bodies used as raw material for the production of soap was that few were prepared to be fooled once again by such a fabrication. Indeed, during the late 1930s and 1940s most people tended to disbelieve anything that did not fit their customary, liberal view of the world. The English historian Tony Kushner described this resistance in his excellent *The Holocaust and the Liberal Imagination* (1994). Before the war German Jewish refugees were often not believed when they told what had happened to them. The physician Dr. Ludwig Gut-

mann, one-time director of the Jewish hospital in Breslau, recorded that when he told his acquaintance the philosopher Professor F.A. Lindemann of the events of Kristallnacht, the latter “somewhat sneeringly interrupted me, saying ‘You must not tell me atrocity legends.’” And Lindemann was a staunch anti-Nazi.

The fear to be taken in once more by atrocity propaganda combined often with an either latent or even open antisemitism within mainstream British society. The case of the widely read author Douglas Reed is particularly interesting. The correspondent of *The Times* in Berlin in the early 1930s, Reed published extremely popular accounts of the rapid developments in Central European politics, and predicted, among other things, the Austrian *Anschluss* and the course of the Czechoslovakian crisis that was to end with Hitler’s absorption of the Czech lands within the Reich. As a result, Reed was widely perceived as one of the very few Englishmen with any understanding of Hitler’s Germany.

Disgrace Abounding (1939) proved one of Reed’s most popular books, and it did not only describe Hitler’s machinations to fool the English and French governments, but also the manner in which the Jews had been able to draw attention to their suffering in the British media. According to Reed, the suffering of the Jews under Hitler was negligible compared with the “holocaust” of the Chinese under Japanese occupation. “In China nearly a million men had been killed or disabled-- *killed or disabled, nearly a million men*--and the Japanese had butchered *several tens of thousands of civilians* and had rendered destitute and homeless *some 30,000,000 more*.” Yet the British government had paid scarcely any attention to that suffering. Instead, they were concerned about the fate of the German Jews. “Just as the Jews tend to monopolize the callings and professions into which they penetrate, when there is no anti-Semitism, so did I find them monopolizing compassion and succour when there was anti-Semitism, and as their numbers are small compared with the great mass of non-Jews who are suffering from brutality and persecution in our times, I thought this to be the old evil, the

squeeze-out of non-Jews, breaking out in a new place. The organized Jewish communities in the countries where anti-Semitism exists, or which it is approaching, have complete command of the technique of enlisting foreign help and sympathy. They understand it; this looking across the frontiers is in their blood. If a group of twenty Jews is put into no-man's land, the British and American Legations and Consulates in the nearest capital are stormed, the British newspaper offices too, the next day the entire British and American Press rings with the story, photographs appear, bishops write letters, committees get busy, soon the Jews are released and are on their way to a new land. Not far away 300 or 400 non-Jewish refugees may be starving in a hut. They have no organized community to care for them, to raid the Legations and newspaper offices on their behalf, nobody visits them, nobody knows that they are there or cares about them. They may rot." Reed repeated the same litany at various other places in the same book. It was, obviously, very important to him.

During the war reports of German atrocities were commonly interpreted at best as exaggerations. *Time* mockingly referred to news from Poland as "the 'atrocities' story of the week," and when the Polish government-in-exile published in March 1940 a long report of the Nazi policy of terror in German-occupied Poland, one American editorial felt the need to warn its readers that, twenty years earlier, "a great many of the atrocity stories which were so well attested and so strenuously told, so indignantly believed and so commonly repeated, were found to be absolute fakes." When in April 1940 the British Foreign Office received a fully corroborated account of Jewish life in German-occupied Poland, Assistant Under-Secretary Reginald Leeper dismissed the report. "As a general rule Jews are inclined to magnify their persecutions," Leeper commented. "I remember the exaggerated stories of Jewish pogroms in Poland after the last war which, when fully examined, were found to have little substance." Three years later, when

the British government had become well aware of the mass extermination of Jews, senior Foreign Office officials still refused to believe what they knew.

The attitude of Victor Cavendish-Bentinck, chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, was typical. He believed that Polish and Jewish sources were unreliable because they had a vested interest in exaggerating German atrocities. Therefore, as late as the summer of 1943, Cavendish-Bentinck opposed the British government to make, at the allied conference in Quebec, a public statement about the systematic gassing of Jews. "It is true that there have been references to the use of gas chambers in other reports; but these references have usually, if not always, been equally vague, and since they have concerned the extermination of Jews, have usually emanated from Jewish sources. Personally, I have never really understood the advantage of the gas chamber over the simple machine gun, or the equally simple starvation method. These stories may or may not be true, but in any event I submit we are putting out a statement on evidence which is far from conclusive, and which we have no means of assessing." On August 27, 1943, Cavendish Bentinck made the following observation: "In my opinion it is incorrect to describe Polish information regarding German atrocities as "trustworthy". The Poles, and to a far greater extent the Jews, tend to exaggerate German atrocities in order to stoke us up. They seem to have succeeded.... I think that we weaken our case against the Germans by publically giving credence to atrocity stories for which we have no evidence. These mass executions in gas chambers remind me of the stories of employment of human corpses during the last war for the manufacture of fat, which was a grotesque lie and led to the true stories of German enormities being brushed aside as being mere propaganda." And so one of the most senior officials in the Foreign Office refused to believe what should have become obvious by then. Tragically the noble intentions of Ponsonby's book had such unintended negative consequences.

Douglas Reed added his own voice in his popular *Lest We Regret* (1943). Reed assumed that the purpose of all the millions of Jews in Europe was to leave for Britain, and that the only reason the British government would let them in was because of their persecution at the hands of the Nazis. If that persecution would stop, the door to Britain would be closed too. This, Reed argued in 1943, was the condition that led to all the talk about the German extermination of the Jews in late 1942. "In November 1942 a great campaign began about the "extermination" of the Jews. At that very moment the prospect of our victory first loomed distinct. The Eighth Army conquered Libya; Italy showed signs of distress; the Germans failed to take Stalingrad; that Germany would be beaten, possibly even in 1943, became clear (and I wrote a play foretelling Hitler's disappearance). Victory, then approached. If it came, and found those Jews still in Europe, they would remain there. If they were to *leave* Europe (if "the problem" was to be solved by transferring it to *us*) they would need to come away before Victory arrived. Also, the British Government had suspended immigration to Palestine. The "extermination" campaign began. The power which this particular interest wields over our public spokesmen and Press stands revealed as gigantic. Some newspapers gave more space to this matter than would be devoted to any other in any circumstances which I can imagine. The word "extermination" was printed billions of times. It was used habitually, without flinching, by Ministers, politicians and the B.B.C. Any who care to keep note of the things which were said, and to compare them in a few years' time with the facts and figures, will possess proof of the greatest example of mass-misinformation in history. All sound of the suffering of the non-Jews who are Germany's captives was drowned."

These words initiated a very-long rant against the statements of the government, the clergy, the editors and all others about Hitler's policy regarding the Jews. Reed knew better. "I saw Hitler's work with my own eyes, from the day he came to power until the eve of this war," he

claimed. "Nineteen-twentieth of the inmates of his concentration camps were non-Jewish Germans; nineteen-twentieth of his victims outside the German frontiers are non-Jewish non-Germans." And then he juxtaposed all the contradictory information coming from Europe and all the contradictory statements about them by politicians, and subjected them to a mocking analysis. "Readers may compare these quotations for themselves. "Extermination *was* ordered; it was *not* ordered, but strongly suspected; it was ordered for *half* the Jews in Poland; for *all* the Jews in Poland; for all the Jews *in Europe by the end of* 1942. Two out of three-and-half million were already dead, on December 4th; one million out of seven million were already dead, on the same day; 250,000 were already dead, three weeks later. Thus spoke our leading men." Reed refused to believe it. He claimed to be better informed than most people making public statements about the extermination of Jews and observed that "I know of no 'oft-proclaimed intentions' or 'orders' to exterminate the Jews." He added that "Hitler is noticeably reticent on that theme," reserving his threats for the British, the Bolsheviks, "and other things" such as the "Czechs, Poles, and Serbs."

Reed's rants were exceptionally virulent in their antisemitism, but nevertheless fitted neatly in the general reticence to give validity to the stories about Jewish suffering in Europe. Arthur Koestler, a Hungarian-Jewish refugee in Britain, expressed often in public his great frustration with the English unwillingness to believe the news that trickled in from Poland. "The trouble with being a contemporary in times like this," Koestler said in a broadcast talk, "is that reality beats the imagination every step.... For an educated Englishman it is almost easier to imagine conditions of life under King Canute on this island than conditions of life in, say, contemporary Poland." In an article published in early 1944 in the *New York Times Magazine*, Koestler lamented how so very few were prepared to believe the reports of the exterminations. Nothing seemed to make a difference. "At present we have the mania

of trying to tell you about the killing, by hot steam, mass electrocution and live burial of the total Jewish population of Europe. So far three million have died. It is the greatest mass-killing in recorded history; and it goes on daily, hourly, as regularly as the ticking of your watch. I have photographs before me on the desk while I am writing this, and that accounts for my emotion and bitterness. People died to smuggle them out of Poland; they thought it was worthwhile. The facts have been published in pamphlets, White Books, newspapers, magazine and whatnot. But the other day I met one of the best-known American journalists over here. He told me that in the course of some recent public opinion survey nine out of ten average American citizens, when asked whether they believed that the Nazis commit atrocities, answered that it was all propaganda lies, and that they didn't believe a word of it. As to this country, I have been lecturing now for three years to the troops, and their attitude is the same. They don't believe in concentration camps, they don't believe in the starved children of Greece, in the shot hostages of France, in the mass-graves of Poland; they have never heard of Lidice, Treblinka, or Belzec; you can convince them for an hour, then they shake themselves, their mental self-defence begins to work and in a week the shrug of incredulity has returned like a reflex temporarily weakened by the shock. Clearly all this is becoming a mania with me and my like. Clearly we must suffer from some morbid obsession, whereas you others are healthy and normal. But the characteristic symptom of maniacs is that they lose contact with reality and live in a phantasy world. So, perhaps, it is the other way around: perhaps it is we, the screamers, who react in a sound and healthy way to the reality which surrounds us, whereas you are the neurotics who totter about in a screened phantasy world because you lack the faculty to face the facts. Were it not so, this war would have been avoided, and those murdered within sight of your day-dreaming eyes would still be alive."

Koestler did not mention names, but he could well have thought about Bill Lawrence, the *New York Times* correspondent in the Soviet Union. When, for example, Lawrence reported in the Fall of 1943 on the mass killing of Jews in Babi Yar near Kiev, he employed a language not much different from that used today by more sophisticated negationists. After mentioning that "Kiev authorities asserted today that the Germans had machinegunned from 50,000 to 80,000 of Kiev's Jewish men, women and children in late September 1941," Lawrence made it absolutely clear that he regarded the claim with great scepticism. "On the basis of what we saw, it is impossible for this correspondent to judge the truth or falsity of the story told to us. It is the contention of the authorities in Kiev that the Germans, with characteristic thoroughness, not only burned the bodies and clothing, but also crumbled the bones, and shot and burned the bodies of all prisoners of war participating in the burning, except for the handful that escaped, so that the evidence of their atrocity could not be available for the outside world. If this was the Germans' intent, they succeeded well, for there is little evidence in the ravine to prove or disprove the story." After the war Lawrence showed considerable embarrassment about his scepticism, and explained it as a direct result of the atrocity propaganda of the First World war. "I grew up in the generation between the two world wars--a generation which had a natural scepticism and inherent disbelief of all wartime atrocity stories. In our most formative years, we had found out that the propagandists for the Western Allies, including our own government, had fabricated some of the most lurid tales of German behavior to arouse their people to wartime fervor....So by the time I headed off to war in 1943, I was unsure just what to believe of all the stories I had heard and read coming out of Europe about Hitler, his SS troops, and the Nazi armies as they marched east across Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, and into the Soviet Union. I had no doubt that Hitler had treated the Jews badly, forcing many of them to flee to the sanctuaries in the West, including the United States. But I was not prepared for, and in my mind did not at first accept, the systematic ex-

termination campaign that Hitler and his minions had conducted.” Lawrence related at length his interrogation of the principal witness, Efim Vilknis, but as it defied credulity, and as there was no supporting evidence, he remained sceptical. Even the fact that the Kiev Jewish community, which had counted more than 100,000 persons before the war, had disappeared, did not help him change his mind. He acknowledged that it was odd that there were no Jews left in Kiev, but he was only prepared to say that “where and how they had departed remained a mystery.”

Even when the war came to an end and the allied armies liberated the camps their remained a great resistance to face the facts. One of the 500 diarists, who kept a daily record for the English social survey organization Mass Observation, wrote after the liberation of Bergen-Belsen that the revelations were beyond belief. “I have not forgotten the recent controversy over the last war atrocity stories, and to me they have always smacked of propaganda--the Germans are our enemies, therefore we must hate the Germans, so additional evidence must be given us to whip up this hatred.... Cruelty has obviously been one of the trade marks of Nazism ever since 1933....It is hard to believe, however, that this mass cruelty has been perpetrated on so many thousands of victims.”

General Dwight D. Eisenhower made it his business to change such attitudes. Immediately after the liberation of the concentration camp at Ohrdruf he visited it, as he wrote to his superior General Marshall on April 15, “in order to be in a position to give *first-hand* evidence of these things if ever, in future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to ‘propaganda.’” He cabled Marshall on April 19 the proposal to give others the opportunity to do the same. “We continue to uncover German concentration camps for political prisoners in which conditions of indescribable horror prevail. I have visited one of these myself and I assure you that whatever has been printed on them to date has been understatement. If you would see any advantage in

asking about a dozen leaders of Congress and a dozen prominent editors to make a short visit to this theater in a couple of C-54's, I will arrange to have them conducted to one of these places where the evidence of brutality and cruelty is so overpowering as to leave no doubts in their minds about the normal practices of the Germans in these camps."

President Truman accepted Eisenhower's proposal, and on April 22 a plane left Washington for Weimar via Paris with six senators and six representatives. The next day a plane with a similar destination left New York. On board were 18 prominent American journalists. Many were sceptical. Malcolm W. Bingay, editor-in-chief of the *Detroit Free Press* admitted a month later in a meeting at the Economic Club of Detroit that he was "frankly sceptical about the atrocity charges. Having lived through the first world war, I realized too many of them had been exploded as myths and I went over in the attitude of 'being from Missouri.'" Joseph Pulitzer, the publisher of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, also changed his mind. "I came here in a suspicious frame of mind, feeling that I would find that many of the terrible reports that have been printed in the United States before I left were exaggerations, and largely propaganda, comparable to reports of crucifixions and amputations of hands which followed the last war, and which subsequently proved to be untrue. It is my grim duty to report that the descriptions of the horrors of the camp, one of many which have been and which will be uncovered by the Allied armies have given less than the whole truth. They have been understatements." Responding to such reports, the American Society of Newspaper Editors felt that it was time to address the issue directly. In an article entitled "Reflections on Atrocities," published in the *Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors*, Gideon Seymour argued that the press should be prepared for possible difficulties in the months ahead. "For when the American prisoners of war get back and say that they and their colleagues were fairly well treated, except for underfeeding, and that few or none of their numbers experi-

enced such brutalities as have been reported from Dachau, Buchenwald, Ohrdruf, etc., a lot of Americans are going to say, "Well then all those atrocities stories were bunk and propaganda." Therefore journalists should take care to make careful distinction in their reports between prisoner- of-war camps and concentration camps.

In the end even the most stalwart supporters of the thesis that all the stories about the systematic extermination of the Jews had been merely atrocity propaganda had to face the facts for what they were. The American magazine *The Christian Century*, which in 1944 had still chided American news papers for giving much attention to the discoveries made by the Soviets in Maidanek--claiming at the time that the "parallel between this story and the 'corpse factory' atrocity tale was too striking to be overlooked"--had to (hesitantly) admit in 1945 that it had been wrong, and that the parallel did not hold. "We have found it hard to believe that the reports from the Nazi concentration camps could be true. Almost desperately we have tried to think that they must be widely exaggerated. Perhaps they were products of the fevered brains of prisoners who were out for revenge. Or perhaps they were just more atrocity-mongering like the cadaver factory story of the last war. But such puny barricades cannot stand up against the terrible facts. The evidence is too conclusive. It will be a long, long time before our eyes will cease to see those pictures of naked corpses piled like firewood or of those mounds of carrion flesh and bones. It will be a long time before we can forget what scores of honorable, competent observers tell us they have seen with their own eyes. The thing is well-nigh incredible. But it happened." When even *The Christian Century* admitted that it had been wrong, it seemed that the world was finally ready for the truth.

For a week or so group after group arrived at the gates of Buchenwald, and by the beginning of May even Eisenhower felt that enough was enough. He wrote to Marshall that "if America is not now convinced, in view of the disinterested witnesses we have already brought over, it

would be almost hopeless to convince them through bringing anyone else.” A week later, on May 9, General Bradley curtailed all visits to the camps with a cable to headquarters. “Buchenwald concentration has been cleaned up, the sick segregated and burials completed to such an extent that very little evidence of atrocities remains. This negatives any educational value of having various groups visit the camp to secure first hand information of German atrocities. In fact, many feel quite skeptical that previous conditions actually existed. Suggest that further visits [to] camp be discontinued.” The allies faced the paradox that their very efforts to improve the situation in the liberated camps created, once more, the possibility for some to argue that everything had been just atrocity propaganda.

Indeed, for all the full page photos of the camps that had become available, the camps never were admitted to reality. Theodor Adorno brought this problem in philosophical focus at the time that Bradley closed Buchenwald for guided tours. Visits or not: it would not make much of a difference. Something had come to pass which had changed the whole perception of what is a lie, and what is truth. “When the National Socialists began to torture, they not only terrorized the peoples inside and outside Germany, but were the more secure from exposure the more wildly the horror increased. The implausibility of their actions made it easy to disbelieve what nobody, for the sake of precious peace, wanted to believe, while at the same time capitulating to it. Trembling voices persuade themselves that, after all, there is much exaggeration: even after the outbreak of the war, details about the concentration camps were unwanted in the English press. Every horror becomes, in the enlightened world, a horrific fairy-tale.” And Adorno observed that, with the war’s end, the situation that had existed before the Nazis had begun to confound truth and lies had not been restored. As lying had come to sound like truth, and truth sounded like lying, it

had become “a labour of Sisyphus to hold on to the simplest piece of knowledge.” And Adorno concluded, with melancholy: “So Hitler, of whom no-one can say whether he died or escaped, survives.”

In 1948 the American Judge Michael A. Musmanno, who had served on Nuremberg Military Tribunal II to hear the case against Oswald Pohl and other members of the SS Wirtschafts-und Verwaltungshauptamt (SS Economic and Administrative Main Department), concluded that, after having sat through 194 sessions of the tribunal, reviewed 1,348 different pieces of written evidence and 511 affidavits, listened to 48 witnesses and testimonies by the defendants, the world of the death camps was still beyond comprehension. In his concurring opinion, Musmanno observed that, when writing of the extermination of the Jews, “the ink runs heavy, the words falter, and a sadness akin to a hopeless resignation enters the soul.” “How can one write about a planned and calculated killing of a human race? It is a concept so completely fantastic and so devoid of sense that one simply does not want to hear about it and is inclined to turn a deaf ear to such arrant nonsense. Barbarous tribes in the wilds of South Pacific jungles have fallen upon other tribes and destroyed their every member; in America, Indian massacres have wiped out caravans and destroyed whole settlements and communities; but that an enlightened people in the 20th century should set out to exterminate, one by one, another enlightened people, not in battle, not by frenzied mobbing, but by calculated gassing, burning, shooting, poisoning is simply blood-curdling fiction, fit companion for H.G. Well’s chimera on the invasion from Mars. Adolf Eichmann, chief of the Jewish section of the Gestapo, estimated that the Hitler-Himmler extermination policy of the Jews resulted in the liquidation of 6,000,000 Jews, of which 4,000,000 were killed in extermination institutions. The murder of 6,000,000 human beings is entirely beyond the capacity of man’s imagination and one instinctively refuses to believe. But the curtain of incredulity has lifted and the armor of incomprehensibility no longer protects. The evidence is in and

what was utter fantasy and a mere macabre playing with numbers, is proved fact. The figure 6,000,000 is written in digits of blood, and no matter which way one turns their crimson horror is upon one.” Fifty years later when Auschwitz has become an accepted part of our intellectual landscape, it is good to remember that, perhaps, the world of the camps ought to have remained within a somewhat forbidden realm. Although the plethora of movies, memoirs, novels, and media revelations about the Holocaust have brought words such as “Auschwitz,” “The Six Million” and so on into daily currency and household usage, the mere fact of their familiarity does not connote their fathomability.

The foregoing consideration demonstrates that there is no historical justification to judge and dismiss the accounts of German atrocities during the Second World War within the context of the atrocity propaganda of the First World War. The attitude of the public of 1939-45 was radically different from that 25 years earlier, and it is clear that any attempt to generate the kind of propaganda symbolized by the notorious *Kadaververwerkungsanstalt* would have merely generated mockery. To understand the difference in the way people experienced these two wars, it is important to remember that the sudden, all-devouring fire of the First World War caught people, who had experienced more than a century of peace and progress, by surprise. No-one could really explain why the war had come, and why it ought to be fought. There was so little relation between the trifle of Sarajevo and the cataclysm of Verdun. Tens of millions of men, coerced into the mass armies, faced incredible suffering amidst a general unintelligibility of events caused by a senseless, overwhelming force. Facing death without knowing why, the demoralized and dejected men who fought in the trenches lost their self-respect. In such circumstances, values collapsed: as the individual act had become irrelevant and individual judgement impossible, the distinction between truth and lie, fiction and reality had become obsolete. Manufacturing useful lies such as the stories of the

Kadaververwerkungsanstalt was no better nor worse than the generals' practice to mask the defeat of their strategies by sacrificing some extra armies in order to steal a very small local success that can be trumpeted as a major victory.

The Second World War was different. Instead of confusion there was resolve. From the very beginning, the allies knew that the war would be grim. "No one can predict, no one can even imagine, how this terrible war against German and Nazi aggression will run its course or how far it will spread or how long it will last," Churchill told the House of Commons on October 8, 1940--in the midst of the Blitz against London. "Long, dark months of trials and tribulations lie before us. Not only great dangers, but also many misfortunes, many shortcomings, many mistakes, many disappointments will surely be our lot. Death and sorrow will be the companions of our journey; hardship our garment; constancy and valor our only shield. We must be united, we must be undaunted, we must be inflexible. Our qualities and deeds must burn and glow through the gloom of Europe until they become the veritable beacon of its salvation." Fighting Hitler under the inspired leadership of men like Churchill and Roosevelt, the allies had no need for atrocity propaganda. In the case of England, Churchill expressed his superb and passionate historical imagination with the consciousness that his words, and those spoken by all Englishmen, would remain the object of scrutiny and judgement to many generations--"Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This Was their finest hour.'" Evoking a dramatic image of what England was, and giving surprisingly little attention to what Germany had become, Churchill was able to mobilize a nation without the need to engage in the very kind of all-too-easily dismissable atrocity propaganda that the weak leaders in the First World War found necessary to employ to bolster morale. "The Prime Minister was able to impose his imagination and his will upon his countrymen,

and enjoy his Periclean reign, precisely because he appeared to them larger and nobler than life and lifted them to an abnormal height in a moment of crisis,” Isaiah Berlin wrote in a review of Churchill’s war memoirs. Churchill’s dramatic language “did turn a large number of inhabitants of the British Isles out of their normal selves and, by dramatising their lives and making them seem to themselves and to each other clad in the fabulous garments appropriate to a great historic moment, transformed cowards into brave men, and so fulfilled the purpose of shining armour.” And Berlin continued with the following important observation: “This is the kind of means by which dictators and demagogues transform peaceful populations into marching armies; it was Churchill’s unique and unforgettable achievement that he created this necessary illusion within the framework of a free system without destroying or even twisting it; that he called forth spirits which did not stay to oppress and enslave the population after the hour of need had passed.”

Indeed, if the caricature of the *Kadaververwerkungsanstalt* was the legacy of allied propaganda of the First World War--a legacy that continues to embarrass--, the bold and dramatic language of Churchill became the legacy of the Second World War--a language that, almost sixty years later, still never fails to inspire.

Let us return now to the war-time revelations about Auschwitz. In November 1941, that is before Auschwitz had been assigned a central role in the Holocaust, the first substantial information about a concentration camp in Oswiecim became available to the public. The 32nd issue of the *Polish Fortnightly Review* an English-language newspaper published by the Polish government-in-exile, carried a 2,000-word long article entitled “Oswiecim Concentration Camp.” It described the camp as the largest concentration camp in Poland, and provided much detail about its extraordinarily violent regime. According to the article, the mortality rate had reached in the winter of 1940/41 an average of 1 per

cent per day, and a peak of 2 per cent per day. During this time, the article continued, “three crematorium furnaces were insufficient to cope with the bodies to be cremated.”

One account described the violence of life and death in the camp in a particularly graphic manner. “It happened one day that a prisoner ate two portions of dinner. When it was discovered he was led out before the entrance gate, near the crematorium. By the gate two rows of guards with knouts were lined up. One of them told the prisoner that as he had shown so much ingenuity and cleverness in eating an additional portion, he was to be released. The gate was open, and he could run into freedom. But as stealing was a punishable offence, he must first run the gauntlet of the two rows of guards. He started to run between the lines, being beaten mercilessly on the head and legs with the knouts. Near the end of the line he began to stagger, but he summoned all his strength and ran out through the gate. Then a machine-gun opened fire, and he was wounded in the belly. The guards called to a man with a wheelbarrow working close by, threw the wounded man on the barrow and ordered him to be taken to the crematorium. The prisoner was sufficiently conscious to see where he was being taken, and in a frenzy of despair tried to say something to the crowd of guards watching the sight. But they only laughed and made their way to the crematorium. There he was thrown in the furnace, where there were already two half-burnt bodies. The sight of his struggles aroused only jeers and laughter among the onlookers. The two guards in charge of the crematorium were ordered to divide the ashes into three, as the last victim had moved and so had disturbed the ashes of the other bodies.”

The *Polish Fortnightly Review* continued to provide updates about the situation in Auschwitz as information became available. In its issue of July 1, 1942 it described the camp in an article entitled “Documents from Poland: German Attempts to Murder a Nation.” Again, Auschwitz was characterized as a particularly violent camp. It mentioned a

second camp. "In addition to the main camp, built near Oswiecim, there is an additional camp near by, in which the brutalities are so terrible that people die there quicker than they would have done in the main camp. The prisoners call this supplementary camp "Paradisal" (presumably because from it there is only one road, leading to Paradise). The crematorium here is five times as large as the one in the main camp. The prisoners of both camps are finished off in three main ways: by excessive labour, by torture, and by medical means." This "paradisal" camp was, in all probability, Birkenau, which had been established in the Fall of 1941, and which in the spring of 1942 had received its first inmates. Contrary to the report, Birkenau did not at that time have a crematorium. A large crematorium, many times the size of the one in the main camp, had been designed and approved, but construction had not yet really started. It is unclear if the reference to the crematorium arose from knowledge of the blueprints.

The report listed various popular forms of torture, and mentioned that German doctors used inmates as guinea pigs for medical experiments in the camp. Of particular interest, in view of later developments, was a short discussion of a German experiment to gas inmates. "Among the other experiments being tried on the prisoners is the use of poison gas. It is generally known that during the night of September 5th to 6th last year about a thousand people were driven down to the underground shelter in Oswiecim, among them seven hundred Bolshevik prisoners of war and three hundred Poles. As the shelter was too small to hold this large number, the living bodies were simply forced in, regardless of broken bones. When the shelter was full gas was injected into it, and all the prisoners died during the night. All night the rest of the camp was kept awake by the groans and howls coming from the shelter. Next day other prisoners had to carry out the bodies, a task which took all day. One hand-cart on which the bodies were being re-

moved broke down under the weight.” It is important to note that, after the war, various witnesses confirmed that in early September the Germans had used Block 11 as an experimental gas chamber.

Two weeks later the *Polish Fortnightly Review* paid attention to Auschwitz once more. It noted the excessive mortality due to the rigors of the camp, and contained in a report on a press conference given by the Polish Minister of Home Affairs Mr. S. Mikolajczyk a reference to the ever increasing size of the inmate population. It also reported on statements given during the same press conference by two members of the Polish National Council on the extermination of Polish Jewry, and a final remark by the Polish Minister of Information that at least 700,000 Polish Jews had died since the beginning of the war. Yet at this time the concentration camp system and the emerging Holocaust were not yet brought into connection.

Only later that year did the *Polish Fortnightly Review* begin to mention camps as a execution sites of Jews. Many reports had reached the Polish government-in-exile about deportations from the Warsaw ghetto. In the fall of 1942 a eye-witness of the fate of the deportees had made his way to England. The Polish underground fighter Jan Koziński (better known by his underground name Jan Karski), had visited an extermination camp at Belzec disguised as a Latvian policeman, and witnessed the destruction of a transport. In England, Karski informed the Polish government-in- exile, and as a result the *Polish Fortnightly Review* published on December 1, 1942 as its main item an article entitled “Extermination of Polish Jewry.” It reported that the Warsaw ghetto had been subject to daily deportations of 7,000 people per day since July 24. Those who were too ill to travel were killed on the spot, or at the Jewish cemetery. The others were loaded in trains. “The deportees were carried off to three execution camps, at Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor. Here the trains were unloaded, the condemned were stripped naked and then killed, probably by poison gas or electrocution. For the purpose of burying the bodies a great bulldozer has been taken to

Treblinka, and this machine works without stopping. The stench of the decomposing bodies has nauseated all the peasants for three miles around and forced them to flight. In addition to Treblinka, there are also camps at Belzec and Sobibor. It has not been possible to ascertain whether any of those who have been carried off have been left alive. We have information only of extermination.”

Remarkably enough, the *Polish Fortnightly Review* did not publish part of Karski’s observations at Belzec, but chose to print as an annex to the report an earlier description of the “Jew- extermination Camp at Belzec.” It was dated July 10, 1942, and was obviously based on hearsay. “When a trainload of Jews arrives at the station in Belzec, it is shunted by a side track up to the wire surrounding the place of execution at which point there is a change in the engine crew and train guards. From the wire onward the train is serviced by German drivers who take it to the unloading point where the track ends. After unloading, the men go to a barracks on the right, the women to a barracks situated on the left, where they strip, ostensibly in readiness for a bath. After they have undressed both groups go to a third barracks where there is an electrified plate, where the executions are carried out. Then the bodies are taken by train to a trench situated outside the wire, and some thirty metres deep. This trench was dug by Jews, who were all executed afterwards.” In the summer of 1942, when the report was written, no-one who was not part of the execution team had left Belzec alive, and thus the description of the method of killing was largely based on rumour.

After drawing attention to the fate of the Jews in the *Polish Fortnightly Review* the Polish government-in-exile issued on December 10, 1942 a note to the other allies concerning the mass extermination of Jews in Poland, repeating in substance the information from the article. In all this publicity, the names of Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka appeared again and again, but there was silence about Auschwitz. This can be explained because, up to the late fall of 1942, Auschwitz did not play a

significant role in the liquidation of Polish Jewry. In the summer and fall of 1942 the majority of transports had come from France, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Belgium, and Yugoslavia, and it can be understood why these escaped the attention of the Polish government-in-exile.

It is more difficult to understand why the Polish government-in-exile decided not to act on a report broadcast in March 1943 by a secret radio station operated by the Polish resistance and received in London. "The statistics for Oswiecim from the establishment of the camp until December 15 [1942] show that more than 640,000 people perished there, with 30,000 still alive. 65,000 Poles have been executed, hanged, tortured, gassed, or have died from starvation and disease with 17,000 still alive. More than 26,000 Soviet POW's have been liquidated; 100 still alive. More than 520,000 Jews have been gassed, including 20,000 from Poland, and the rest from France, Belgium, Holland, Yugoslavia, etc. 6,800 women are alive, mainly Poles, 19,000 have died. Only a portion are registered in the camp records. Thousands are dying without being identified--e.g. Almost all Jews."

The Polish government-in-exile was one of only two organizations that had both the wish and the means to systematically monitor the camps in Poland. The second organization that received information about the camps on a systematic basis was British intelligence. Beginning in 1941, the Government Code and Cypher School, which trained intelligence officers, had begun to monitor, decipher and process the German police cyphers. Its main reason was that the hand cyphers of the German police and SS formed good raw material for the training of new decoders, and also provided insight in the strategically more important cyphers used by the German army. Furthermore the information obtained provided important data about anti-partisan activities. From the spring of 1942 until February 1943, the Government Code and Cypher School also intercepted crypted radio messages sent by the administration of the concentration camps to Berlin. These included reports from Auschwitz, but not from Belzec, Sobibor, and

Treblinka. In a post-war history of this operation, the British historian F.H. Hinsley mentioned that “[t]he daily return consisted of a series of unheaded, unexplained columns of figures,” which were interpreted by the students of the Government Code and Cypher School as information about “(a) number of inmates at the start of the previous day, (b) new arrivals, (c) departures by any means, and (d) number at the end of the previous day.” Departures by any means was interpreted as a euphemism for deaths. “The returns from Auschwitz, the largest of the camps with 20,000 prisoners, mentioned illness as the main cause of death but included references to shootings and hangings. There were no references in the decrypts to gassings.”

A summary of intercepted messages for the month of August, 1942, includes the following item:

“Reports on deaths in German prison camps during August reveal the following figures:

- NIEDERHAGEN:24;
- AUSCHWITZ:6829 men,1525 women;
- FLOSSENBURG:88;
- BUCHENWALD:74.(1/9) A message of 4/9, in reply to a request for 1000 prisoners for building the DANUBE railway, states that AUSCHWITZ cannot provide them until the “ban” (Lagersperre) on the AUSCHWITZ camp has been lifted. It appears that although typhus is still rife at AUSCHWITZ, new arrivals continue to come in. As from 1/9/42, “natural deaths” among prisoners in Concentration Camps are to be reported apparently only in writing (durch Formblatt).”

The decrypt revealed that the mortality in Auschwitz was about a hundred times that of the large concentration camp at Buchenwald, but also suggested that the main cause of death was typhus. Indeed: the great majority of the 6,829 men and 1,525 women who died in Auschwitz in August 1942 were struck down by disease. It must be remembered, however, that the mortality figures which the concentration camps sent to Berlin only applied to the deaths of registered prisoners, and not to

the gassing of deportees who were selected after arrival for immediate extermination. This was made clear after the war during the trial of the head of the central administration of the SS, Oswald Pohl. He was examined in detail about the information he received from the camps about the death rate of the inmates. These, he told the court, were assembled in charts. “[Judge Musmanno]: “Then you did know how many people were dying in the concentration camps?” [Pohl]: “Yes. I did.” Q.: “And when you saw the number increasing, did you do anything about it?” A.: “Of course I did. That development was always dependent on the development of the diseases. I inquired what diseases actually prevailed there, what measures had been taken in order to eliminate a steady increase of these diseases. The diseases, epidemic diseases, were usually the reason for the deaths, and they depended on the time or on the epidemic that prevailed at the time. In these curves we could not see all the deaths which occurred through the measures of the Reich Security Main Office or the Reich Government. I only dealt with the inmates who were in the camps according to plan, and who could be used for labor allocation.” A couple of minutes later, Pohl’s lawyer Seidl came back to the charts. “[Dr.Seidl]: “We know today that in certain camps extermination measures against certain groups were introduced, and I am thinking especially of the extermination of the Jews. Were these groups of people represented in Dr. Lolling’s statistics, or did he confine himself to covering only those cases which, on the strength of reports from medical offices of the individual camps, came to his knowledge?” [Pohl]: “The figures about exterminations were not reported to the Inspectorate at all, and consequently Dr. Lolling could not evaluate them for his statistics.” For the administration of the camps, information about the mass-killing of people who were not admitted to the camp, and who therefore did not make any claim on the resources of the SS, was irrelevant.

In 1943, when the four crematoria came into operation in Birkenau, the name “Birkenau” occasionally surfaced in relation to the Holocaust, but no-one made a connection with Auschwitz. There remained a kind of interpretative “gap” between the few accounts of the camp at Auschwitz as a particularly violent concentration camp meant mainly for Polish resistors, Birkenau as a destination for Jews of unknown geographical location, the Holocaust in general, and the town of Auschwitz as a site of massive industrial activity. Martin Gilbert observed that in fact the industrial activity in the Auschwitz region, with its use of slave-labour, “proved one of the most effective means of hiding the main purpose of Birkenau.” A good example of this can be found in a report that reached the World Jewish Congress in the summer of 1942. “We receive alarming reports from camps in Upper Silesia. A French deportee worker reports large concentrations of Frenchmen, English prisoners-of-war, ordinary convicts and Jews in labour camps. Large factories with accommodation for workers are being constructed directly above coal mines for the purpose of producing synthetic rubber. 36,600 men work on one building site; 24,000 on another one. Among them are several thousand Jewish deportees between the ages of 16 and 24 who are treated worst....The rate of mortality is so high that in some camps the Jewish personnel has been entirely replaced many times over. Non-Jewish workers are forbidden any contact with Jews.” In June 1944, when as the result of the escape of Rudi Vrba and Alfred Wetzlar finally the truth about the use of Birkenau as a site of systematic extermination became known, the Senior Representative of the Jewish Agency in Geneva, Richard Lichtheim, wrote in a letter to the Jewish Agency executive in Jerusalem that up to then he had always assumed that any reference to deportations of Jews to Auschwitz concerned the German purpose “to exploit more Jewish labour in the industrial centres of Upper Silesia.”

And of course it did not help that no maps showed the name “Birkenau.” Even in AustroHungarian times, when the town of Oswiecim was also known as Auschwitz, the village the Germans called Birkenau was identified on the official maps with its Polish name: “Brzezinka.” A final issue was that, during the war, Birkenau was officially incorporated in the German Reich. Those who knew about transports of Jews to extermination centers knew that these were located in Poland. The term “Poland” carried the assumption of “German-occupied Poland,” which was the Government General. The resulting confusion aided the Germans to maintain secrecy about Auschwitz as a place of mass extermination.

And then there was the fact that the many atrocities the Germans enacted elsewhere also proved an effective screen. In April 1943, for example, a report was drafted on Auschwitz by a Pole who, on instructions of the Polish underground, had gone to the town of Oswiecim to find out what was going on in the camp. His findings were based on accounts of freed (gentile)prisoners. According to the report, Auschwitz had become a major extermination camp for Jews.

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- a. Gas Chambers, the victims were undressed and put into those chambers where they suffocated.
- b. Electric Chambers, these chambers had metal walls, the victims were brought in and then high tension electric current was introduced.
- c. The so-called Hammerluft system. This is a hammer of air. Those were special chambers where the hammer fell from the ceiling and by means of a special installation victims found death under air pressure.
- d. Shootings. This was used as a collective form of punishment, in cases of lack of subordination, thus killing every tenth.”

Yet the report was never made public: added as an appendix to a long description of the Warsaw ghetto, it was overlooked when the whole text was dropped because, by the spring of 1943, the

situation in Warsaw had changed so dramatically as the result of the uprising that the account in the report was considered obsolete.

Finally there was the general problem to make information available. In March 1944, for example, the Polish Consul-General in Istanbul issued a cyclostyled report that claimed that between the summer of 1942 and the fall of 1943 some 850,000 Jews had been gassed in Auschwitz. Published in a marginal format in a marginal location, it did not attract any attention outside the Polish refugee community in Turkey.

If the Germans aimed to keep killings in Birkenau secret, the Polish Labour Group in New York City and the American Office of War Information in Washington D.C. inadvertently aided them in their mission. In 1942, before the mass killings of Jews had started, the Polish underground had published a book on Auschwitz. Entitled *Oboz Smierci* (Camp of Death), it chronicled the first two years of the camp's existence--the period in which it only fulfilled a marginal role in the Final Solution. Nevertheless, the account was grim enough and, smuggled out of Poland, the text was translated into English and published March 1944 by the Polish Labour Group in New York City as *Oswiecim Camp of Death (Underground Report)*. The American publication was endorsed by Elmer Davis, the head of the Office of War Information. In a letter dated February 16, 1944 and printed opposite the title page, Davis wrote that he was glad to see the publication of the text. "The record written in blood at Oswiecim and institutions like it in the Nazi dominated countries should be preserved to document the diabolical methods of Nazi suppression and warn the free men of the future against the tyranny which we allowed to rise and blight our time." The opening lines were grim enough. "Oswiecim concentration camp, Auschwitz in German, has for two years symbolized the sinister reality of Polish life under German occupation. The shadow of Oswiecim falls over the whole of Poland, for the most remote corners of the country

have yielded their sons and daughters to its torture chambers. According to verified information up to July 1942, 125,000 persons passed through the camp, while, during all of the camp's existence, barely 7,000 people have been released. This figure includes twelve persons who escaped or who were transferred to other camps. At that time 24,000 men and women remained alive. Consequently, 94,000 people have perished in Oswiecim. In addition to Oswiecim there are a series of other camps, organized somewhat later: Tremblinka, Belzec, and others in the past year in almost every administrative district. Life in any of these camps is an inferno equal to that of Oswiecim. However, in Oswiecim, the methods of cruelty have been lowered to their vilest depth, and applied in every form."

The text described how information over the camp had only leaked out slowly, and that the editors had checked every detail scrupulously. "Coloring and strong expressions have been eliminated to let the facts speak for themselves." One area of specific interest was the account of gassings in the basement of Block 11, the penal barrack. Regularly, the report claimed, groups of prisoners disappeared into those cellars. Mostly these were sick inmates, but at times also included healthy Russian prisoners of war. After some time cries could be heard. "Then there is silence, an ominous silence that spreads around the double barrack. In the ensuing daylight, the silent barrack seems like a huge slab over an immense grave." The report described how for three days nothing moved. Then, on the fourth night, carts came to collect naked bodies to bring them to the crematorium. When one of the carts overturned, one of the prisoners was able to observe in the moonlight that the dead had a strange, greenish pallor. "Years ago he had seen another like it, in an abandoned trench, with the same spectral appearance. It is the mark of poison gas." "No one emerges alive from the darkness of the underground cells to tell a word, and yet, in the first bit of dawn, the secret of 800 dead men filters through. A trip to Oswiecim, a flight

of steps into the “underground,” and death by gas.” As we know today, the account was correct: Both Pery Broad and Rudolf Höss were to corroborate it.

In early 1944 *Oswiecim Camp of Death (Underground Report)* was seen as an important account of German atrocities in Auschwitz. No one pointed out that, as an essentially two-year- old account, it did not bring up-to-date information. Easily interpreted as an account of the contemporary situation in Auschwitz, its publication effectively denied whatever rumours had been floating around about Auschwitz as a place where transports of Jews from all over Europe arrived to be gassed.

In the middle of 1944 substantial information about the use of Auschwitz as a site of systematic genocide became available in the form of three reports. The first and most important account was written by two young Slovak Jews, Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzlar, who had been imprisoned for two years in Auschwitz before their successful escape on April 10, 1944. They returned to Slovakia in the hope to warn the Hungarian Jews, and there they were debriefed by the Jewish underground. A second statement, that corroborated the other, was added. It was older than the Vrba-Wetzlar Report, having been written by a the Polish gentile Jerzy Tabeau shortly after his escape from Auschwitz on 19 November 1943. In the version issued by the War Refugee Board, Tabeau is identified as “a non-Jewish Polish Major.”

In June 1944 the Vrba-Wetzlar and the Tabeau reports reached Switzerland, and by the middle of the month various copies were circulating. On June 19, Richard Lichtheim, the senior Jewish Agency representative in Geneva, wrote to the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem that it had now become possible to ascertain “what has happened and where it has happened.” The systematic killing of Jews not only occurred in the by then well-known camps like Treblinka, but also in “similar establishments situated near or in the labour camp of

Birkenau in Upper Silesia.” Knowing well the confusion that existed as to the what and where of Birkenau, Lichtheim felt compelled to stress that “[t]here *is* a labour camp in Birkenau just as in many other places in Upper Silesia, and there are still many thousands of Jews working there and in neighbouring places (Jawischowiz etc.).” Yet the use of Birkenau as labour camp did not preclude an even more grim purpose: “But apart from the labour-camps proper there is a forest of birch trees near Birkenau (Bezinky) where the first large-scale killings took place in a rather “primitive” manner, while later on they were carried out in the labour camp of B itself with all the scientific apparatus needed for this purpose, i.e. In specially constructed buildings with gas-chambers and crematoriums.” Lichtheim also explained that Birkenau was formally subordinated “to the camp of Auschwitz (Oswiecim) which is 4 km from Birkenau.” This camp, he observed, was generally known because of its violent regime as a “Death Camp.” Yet for all its horror it was now revealed to be a pale foreshadowing of Birkenau. The gentiles imprisoned in Auschwitz “have not been slaughtered wholesale on arrival like 90 per cent of the Jews arriving in Birkenau.”

The revelations about the purpose and function of Birkenau occurred at a time that the Germans were in the process of dispatching daily trains full of Hungarian Jews to that location. The Jewish Agency in Jerusalem was likely to do little, but the British Government in London perhaps more, and so Lichtheim contacted the British legation in Geneva with the request (if they would be willing) to cable a text Lichtheim had written to Foreign Office in London. The British diplomats agreed, and on June 27 the Lichtheim telegram was sent to London under signature of the British Minister in Berne. It began as follows: “Received fresh reports from Hungary stating that nearly one half total of 800,000 Jews in Hungary have already been deported at a rate of 10,000 to 12,000 per diem. Most of these transports are sent to the death camp at Birkenau near Oswiecim in Upper Silesia where in the

course of the last year over 1,500,000 Jews from all over Europe have been killed. We have detailed reports about the numbers and methods employed. The four crematoriums in Birkenau have a capacity for gassing and burning 60,000 per diem.” A week later the Foreign Office received an eight-page summary of the Vrba-Wetzlar report from the acting Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hubert Ripka, who had obtained it from the Czechoslovak representative in Geneva.

By the time the facts about Auschwitz had reached London, it also had become known in Washington D.C.. On June 24 Dr. Gerhart Riegner, who represented the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, had given the representative of the War Refuge Board in Berne, Roswell D. McClelland, a summary of the report, and that same day the latter had cabled the most important elements to Washington D.C. “There is little doubt that many of these Hungarian Jews are being sent to the extermination camps of Auschwitz (Oswiecim) and Birke Nau (Rajska) in eastern Upper Silesia where according to recent reports, since early summer 1942 at least 1,500,000 Jews have been killed. There is evidence that already in January 1944 preparations were being made to receive and exterminate Hungarian Jews in these camps. Soon a detailed report on these camps will be cabled.” In fact, it was two weeks before he was able to telegraph an eight page summary to Washington on July 6, promising that “when mailing facilities permit, microfilm copies of the two reports ‘in extenso’ will be sent.” The time-lag can be explained as McClelland desired to obtain certainty about the reliability of the report. A member of the Bratislava Papal Nunciature, who had personally interviewed Vrba and Wetzlar, told McClelland that their story had been thoroughly convincing, and also explained that they had been closely cross-examined by senior members of the Bratislava Jewish community. The latter had taken care that the material finally incorporated into the report included only that about which there was no uncertainty or equivocation.

Having received the assurances he had sought, the American diplomat decided to put his career on the line, and he cabled a summary of the report to Washington D.C. It described the location, the huge size and the atrocious living conditions of Auschwitz, identified as camp "A," and Birkenau, identified as camp "B." After a short account of various medical experiments, and methods of executions through shooting or phenol injections, the summary addressed the core issue: the role of Auschwitz in the Holocaust. "Jews who were brought to A toward end of 1941 were for most part Polish political prisoners and killed by various methods as such. Not until spring of 1942 were transports of Jews en masse sent to B (constructed principally for them) to be exterminated on purely racial grounds." The telegram mentioned that, up to the escape of the authors of the report, a total of 145,500 people had been admitted to the camp and registered as inmates. Most deportees were, however, not admitted. "As first large transports of Jews began to arrive in spring of 1942 process was to admit about 10% of more able-bodied men and 5% of women into B. This selection was made by Gestapo political commission at unloading of trains. Balance including elderly people, women with small children, those ill or otherwise unsuited for work and abandoned children were taken directly to Birkenwald in trucks and gassed." The summary mentioned that, initially, the bodies of the murdered people were buried. In the fall of 1942 the Germans had abandoned this practice, and turned to open-air incineration on pyres. "At the end of February 1943 four newly constructed crematoria and gassing units were put into operation in B two larger and two smaller the larger type consisted of vast central hall flanked on one side by furnace room and on other by long narrow gas chamber. About 2000 persons at once were crowded into central hall which was camouflaged to resemble a bathing establishment made to undress given a piece of soap and towel and then herded down a short stairway into adjoining lower gas chamber this is hermetically closed and SS men wearing gasmasks mount to rood and shake down into room from three openings in ceiling a powdered cyanide preparation labelled cyk-

lon manufactured in Hamburg. Within a few minutes everyone in gas chamber is dead, latter is aired and Sonderkommando proceeds with gruesome work of transporting bodies on small flat cars running along track passing under central hall to furnace room here there are nine ovens each with four openings with high smokestack rising in middle each opening can incinerate three normal bodies within one-half hours. Daily capacity of larger crematoria is 2000 of two smaller about 1000 each, total of all four units is some 6000 daily.” After providing details of various transports that had been subjected to selection and extermination, the telegram concluded with a frightful statistic. “Authors set number of Jews gassed and burned in B between April 1942 and April 1944 at from 1.5 to 1.75 million about half of them Poles the others (in thousands followed by country of origin) 150 France, 100 Holland, 60 Germany, 50 Lithuania, 50 Belgium, 50 Yugoslavia, Italy and Norway, together 30, Slovakia, 30; Bohemia, Moravia and Austria together 300 from various camps for foreign Jews in Poland.”

By the time McClelland’s summary arrived in Washington D.C., *The New York Times* had already run three stories on Auschwitz. The first, published on June 20, was only 22 lines long. Entitled “Czechs Report Massacre,” it reported the death of 7,000 Czech Jews. “The report said that the victims were dragged to gas chambers in the notorious German concentration camps at Birkenau and Oswiecim.” Two weeks later the coverage had increased four-fold in an article entitled “Inquiry Confirms Nazi Death Camps,” subtitled “1,715,000 Jews Said to Have Been Put to Death by the Germans Up to April 15.” The author, the *The New York Times* correspondent in Geneva Daniel Brigham, still hedged his language, but three days later, in an even longer article entitled “Two Death Camps Places of Horror” he had lost all doubt: the report had received “incontrovertible confirmation of the facts.”

By the middle of July 1944 many had become convinced that the Germans were engaged in the systematic annihilation of Jews in extermination camps, and that Birkenau was one of the most important of

these. But few people could really imagine what such places were like. The world of the camps remained intangible. This changed on July 23, 1944. Five days earlier the Soviet army had broken through German lines at Kowel, and on July 23 the Eight Guards Army took the town of Lublin. In Lublin's suburb of Maidanek, General Chuikov's soldiers found a large concentration camp, which the Germans had largely evacuated in the preceding months, but which for unknown reasons they had failed to destroy. The crematorium and various of the gas chambers were captured largely intact. For the first time it became possible to fully imagine what the word "Birkenau" meant. On August 29 the Soviet Embassy in Washington published the first instalment of a long, two-piece article by Konstantin Simonov entitled "Lublin Annihilation Camp." The article began with a statement that was to be repeated almost literally by dozens of journalists as they reported, in the nine months that followed, of the things they witnessed in the German concentration camps upon their liberation: "What I am now about to relate is too enormous and too gruesome to be fully conceived." Simonov admitted that it would take a painstaking inquiry to establish all the facts about the camp. Yet, having seen the place, and talked to around 100 witnesses, he could not wait. "[A] man who has seen what I have cannot hold his peace and cannot wait to speak." "But we open a door and find ourselves in another disinfecting chamber which is built on an entirely different principle. It is a square room, a little over two meters high and roughly six meters long and as many wide. The walls, ceiling and floor are all built of solid gray concrete. There are no shelves for clothes here such as we saw in the other chamber. The room is absolutely bare. A single steel door hermetically closes the entrance to the chamber. It can be fastened from the outside by an impressive steel bar. In the walls of this concrete vault are three apertures. In two of them pipes are fitted which lead out into the open. The third aperture is a little spy hole, a small square window barred on the inside by a stout steel grid fitted into the concrete. A thick panel of glass covers the outer side of the aperture so that it cannot be reached

through the grid. What is on the other side of this spy hole? To answer this question we leave the chamber and find that next to it is another and smaller room, also built of concrete. It is into this room that the spy hole leads. Here there is an electric switch. And here too, on the floor, stand several hermetically sealed cylindrical tins on which is inscribed the word “cyclone “ and in smaller letters “for special use in Eastern regions.” It was the contents of these tins which was poured through the pipes into the chamber next door after it had been filled with people. The people were stripped naked before they were pushed into the room and they were packed so tight they occupied little space. In these 40 square meters or so 250 persons were jammed at one time. The steel door was closed upon them and its edges sealed with clay. Then specially trained operators wearing gas masks poured the “cyclone” out of the cylindrical tins into the chamber. The small bluish innocent-looking crystals, on contact with the oxygen of the air, immediately began to generate poisonous gases which simultaneously affect all centers of the human organism. An SS man of the commanding squad turned on a switch in the next room illuminating the poison chamber and through the spy hole watched all stages of the asphyxiation, which according to various witnesses lasted from two to 10 minutes. He could safely watch the action of the gases and the faces of the dying. The spy hole was set into the wall at roughly the height of a human face. He had no need to look down, for the people were packed so close they did not fall as they died, but continued in an upright position. Incidentally, “cyclone” really is a disinfecting substance. It was actually used for the disinfection of clothes in neighbouring sheds. Everything seemed fair and aboveboard. It all depended on the dose which was poured into the chambers.” In a second part of his report, published a few days later, Simonov reported on the crematoria. “It is a large rectangular building, built of highly resistant firebrick. It contains five brick furnaces arranged one alongside the other, with round, hermetically-closing iron doors which now stand open. The deep furnaces are half-filled with incinerated vertebrae and ashes. In a space

in front of each furnace lie skeletons which were made ready by the Germans for cremation. Those in front of three of the furnaces are skeletons of men and women; those in front of the other two are the skeletons of children of 10 and 12, to judge by their size. There are five or six skeletons in front of each furnace. This indicates their capacity. Each furnace was built to accommodate six bodies. If the six bodies would not fit into the crematorium the operators hacked off the protruding parts of the body, an arm, a leg or a head, and then hermetically closed the door. There are five furnaces in all. They could handle a large number of bodies daily. Originally they incinerated a corpse in 45 minutes, but gradually by raising the temperatures in the furnaces the Germans doubled the handling capacity of the crematorium and incinerating process; instead of 45 minutes they took 25 and even less. Experts have already determined the fireproof brick from which the furnaces are built and conclude from the deformations and changes to which it has been subjected that the temperature in the furnaces exceeded 1,500 degrees Centigrade. Additional evidence is furnished by the cast-iron dampers, which have also been deformed and have slightly melted. If we reckon on an average that each batch of bodies took half an hour to cremate, and if we bear in mind, as is generally testified, that since the autumns of 1943 smoke poured from the crematorium chimney-stack incessantly, day and night, we may conclude that the total capacity of the crematorium was 1,400 bodies per day." The sight that shocked Simonov most was a large shed filled with shoes. "There may be a million, there may be more. They spill over out of the hut through the windows and the doors. In one spot the weight of them pushed out part of the wall, which fell outwards together with piles of shoes. Every kind of footwear can be found here: torn Russian military top-boots, boots of Polish soldiers, men's shoes, women's slippers, rubber overshoes, and what is the grimmest of all, thousands upon thousands of pairs of children's footwear--boots, shoes and sandals of children ten years old, eight years old and even of babies. It is hard to imagine anything more gruesome than this sight, a silent wit-

ness of the destruction of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children....Like everything else in the death camp, this storehouse was built for utilitarian purposes; nothing belonging to the slaughtered victims was to be wasted, neither clothes, shoes, bones nor ashes.”

One day after the Soviet Embassy in Washington published the first instalment of Simonov’s account of Maidanek, the American public found confirmation in *The New York Times*. On August 30 it carried on the front page an article entitled “Nazi Mass Killing Laid Bare in Camp,” written by the same Bill Lawrence who, nine months earlier, had shown such scepticism about the alleged mass killing of Jews in Babi Yar. This time Lawrence did not hedge his statements anymore. “I have just seen the most terrible place on the face of the earth--the German concentration camp at Maidanek, which was a veritable River Rouge for the production of death, in which it is estimated by Soviet and Polish authorities that as many as 1,500,000 persons from nearly every country in Europe were killed in the last three years. I have been all-through the camp inspecting its hermetically sealed gas chambers, in which victims were asphyxiated, and five furnaces in which the bodies were cremated, and I have talked with German officers attached to the camp, who admitted quite frankly that it was a highly systemized place for annihilation, although they, of course, denied any personal participation in the murders.... This is a place that must be seen to be believed. I have been present at numerous atrocity investigations in the Soviet Union, but never have I been confronted with such complete evidence, clearly establishing every allegation made by those investigating German crimes. After inspection of Maidanek, I am now prepared to believe any story of German atrocities, no matter how savage, cruel and depraved.”

While seeing Maidanek may have convinced Lawrence that his earlier scepticism had been inappropriate, the editors of *The Christian Century* felt no need to let go of the scepticism they had shown all along about the atrocity stories coming from Europe. On September 13, 1944 they

provided under the heading “Biggest Atrocity Story Breaks in Poland” a short summary of Lawrence’s account, and noted that “chief evidence for the charge that 1,500,000 persons had been killed in this manner was a warehouse ‘about 150 feet long’ containing clothing of people of all ages who were said to have been done to death in the camp.” It did not convince the editors back home in America. “Many newspapers gave the Lublin charges the big headline of the day, but the parallel between this story and the “corpse factory “ atrocity tale of the First World War is too striking to be overlooked. That story started in 1917 and was not finally discredited until 1925. There may or may not be a relation between the fact that the Lublin account came out immediately after it was charged by London Poles that the Russians had stopped their advance within artillery range of Warsaw and waited until the Germans had killed 250,000 Poles within the city who had risen to fight for their freedom in response to the call of the Polish government-in-exile.” And thus the editors of one of the leading Christian magazines in the United States concluded their coverage of the discovery of Maidanek.

The editors of *Time* showed less hesitance to accept facts for what they were. On August 21 they had provided a first account of the “gigantic murder plant,” largely taken from notes by the Russian war correspondent Roman Karmen. Three weeks later they printed an almost full-page article entitled “Murder, Inc.” written by their Moscow correspondent Richard Lauterbach, who had visited the camp sometime earlier. He was puzzled by the banality of the camp. “I took notes calmly, feeling little emotion. It was all so cold and bare.” After having inspected the gas chambers, his guide, the secretary of the Soviet Atrocities Commission Dmitri Kudriavtsev, showed him some cabbage patches. “The big, leafy cabbages were covered with a sooty, grey dust and next to them were high mounds of grey brown stuff. “This,” said Kudriavtsev, “is fertilizer. A layer of human bones, a layer of human ashes, a layer of manure. This is German food production. Kill people;

fertilize cabbages.” Lauterbach noted the Soviet expert’s explanation of the ultimate result of capitalist logic without comment. And neither did he dispute the expert’s interpretation of German efficiency. “The crematorium might have been a big bakeshop or a very small blast furnace. Here the Nazis carted the bodies, straight from the gas chambers. They cut them up scientifically. They put the chunks on iron stretchers, slid them on rollers into the five greedy mouths of the coke-fed ovens. They could disintegrate 1,900 people a day. “There was great economy,” said Kudriavtsev. “These furnaces also heated the water for the camp.” Lauterbach ended with an extensive description of the warehouses with shoes.

A week later *Life* ran another of Lauterbach’s articles on Maidanek. It was entitled “Sunday in Poland.” “It was not the gas chambers where victims were snuffed out standing up, or the crematorium where they were chopped up and then burned in construction ovens. This part of the “death factory” didn’t get to me somehow. Too machine-like. It wasn’t even the open graves with skeletons or skulls or stacks of fertilizer made from human bodies and manure. The full emotional shock came at a giant warehouse chock-full of people’s shoes, more than 800,000 of all sizes, shapes, colors, and styles. In some places the shoes had burst out of the building like corn from a crib. It was monstrous. There is something about an old shoe as personal as a snapshot or a letter. I looked at them and saw their owners: skinny kids in soft, white, worn slippers; thin ladies in black highlaced shoes; sturdy soldiers in brown military shoes.”

By this time a joint Soviet-Polish commission, that comprised of three Russian and eight Polish members (amongst whom a priest, the President of the Lublin Red Cross, two academics and two lawyers), and which was assisted by a six-member Board of Medico-Legal Experts and a four-member board of Technico-Legal and Chemical Experts, had begun a systematic forensic investigation, following procedures that had been well established in nineteen earlier enquiries into Ger-

man atrocities. They were lucky in that they had been able to obtain not only testimonies from former inmates, but also from a number of SS men who had not been able to escape in time. Furthermore some parts of the camp administration had been captured and, as we have seen, the gas chambers and crematoria had remained intact and were available for forensic investigation. In October the commission issued its report, the English-language version of which was made available by the Soviet embassy in Washington D.C. on October 17.

After a short introduction, the report came immediately to the point. “The Hitlerite hangmen set up a huge death factory at Maidanek in Lublin. They named it “Vernichtungslager” ((Extermination Camp). Germans who had served in this camp and were taken prisoner testified before the Commission. SS Rottenfuehrer Theodor Scholen stated: “This camp was called the ‘Extermination Camp’--‘Vernichtungslager’--just because a tremendous number of people were exterminated there.” Heinz Stalbe, a member of the Kampfpolizei, stated: “The main purpose of this camp was to exterminate the greatest number of people, and for this reason it was named the ‘Vernichtungslager,’ i.e.’Extermination Camp.’” Of course, the designation “*Vernichtungslager*” was only an informal one used by the SS guards in their conversations with the Soviets, and perhaps amongst themselves. The official designation of Maidanek was, like that of Birkenau, as a “Prisoner-of-War Camp of the Waffen SS Lublin” (*Kriegsgefangenenlagers der Waffen SS Lublin*)--a designation that preserved Himmler’s original but quickly thwarted intention to use the camp as a forced labour pool of Soviet prisoners of war.

The bulk of the report was devoted to an extensive description of life in the camp, the constant starvation and exhaustion, the diseases, the humiliations, beatings, tortures, and hangings. One chapter chronicled the mass shootings, which had culminated on November 3, 1943 in the execution of 18,400 people on one day. Another chapter described extermination by gas. “One of the methods most widely used for the mass

extermination of people in Maidanek Camp was asphyxiation with gas. A board of technico-legal and chemical experts--presided over by the architect engineer of the town of Lublin, KELLES-KRAUSE, and consisting of Major Engineer, Assistant Professor TELANER, Master of Technical Science GRIGORYEV, and Master of Technical Science PEL-KIS, established that cells built on the territory of the camp had been used chiefly for the mass extermination of human beings. There were six such cells. Some had been used for killing people with "S.O." gas, others for killing with the poisonous chemical substance called "cyclone." On the camp territory there were discovered 535 drums of "Cyclone-B2" preparation and several steel cylinders containing carbon monoxide.... On the basis of precise calculation used in the technical examination of the gas cells, chemical analysis of the carbon monoxide and "cyclone," the experts have ascertained: "Technical and sanitary-chemical analysis of the gas cells in Maidanek Concentration Camp fully confirms that all these cells, especially cells Nos. 1,2,3 and 4, were destined and used for the large-scale extermination of people by poison gasses such as hydrocyanic acid (the 'cyclone' preparation) and carbon monoxide."

The conclusions by the technical experts were corroborated by eyewitness testimony of the captured SS men. "At a session of the Commission German SS men who had served in the camp related the following about the large-scale gassings of people: SS Rottenfuehrer Haensche stated that on September 15, 1942, 350 people, including women and children, were killed in a gas cell. SS Oberscharfuehrer Ternes told the Commission about the asphyxiation of 500 people, including many women and children, in gas cells on October 16, 1943. The selection of people for asphyxiation was done systematically by the German camp doctors Blanke and Rindfleisch. The same Ternes stated: "On the evening of October 21, 1943, Camp Doctor SS Untersturmfuehrer Rindfleisch told me that on that very day 300 children of three to 10 years of age had been asphyxiated with the "cyclone" pre-

paration in a gas cell.” Bodies were regularly removed from the gas cells to be burned in the crematorium or on bonfires. The bodies were transported on trucks or on special platforms hauled by tractors. Many eyewitnesses gave evidence on this point. The German prisoner of war SS Rottenfuehrer Theodor Scholen, who had worked in the camp, stated: “I often saw the truck, with a trailer attached, running from the gas cell to the crematorium and back. It took dead bodies from the gas cell, and then returned empty.”

The next chapter dealt with the technology of incineration. The crematorium had been completed in 1943 and counted five furnaces designed to burn continuously. “The technical experts who thoroughly examined the structure of the furnaces came to the following conclusion: “The furnaces were intended for burning bodies and designed to function uninterruptedly. Four bodies with hacked off extremities could be placed in one furnace at a time. It took 15 minutes to burn four bodies, and so with all furnaces working round the clock it was possible to burn 1,920 bodies in 24 hours. Taking into account the great quantity of bones discovered all over the camp (in pits, in vegetable gardens and manure heaps), the Committee of experts believes that bones were taken out of the furnaces before they could be completely consumed, and that therefore, in fact, many more than 1,920 bodies were burned in 24 hours.” There was also ample evidence that the Germans had incinerated corpses on large pyres, and the commission had found at least 18 large mass graves within the camp area, and 1,350 cubic meters of compost that consisted, among other things, of human ashes and small human bones. On the basis of the capacity of the old incinerators and the new crematorium, the assumed capacity of the pyres both inside and outside the camp, the commission estimated that some 1.5 million people had been killed in the camp. This latter figure was found suspect from the beginning, and led in 1948 to a new, official estimate of 360,000 victims based on analysis of transports, lists of the dead, and the occupancy of the barracks.

By the time the report appeared, the shock of the initial discovery had passed. The forensic investigation had confirmed the initial accounts, and so it was not really news. Few newspapers paid attention. Yet the work of the commission made an impact on the German leadership. Maidanek was “a public relations” disaster. David Irving tells in his *Hitler’s War* that at a war conference of October 27 Press Chef Otto Dietrich handed Hitler an English newspaper that carried a summary of the Soviet report. “A hush fell on the war conference. Hitler angrily laid the newspaper aside: “That’s that ‘hacked-off hands again--pure enemy propaganda!” But the consternation among his circle persisted. A perplexed Ribbentrop showed the newspaper to his son Rudolf, visiting him on injury leave from his Waffen SS unit. Rudolf too exclaimed, “Father, can’t you recognize atrocity-propaganda when you see it--it’s the ‘hacked-off hands’ again!!” Ribbentrop uneasily pressed Hitler in private. “It’s Himmler’s affair,” replied the Führer dismissively, “and his alone.” Indeed: Himmler became determined that it would not happen again. Within days after the incident in the Führer headquarters, he decided that, for all practical purposes, the Jewish Question had been solved as much as it was in his power to do, and he ordered the cessation of gassing in Auschwitz, and the dismantling of the extermination installations in the crematoria.

Just at the time that crews of prisoners completed the demolition of the gas chambers in Auschwitz the War Refugee Board published the Vrba-Wetzlar and Tabeau reports, which had been made available in summary in early July, and a third text drafted by Arnost Rosin and Czeslaw Mordowicz, who had escaped Auschwitz in late May, and who provided important information about the early phase of the Hungarian Action. The collated text was entitled *German Extermination Camps--Auschwitz and Birkenau*. In its press release, the Board stated that, with exceptions for the figures concerning the number of people admitted

to the camps--"declared by the authors to be no more than reliable approximations"--it accepted the accounts as providing "a true picture of the frightful happenings in these camps."

The first time gassing is mentioned concerns the killing of prisoners in the summer of 1942. At this time Vrba had been the administrator of the sick barrack, and hence knew of the selections. "At the same time the so-called "selections" were introduced. Twice weekly, Mondays and Thursdays, the camp doctor indicated the number of prisoners who were to be gassed and then burned. These "selectees" were loaded into trucks and brought to the Birch Forest. Those still alive upon arrival were gassed in a big barrack erected near a trench used for burning the bodies." In the report Vrba and Wetzlar also correctly identify the completion of Crematorium 2. "At the end of February, 1943 a new crematorium and gassing plant was inaugurated at BIRKENAU. The gassing and burning of the bodies in the Birch Forest was discontinued, the whole job being taken over by the four specially built crematoria. The large ditch was filled in, the ground levelled, and the ashes used as before for fertilizer at the farm labour camp of HERMENSE, so that today it is almost impossible to find traces of the dreadful mass murder which took place there. At present there are four crematoria in operation at BIRKENAU, two large ones, I and II, and two smaller ones, III and IV." There followed a long description of crematoria 2 and 3 (in their numbering I and II) accompanied by a sketch. It is clear that the account of the lay-out of the interior is based on second-hand information, probably derived from members of the *Sonderkommando*. Indeed: in sworn deposition Vrba made in 1961, and in his later book *I Cannot Forgive* (1963), Vrba stated that he received all the specific information on the crematoria from *Sonderkommando* Philip Müller and his colleagues.

On the basis of direct observation, people who had been on transports, the people who handled the property of the deportees, the reports of the registry office of the Quarantine Camp in Auschwitz, and the in-

formation provided by those who worked the crematoria, Vrba and Wetzlar estimated that about 1,765,000 Jews had died in Auschwitz up to April 1944.

Jerzy Tabeau's report, which had a independent origin, provided much detailed information on life in the camp. More importantly, it corroborated the Vrba-Wetzlar account of the use of Birkenau as a site of mass extermination. Tabeau mentions that the first large transports of Jews began to arrive in the spring of 1942. "Certain large scale preparations had to be made to receive these mass transports and a special concentration camp was opened at BIRKENAU (The Polish name of the village is RAJSKO)." It describes the selections in detail, and the killing in the summer and fall of 1942 of the Jews in the gas chamber in the birch forest. Tabeau mentions the problems with getting rid of the corpses. "The crematoria had not yet been constructed, although there was a small one at AUSCHWITZ which, however, was not employed for burning these bodies. Mass graves were dug at that time into which the corpses were simply thrown. This continued into the autumn of 1942. By this time extermination by gas was being intensified and there was no more time as such for summary burial. Row upon row of bodies of murdered Jews, covered only by a thin layer of earth, were widely dispersed in the surrounding fields, causing the soil to become almost marshy through the putrefaction of the bodies. The smell emanating from these fields became intolerable. In the autumn of 1942 all that remained of the bodies had to be exhumed and the bones collected and burned in the crematoria (by that time four had been completed). An alternative was to gather the remains of the unfortunate victims into heaps, pour gasoline over them, and leave it to the flames to finish the tragedy." With exception of the clause "and the bones collected and burned in the crematoria (by that time four had been completed)" all that Tabeau mentioned was corroborated after the war.

As a result, much was known about Auschwitz by the end of 1944. The report of the War Refugee Board provided the structure, and the knowledge of Maidanek the texture of that knowledge.

IV Attestations, 1945–46

But it is time I should conclude this head, under which I have touched some of the reasons that show the folly of endeavouring to establish universal Pyrrhonism in matters of history, because there are few histories without some lies, and none without some mistakes; and that prove the body of history which we possess, since ancient memorials have been so critically examined, and modern memorials have been so multiplied, to contain in it such a probable series of events, easily distinguishable from the improbable, as force the assent of every man who is in his senses, and are, therefore, sufficient to answer all the purposes of the study of history. Lord Bolingbroke, *Lessons on the Study and Use of History*

On January 27, 1945 units of the 28th and 106th Corps of the First Ukrainian Front liberated the Auschwitz camps. They found in Auschwitz-Monowitz, the slave labour camp attached to the IG Farben Buna works, 600 sick inmates. The Italian Primo Levi was one of them. “They were four young soldiers on horseback, who advanced along the road that marked the limits of the camp, cautiously holding their stenguns. When they reached the barbed wire, they stopped to look, exchanging a few timid words, and throwing strangely embarrassed glances at the sprawling bodies, at the battered huts and at us few still alive. To us they seemed wonderfully concrete and real, perched on their enormous horses, between the grey of the snow and the grey of the sky, immobile beneath the gusts of damp wind that threatened a thaw. It seemed to us, and so it was, that the nothing full of death in which we had wandered like spent stars for ten days had found its own solid centre, a nucleus of condensation; four men, armed, but not against us: four messengers of peace, with rough and boyish faces be-

neath their heavy fur hats. They did not greet us, nor did they smile; they seemed oppressed not only by compassion but by a confused restraint, which sealed their lips and bound their eyes to the funereal scene. It was that shame we knew so well, the shame that drowned us after the selections, and every time we had to watch, or submit to, some outrage: the shame the Germans did not know, that the just man experiences at the other's crime; the feeling of guilt that such a crime should exist, that it should have been introduced irrevocably in the world of things that exist, and that his will for good should have proved too weak or null, and should not have availed in defence. ”

The Red Army liberated 1,200 sick prisoners in the Auschwitz *Stammlager* and 5,800 inmates in Birkenau. The rest, some 60,000 inmates, had been forced a week earlier in a death march to the west. In Birkenau the Soviets also found the blown-up remains of four crematoria--the SS had learnt from Maidanek--and a large compound with 32 burned storage houses. Again, the SS had tried to avoid the embarrassment caused by the 820,000 shoes in Maidanek. And they largely succeeded this time: all that was left in the four storage barracks that were not completely destroyed at Birkenau were a mere 5,525 pairs of women's shoes and 38,000 pairs of men's shoes--and 348,820 men's suits, 836,255 women's garments, 13,964 carpets, 69,848 dishes, huge quantities of toothbrushes, shaving brushes, glasses, crutches, false teeth, and seven tons of hair.

Immediately after the liberation the well-known Russian writer and *Pravda* correspondent Boris Polevoi wrote a first impression of the camp entitled “The Factory of Death at Auschwitz.” Wired from Auschwitz, it appeared in Pravda on February 2. “It will take weeks of long and careful investigations by special commissions before a full picture of the truly unparalleled German outrages at Auschwitz is established,” the article began. “What is noted here are only the outlines coming from a first glance acquaintanceship with the site of the monstrous outrages of the Hitlerite hangmen.” And this was indeed what the art-

icle provided, “a first glance acquaintenship.” Today, more than fifty years later, in an epoch that expects descriptions of the camps to evoke the stark and terrible gentleness of Jean Cayrol’s script for Alain Resnais’ *Night and Fog*, or the naturalism of Primo Levi’s *If This Is A Man?*, or the restrained agony of Elie Wiesel’s *Night*, the histrionic language of the Pravda piece seems in bad taste. But it must be remembered that Cayrol wrote his lines ten years after the event, when the landscape of Auschwitz had become peaceful, while Polevoi wrote amidst the atrocity itself.

If Simonov’s report on Maidanek had been characterized by utter surprise and shock, Polevoi admitted that he had been prepared for what was to be revealed. “The name of the town “Auschwitz” has long been a synonym for bloody German atrocities in the lexicon of the peoples of the world. Few of its prisoners escaped the fires of its notorious “ovens.” From behind the wire of its numerous camps only a phantom echo had filtered of the wails from the lips of its thousands of prisoners. Only now, when the troops of the First Ukrainian Front had liberated Auschwitz, was it possible to see with one’s own eyes the entirety of this terrible camp, in which many of its tens of square kilometers of fields were soaked in human blood, and literally fertilized with human ash.”

To the Soviet journalist there was no doubt: Auschwitz was the direct result of Monopoly-Capitalism--a *Leitmotif* that had been well established almost half a year earlier at the occasion of the liberation of Maidanek, and that went straight back to Karl Marx’s analysis of the reduction of human labour into a commodity. But, as Polevoi observed, Auschwitz was in class of its own. “The first thing that strikes one about Auschwitz, and which distinguishes it from other known camps, is its enormous expanse. The territory of the camp occupied tens of square kilometers and in recent years had grown to absorb the towns of Makowice, Babice, and others. It was an enormous industrial plant, having its own branch facilities, each of which received its own special

charge. In one, the processing of the arrivals took place: prisoners were made of those who, before death, could be put to work, while the elderly, the children, and the infirm were sentenced to immediate extermination. In another, a division for those who were so exhausted and worn out as to be barely fit for physical labour, they were assigned the task of sorting the clothes of the exterminated, and of sorting their shoes, taking apart uppers, soles, linings. It is fair to say that all prisoners entering the branches of the industrial plant were to be killed and burned, either by being killed outright or through the many ordeals of confinement.” Auschwitz, in other words, was a vast corporate enterprise which was unique in so far that it considered its workers to be totally expendable, and that once the labour had ceased to be a commodity, the body became one.” Around this industrial plant enormous fields and enclosures were established in the Sola and Vistula river valleys. The remains of the prisoners, burned in the “ovens”, had their ash and bones crushed in rolling mills and converted to meal, and this meal went to the fields and enclosures.” “Auschwitz! Impartial commissions will establish the precise number of the people killed or tortured to death here. But already we can assert, based on discussions with Poles, that in 1941-1942 and at the beginning of 1943 five to eight trains of people arrived every day, indeed on some days so many came that the station could not handle them. The people came from the surrounding territories occupied by the Germans, from the USSR, from Poland, from France, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The wagons were tightly packed with people and were always locked. At the station, the Polish railway workers were replaced by a crew from the camp, which included several special railway detachments. The wagons would disappear behind the gates and return empty. In the first four years of the camp’s existence the railway workers did not see a single wagon coming back from the camp carrying people.” While the information of the Polish railway workers on the number of trains in the early years seem exaggerated--an item of misinformation that can be explained as the result of the fact that Auschwitz was a railway center of more than re-

gional importance--their information about the fact that in the first four years the trains that left Auschwitz were empty seems correct if only because of its implication that in the last year trains left the camp with prisoners. As we know, in the last year of its existence a large number of prisoners who had survived selection left Auschwitz after some days on transports to other camps.

Then the article turned to the machinery of death. "Last year, when the Red Army revealed to the world the terrible and abominable secrets of Majdanek, the Germans in Auschwitz began to wipe out the traces of their crimes. They levelled the mounds of the so-called "old" graves in the Eastern part of the camp, tore up and destroyed the traces of the electric conveyor belt, on which hundreds of people were simultaneously electrocuted, their bodies falling onto the slow moving conveyor belt which carried them to the top of the blast furnace where they fell in, were completely burned, their bones converted to meal in the rolling mills, and then sent to the surrounding fields. In retreat were taken the special transportable apparatuses for killing children. The stationary gas chambers in the eastern part of the camp were restructured, even little turrets and other architectural embellishments were added so that they would look like innocent garages. But even so one can see the traces of the murder of millions of people! From the stories of prisoners, liberated by the Red Army, it is not difficult to make out all that the Germans tried so carefully to conceal. This gigantic industrial plant of death was equipped with the last word in fascist technology and was furnished with all of the instruments of torture which the German monsters could devise. In the first years of the camp, the Germans maintained only a cottage industry of death: they simply led prisoners to a large open pit, forced them to lie down and shot them in the back of the head. When one layer was full, the next would be forced to lie down head-to-foot on the layer below. And so was filled the second layer, and the third, and the fourth... When the grave was full, to make sure that all of the people were dead, it was raked with subma-

chine gun fire several times, while those for whom there was no room in the grave covered it up. Thus were filled hundreds of enormous pits in the eastern part of the camp, which bore the name of the “old” graves. The German hangmen, noting the primitiveness of this method of killing, decided to increase the productivity of the industrial plant of death by mechanizing it, leading to the gas chambers, the electric conveyor belt, the construction of the blast furnace for burning bodies and the so-called “ovens.” In the weeks that followed, forensic investigation was to confirm the existence and use of the gas chambers and the ovens, and relegate the electric conveyor belt and the blast furnace to the realm of myth.

The article followed with a catalogue of the “ordinary” instruments of torture, and in one line described the condition of the surviving inmates--“people, so worn out that they swayed like shadows in the wind, people, whose age it was impossible to determine.” And it concluded: “The Red Army saved them, and pulled them from hell. They honor the Red Army as the avengers for Auschwitz or Majdanek, and for all the pain and suffering which the fascist hangmen have brought to the people of Europe.”

The same day that Polevoi’s article appeared in *Pravda*, the British weekly *The Jewish Chronicle* devoted one sentence to the event. “The Red Army has captured Auschwitz(Oswiecim), one of the most notorious of all death camps.” A week later the same magazine carried a front-page article entitled “Oswiecim Revelations: Worst Death Camp Captured.” The article provided a summary of Polevoi’s account, and ended with the grim statistic that “it is estimated that over 1,500,000 victims were done to death in Oswiecim, and hundreds of thousands of them were Jews.”

It was from the outset clear that Auschwitz had been the site of a tremendous crime, and that the best way to use it as an indictment of National Socialism was to follow the example taken in Maidanek and es-

tablish the truth according to commonly accepted historical and judicial criteria of evidence. Therefore the Prosecutor's Office of the First Ukrainian Front immediately began a preliminary investigation. Like the investigation of Maidanek, it operated under the aegis of the Soviet State Extraordinary Commission for the Investigation of Fascist and Nazi Crimes. The investigators inspected the grounds of the camp, the pits containing human remains, and the ruins of the crematoria. They were assisted in the examination of the latter structures by Professor Roman Dawidowski, a specialist in heating and combustion technology from Cracow. Furthermore they studied the extermination process, and the remaining loot. Physicians medically examined 2,819 former inmates, and conducted autopsies on the corpses of 536 prisoners, and members of the Prosecutor's Office interviewed 200 of the remaining prisoners. They were fortunate in that they were able to interview three surviving members of the Sonderkommando. Until the end the Germans had kept some 100 Sonderkommando around: 30 to run Crematorium V, and 70 to clean out the incineration pits used in the summer of 1944. These 100 Sonderkommando were marched out of the camp on January 18, but Alain Feinsilber (alias Stanislaw Jankowski), Szlama Dragon and Henryk Tauber were able to escape, and the last two returned in time to Oswiecim to give evidence to the Soviets. Dragon also remembered the location where his fellow Sonderkommando Salmen Gradowski had buried a journal, written in Yiddish, in an aluminium canteen. The canteen was dug up in the presence of the members of the Prosecutors office. It contained a 81-leave notebook and a letter, dated September 6, 1944. Significant parts of the journal, which he had begun before his transport to Auschwitz, had become unintelligible. However the letter was preserved perfectly. For the record, here it is quoted in full. "I was writing this at the time when I was in the "Sonderkommando." I had been brought from the camp at Kielbasin near Grodno. I wanted to leave this as also other numerous notes as memento for the future world of peace, so that it may learn what had happened here. I have buried this under the ashes deeming it

the safest place, where people will certainly dig to find the traces of millions of men who were exterminated. But lately they have begun obliterating the traces and everywhere, where there was much ash, they ordered to have it ground fine and to cart it away to the Vistula and to let it flow with the current. We have dug up many graves and now two such open graves are in the terrain of the second and third crematorium. Several graves are still full of ashes. Perhaps they had forgotten about them or they themselves had maybe concealed it from the higher authorities, why, the order was: to obliterate all traces as quickly as possible; so, by not carrying out that order, they desisted from it. Thanks to that there are still two large graves left with ashes on the terrain of the second and third crematorium. Masses of ashes [from burnt corpses] of hundreds of thousands of Jews, Russians, Poles, were strewn and ploughed in on the sites of the crematoria. In the area of the fourth and fifth crematorium there are also small quantities of ash. There it was at once ground and taken to the Vistula, because all that area was destined for "burning the bridge"!!! The notebook and other notes have lain in the graves, getting saturated with the blood of not always entirely burnt bones and pieces of flesh. One can recognize the odour at once. Dear finder, search everywhere, in every inch of soil. Tens of documents are buried under it, mine and those of other persons, which will throw light on everything that was happening here. Great quantities of teeth are also buried here. It was we, the Kommando workers, who expressly have strewn them all over the terrain, as many as we could, so that the world should find material traces of the millions of murdered people. We ourselves have lost hope of being able to live to see the moment of liberation. In spite of good news that reaches us, we see that the world gives the barbarians the opportunity of destruction on an immense scale and of tearing out with roots the last remainder of the Jewish nation. Under our eyes tens of thousands of Jews from the Czech and Slovakian regions are now perishing. Those Jews could have certainly lived to see freedom. But everywhere where danger approaches the barbarians, from every place

which they have to leave, they take the remnants of Jews still alive and bring them to Birkenau-Auschwitz or to Stutthof near Gdansk. This is known thanks to the reports of persons who had come from there to us, too. We, the "Sonderkommando," had long since wanted to put a stop to our horrible work which we were forced to do under threat of death. We wanted to do great things. But people from the camp, a section of the Jews, Russians and Poles, have restrained us with all might and have forced us to put off the date of the mutiny. That day is approaching. It may happen today or tomorrow. I am writing these words in a moment of the greatest danger and excitement. May the future judge us on the base of my notes and may the world see in them, if only one drop, the minimum, of this tragic world amidst which we had lived. September 6, 1944. Salmen Gradowski." The uprising, which had been originally planned to happen in June, occurred one month later, on October 7, 1944. Gradowski was one of the leaders of the revolt. The uprising failed. The Germans captured and tortured Gradowski, and crushed his skull.

The notebook that accompanied the letter contained a detailed description of Gradowski's deportation to Auschwitz. He described how tension mounted in the train when it passed Bialystok on its way to Warsaw. "The train accelerated its motion. Everyone plunged again into an atmosphere of absolute despondency. The sadness grew with every kilometre and with every kilometre the emptiness became greater. What happened? Here we are approaching the ill-famed station of Treblinka," so tragic for the Jews, where, according to information which had filtered through to us, the majority of Poles and Jews from abroad were swallowed up and wiped out. Everyone is looking through the small windows and is searching for something in silence. They will, maybe, notice something, find some sign which would tell them the truth. Somebody, perhaps, would stand in the road and would tell them whither they are being led and what is awaiting them. Oh, how horrible!" The train passes two women who make a gesture across their

throat. Then the train begins to slow down. "The train has stopped, two thousand five hundred persons held their breaths. Teeth were chattering with fright and hearts were beating like mad. This great human mass, bathed in deadly sweat, is awaiting the coming minutes. Each second is an eternity, each second--a step nearer to death. All have grown numb in the expectation of satan's hand, reaching out, which will soon snatch them with its claws and will hurl them into this abyss. The whistle awakened them from their torpor. The train wrenched itself free of death and continued on; its route. Mothers are kissing their children, husbands are kissing their wives. Tears of joy are shed, all have wakened to live and have heaved sighs of relief. A fresh surge of hopeful thoughts has mastered everyone. The belief that all these versions are untrue has begun to be strengthened. The fear is slowly fading away, the fright is vanishing. There is no foundation for all the bad news and anticipations. They are the result and the echo of some single horrible happening but not of mass phenomena. You can therefore notice now how everybody has plucked up his courage, deeming they were taken to live, perhaps to live a hard life, but still a life." In the end, their optimism proved without foundation. After a gruelling journey, the train stopped in Auschwitz, and the passengers were subjected to selection. "Men have to stand separately, women separately. This order came like a thunderclap upon all. Now, when one is standing at the last stage, when one has come to the journey's end, one is ordered to separate, to cleave that which is indissoluble, which has been united and has grown into one inseparable whole. Nobody stirs from the spot, not being able to believe that which is unbelievable. It is not possible for something unreal to become real, a fact. But a rain of blows which the foremost ranks of people standing there had felt acted so that even in the farther ranks families had begun to separate.[...] It was thought that the formal procedure had begun of establishing the exact number of newcomers, both sexes separately. It was felt that the most important was approaching, when necessity arose to solace one another and to raise one another's spirits. The strength of indissoluble family ties

was still felt. Here are two persons standing, the husband on one side, the wife and the child on the other. Older people are standing, an old father and opposite the mother, weak already. Brothers are standing there, looking in the direction of their dear sisters. Nobody knows what is going to happen next.” Gradowski described how men who tried to cross over to the women’s line were beaten up, and driven back, and how in the separation all the hope that had sustained them throughout their ordeal in the ghetto and the transit camp at Kielbasin was destroyed. “The thought of staying together with the family, this opiate, which had kept up their spirits on the journey, has all at once stopped to act.” Lorries came up to transport the old people, the women and children. Gradowski was admitted into the camp. “We are here in a camp of death. It is a lifeless island. Man does not come here to live but to die, sooner or later. There is no room for life here. It is the residence of death. Our brain has grown dull, the thoughts are numbed, it is not possible to grasp this new language. Everyone is meditating on where his family is. Where were they driven and how will they manage in the new conditions? Who knows how the mortally frightened children will behave seeing how their mothers are being maltreated?[...] All are standing helpless, worried, full of despair, lonesome, unhappy, broken. Bunks are being assigned. They are beds of boards, each for five, six numbers jointly. We are told to climb into them, to push in so far that only the head should be seen. Get inside as far as possible, you accursed man! You won’t be able to see each other. The old camp inmates come to the bunks and ask how many were left in the lager and what was the strength of the transport. We are unable to grasp the meaning of such questions. Of what significance is [the list] of these numbers? Where are those who left us driving away in lorries? They regard us with cynical smiles and heavy sighs escape their lips. This is the sign of human compassion with us. Among the camp inmates of long standing there was one from our [transit] camp who had come with the former transport we knew nothing about till now and lost all trace of it. We thought he would inform us about the fate of those men, would

show us some trace from “the country of Yekes” [Germany]. But what does this man tell us! What does he have to say!? The heart trembles. It makes our hair stand on end. Listen to what he is saying, “My dears, we have passed the same road as you did [...] Those, who drove away in lorries, were led to death at once and those who went on foot also went to meet death--for some after a longer time of torture, for others after a shorter time.”

The journal recovered in March did not contain descriptions of Gradowski’s work as a Sonderkommando. In the Summer of 1945 a Pole found a second manuscript by Gradowski. He gave it to an Oswiecim native Chaim Walnerman, who took it with him to Israel, to publish it in the 1970s under the title *In the Heart of Hell* (I have been unable to trace a copy of this text within Canada). According to Nathan Cohen, the second manuscripts provides detailed descriptions of the murder of the inmates of the so-called family camp, and the incineration of their remains.

Remarkable as the discovery of Gradowski’s journal was, and the other gruesome discoveries the Soviet commission made, the Soviets chose not to use the camp as a major destination for foreign journalists. In August 1944, nothing much was happening on the front--in fact the Soviet armies had halted their advance in order to allow the Germans to crush the Warsaw uprising--and not only were many correspondents available to visit Maidanek, the concentration camp even provided a convenient decoy to detract western attention from the Soviet betrayal of the Polish underground army. Auschwitz was liberated just before the Yalta Conference. Exactly at the time that news of the liberation of Auschwitz reached Moscow, the allied leaders were gathered in the Crimea, and most western correspondents were there to cover the world-historical gathering. The moment the conference was over, they returned to the front to report on the enormous offensive which was to end with the conquest of Berlin. There was too much to cover, and the liberation of “another Maidanek” a couple of weeks

earlier was not merely “old news,” but also of considerable less interest than, for example, the conquest of the industrial area of Upper Silesia, the siege of Breslau, the surrender of Danzig, or the crossing of the Oder river.

Only in April, in the very last weeks of the war, did the concentration camps return to the frontpages of the press. With the liberation of Bergen-Belsen by British troops, and the liberation of Ohrdruf, Buchenwald and Dachau by the American army, for the first time large groups of western observers confronted the horrors of the camps, and within days pictures of mountains of emaciated corpses and starved inmates filled the newspapers and airwaves. The BBC program “War Report” aired on April 19 Richard Dimbleby’s report from Bergen-Belsen. “I picked my way over corpse after corpse in the gloom, until I heard one voice raised above the gentle undulating moaning. I found a girl, she was a living skeleton, impossible to gauge her age for she had practically no hair left, and her face was only a yellow parchment sheet with two holes in it for eyes. She was stretching out her stick of an arm and gasping something, it was “English, English, medicine, medicine,” and she was trying to cry but she hadn’t enough strength. And beyond her down the passage and in the hut there were the convulsive movements of dying people too weak to raise themselves from the floor. In the shade of some trees lay a great collection of bodies. I walked about them trying to count, there were perhaps 150 of them flung down on each other, all naked, all so thin that their yellow skin glistened like stretched rubber on their bones. Some of the poor starved creatures whose bodies were there looked so utterly unreal and inhuman that I could have imagined that they never lived at all. They were like polished skeletons, the skeletons that medical students like to play practical jokes with.”

“The British and Americans hailed the liberation of the camps as a proper and fitting capstone to their war effort,” Jon Bridgman wrote in his recent *The End of the Holocaust*. “From the very beginning they had

proclaimed that they were fighting against the evil of Naziism which if triumphed would usher in “a new Dark Age made more sinister by perverted science” [Churchill]. Liberation provided overwhelming evidence that the “New Dark Age” was no mere figure of speech. The deaths in battle of American and British soldiers were then invested with a kind of sanctity: after the opening of the camps who could say that they had died in vain?”

With the liberation of the western camps, the name Auschwitz became once more of interest. Many of the surviving inmates in Belsen and Buchenwald had arrived there relatively recently, having been evacuated in January from Auschwitz. As journalists began to interview the survivors, they heard again and again that Belsen and Buchenwald had not been the worst. “The worst camps were those at Auschwitz, in Silesia, and Lublin, Poland where many of Buchenwald residents had been at one time or another,” the American journalist Helen Kirkpatrick noted. A correspondent of the Polish Telegraph Agency, who had witnessed the liberation of Buchenwald, also cabled to his head office in London that, for all its apparent horrors, “Buchenwald is not among the worst of the concentration camps. It was a camp of slow death, of death by exhaustion, sickness and hunger.” And he quoted one of the liberated prisoners, who had also been an inmate in Auschwitz, that “by comparison with Oswiecim, Buchenwald was a paradise.” The American intelligence officer Saul K. Padover, who visited the camp shortly after liberation, recorded how he met among the prisoners a Polish high-school teacher from Kattowitz, located at some 30 miles from Auschwitz. “He had been through many camps, including the murder factory of Auschwitz(Oswiecim) where three million people, the majority of them Jewish men and women and children were gassed and then burned to death. The Pole, a Catholic, told it in a breaking voice, and as he talked he became hysterical and I had to put my hand on his shoulders to restrain him. “I saw them murder the

Jews. God Almighty, do you know what it means to see human beings burned to death? They were God's children, like us. God's children, like everybody, except the Germans."

On April 20, Radio Luxembourg's German-language "Story of the Day," prepared by a small group of German exiles serving the American army, carried an interview with an Auschwitz survivor who had been evacuated earlier that year first to Buchenwald and finally to in Ohrdruf. "Q.: "You were in the concentration camp Auschwitz?" A.: "Yes, I was in Auschwitz since June 30, 1944. Since then I was also for a shorter time in the concentration camps Buchenwald and Ohrdruf. I escaped with three comrades from Ohrdruf and was able to reach the American lines. Q.: "Can you tell us something more about Auschwitz?" A.: "Auschwitz was an extermination camp built by the Nazis. There between 12,000 and 20,000 people were killed on a daily basis." Q.: "Between 12,000 and 20,000?" A.: "Yes. One can say with certainty that the Nazis killed more people in Auschwitz and the other concentration camps than have fallen during this whole war at the frontlines." Q.: "Can you tell us how this terrible mass-extermiation took place?" A.: "Every day some transports arrived in Auschwitz, each of between 2,000 and 3,000 people. At their arrival they were divided into two groups: men and women. Each of these two groups was again subdivided into two. In the one group were those above 50 years old, and those who the SS doctors deemed to be unfit for work. In the other group were the younger and stronger people. Those who belonged to the group of over 50-year olds--and to this group also belonged the small children and mothers who did not want to be separated from their children --were immediately killed." Q.: "In what manner?" A.: "In Auschwitz were four enormous crematoria. Those condemned to death were led into these crematoria, had to undress themselves, and were gassed in a hall that was hermetically sealed. Then the corpses were incinerated in the same crematorium. The crematoria worked

day and night. During the day heavy clouds of smoke hang over the camp, and by night the flames of the crematoria gave the camp a sinister glare. One could not escape the smell of burnt flesh.”

The name “Auschwitz” turned up again and again. Members of the British Parliament, who had visited Buchenwald on invitation of General Eisenhower, were quoted in *The Times* of April, 28 that “[o]ne of the statements made to us most frequently by prisoners was that conditions in other camps, particularly those in Eastern Europe, were far worse than at Buchenwald.” “The worst camp of all was said by many to be at Auschwitz; these men all insisted on showing us their Auschwitz camp numbers, tattooed in blue on their left forearms.”

As the British Members of Parliament drafted their report, a special intelligence team of the Psychological Warfare Division of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces, headed by Lieutenant Albert G. Rosenberg, was busy interviewing former inmates in an effort to document the atrocities. They were assisted by a group of prisoners, headed by the Austrian journalist and economist Dr. Eugen Kogon. The team interviewed some 150 people, and gathered in the process a number of important testimonies about Auschwitz and other extermination camps in the East. It is important to note that, at the time that Rosenberg, Kogon and their colleagues took these testimonies, the Soviet commission had not yet published its results. One of witnesses was a fifteen-year old girl Janda Weiss, who had been deported to Birkenau a year earlier with a transport of 1,500 Jews from Theresienstadt. “Out of 1,500 people the camp doctor, SS Captain [Josef] Mengele, selected ninety-eight. I was among the “strong.” We immediately went into the camp; the rest of the family camp were gassed. In camp I became a helper in the kitchen. I visited the barracks of the Jewish work detail, which worked in the crematorium. These comrades told me about the horrors of the crematorium, where I would later work. After May 19 [1944] the Hungarian transports began arriving, with around 7,000 people daily. I will now describe the crematori-

ums and the transports. At the station 2,000 people got off the trains. They had to throw away all their luggage. Afterward the men and women were divided into two groups, at which the larger boys were assigned to the group with the men. Then the great devourer of Jews, Mengele, drove by in a car, seeking out the strongest from each transport. They numbered around thirty out of 2,000. The remainder were led away by SS Technical Sergeant Moll, the officer of the crematorium. The elderly were loaded onto dump trucks and then dumped into burning trenches while still alive. The remainder were led into the gas chambers. Meanwhile new transports were arriving. In front of the gas chamber was a dressing room. On its walls was written in all languages: "Put shoes into the cubbyholes and tie them together so you will not lose them. After the showers you will receive hot coffee." Here the poor victims undressed themselves and went into the chamber. There were three columns for the ventilators, through which the gas poured in. A special work detail with truncheons drove the people into the chamber. When the room was full, small children were thrown in through a window. Moll grabbed infants by their little legs and smashed their skulls against the wall. Then the gas was let into the chamber. The lungs of the victims slowly burst, and after three minutes a loud clamoring could be heard. Then the chamber was opened, and those who still showed signs of life were beaten to death. The prisoners of the special work details (*Sonderkommandos*) then pulled the corpses out, took their rings off, and cut their hair, which was gathered up, put in sacks, and shipped to factories. Then they arranged the corpses in piles of ten each. After Moll had counted them, they were taken to the ovens, or if the crematoriums were insufficient, thrown into fire trenches.... Once an Italian woman, a dancer, was brought to the crematorium. That drunken pig, the roll call officer Schillinger, ordered her to dance naked. She took advantage of a favorable moment, came near him, grabbed his pistol away from him, and shot him down. In the exchange of gunfire that followed, the SS won of course. Once Moll took a family of six. First he shot the youngest in the

presence of the rest, then he shot the older ones and finally the father and the mother. Thousands of women with shaved heads asked about their children and husbands. I lied to thousands of women, telling them that their loved ones were still alive, even though I knew very well that they were dead.”

The German Jew Walter Blass testified that Jews were not only subjected to selection on arrival. This procedure was also a regular occurrence for those imprisoned in the camp. “Selection--that was a terrifying word for every Jew in Auschwitz. It hung like the sword of Damocles over each Jew. All Jews who were injured at work or in bomb attacks, who had wounds (and how many flesh wounds there were!) or skin rashes, who had fever or malaria, who were afflicted by typhus, as well as the great number of undernourished, called “Muslims” [*Muselmänner*]-all, all of them, were murdered. Selections occurred at irregular intervals, sometimes after two or three months, then after four to five months, then again, as in January 1944, twice within two weeks. These last selections alone took from the men’s camps B II d in Birkenau 1,200 victims each, out of about 4,000 Jews, so around two-thirds of the Jewish prisoners were liquidated. At this time there were in Auschwitz and the immediate vicinity around thirty camps for men and two camps for women with varied number of prisoners. A total of 40 percent of the men and 60 to 70 percent of the women were murdered in January [1944]. If the SS doctor came with his staff, the cards had to be quickly altered (“non-Aryans” became “Aryans”). Jews had to undress completely and were quickly observed front to rear. Then, according to whim, they were sent to the right to record the prisoner number tattooed on the arm; that meant the death sentence. Or they were sent to the left, that is, back to the barracks; that meant a prolongation of life. When the “action” had been completed in the entire camp, those selected for death by gassing were transferred to the gassing barracks. There they were placed under especially strict guard, since they were “condemned to death.” Often they remained

there for two to three days, usually without food, since they were already considered to be “disposed of” [*abgesetzt*]. They remained in the throes of death, a death only these totally depraved Nazi beasts could think of.”

The interest in the camps generated by Belsen and Buchenwald and the various references appearing in the western press to Auschwitz offered the Polish government-in-exile a good opportunity to present the atrocities of Auschwitz to the western public. The first substantial report to appear after the liberation of Auschwitz was entitled “Polish Women in German Concentration Camps,” and it was published in the May 1, 1945 issue of the *Polish Fortnightly Review*. The article consisted of two eye-witness testimonies, some statistics, and a note on medical experiments in the women’s camp. The first testimony was entitled “An Eye-Witnesses’s Account of the Women’s Camp at Oswiecim-Brzezinka (Birkenau)--Autumn, 1943, to Spring, 1944,” and like all the other articles published in *The Polish Fortnightly Review*, it was anonymous. It is, however, clear that it was written shortly after the beginning of the Hungarian Action. “At the outset I want to say that the details given below are strictly true and authentic. They are not dictated by any desire for propaganda, by hatred, or by love of exaggeration. On the contrary, instead of making the picture more glaring, I shall try to tone it down, to make it more credible. For the reality I have to write about is so horrible that it is difficult to believe it. Yet it is reality, and believe my words as you would believe someone returned from the dead.” The report began with some figures. At the time the author escaped, the serial numbers of new inmates had gone up in the 80,000s, of whom some 65,000 had died. Most of the dead were Jewish women. Then the account discussed the conditions of work, the food, distinguishing marks, the camp administration, and a description of the physical lay-out of the camp itself. “Health and strength, honour and life--it is not sufficient to deprive the prisoners of these in order to consummate the work of dehumanizing them: the prisoners must be

robbed of their heart. Perhaps the greatest torment of a stay in the camp was the sight of the terrible tragedy of the Jews, which was open to all the camp to see. In Brzezinka there were six “chimneys,” or crematoria. They were never idle. Not an evening passes without the prisoners seeing flames leaping out of the broad chimneys, sometimes to a height of thirty feet. Not a day passes without heavy billows of smoke pouring from them. The cremating of the bodies of those who die in the camp is only a small part of the crematoria’s functions. They are intended for the living rather than the dead. And every day trains draw into the camp along the sideline bringing Jews from Bulgaria, Greece, Rumania, Hungary, Italy, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, Poland, and until recently, from Russia. The trains bring men, women and children, and old people. Ten per cent of the women in each train are sent to the camp are given a number tattooed on them, a star on their clothing, and the numbers of those in the camp are thus increased. The others are sent straight to the gas chamber. The scenes which take place there defy all powers of description. But as ten per cent of the transports are brought to the camp amount to over thirty thousand Jewish women, what is the total figure of the victims whom the crematoria have consumed? It is terrible to think, terrible to watch when lorries pass through the Lagerstrasse, carrying four thousand children under ten years of age (children from the ghetto in Terezin in Bohemia) to their death. Some of them are weeping and calling “mummy,” others were laughing at the passers by and waving their hands. Fifteen minutes later not one of them was left alive, and the gas-stupefied little bodies were burning in the horrible furnaces. But who will believe that this is true? Yet I swear that it was so, calling on the living and the dead as my witnesses.” The second account only dealt with the living conditions in Birkenau, and this was followed by a table showing the monthly gassing rate of registered inmates in the women’s camp for 1943. The average number was a little over 1,600 persons per month.

On May 6 units of the American army liberated a concentration camp in Ebensee, Austria. One of the inmates was the 43-year-old painter David Olère. Born in Warsaw, Olère had moved to Paris in 1923 where he found work making posters and designing film sets. Arrested in February 1943, he had been deported to Auschwitz on March 2 of that year. He was assigned to the Sonderkommando of crematorium 3. A fellow Sonderkommando Don Paisikovic recalled after the war that among the few Sonderkommando who were not gassed was “a Parisian Jew named ‘Oler.’” “He was an artist and during the whole time that I knew the commando, his only task was to do paintings for the SS. He was excused from all other work of the Sonderkommando. We knew that apart from the exceptions mentioned, all the detainees of the ex-Sonderkommando were gassed.” Olère lived in the attic of crematorium 3, and observed both the building and its operation.

After his liberation Olère returned home to Paris. There he began to draw his memories: over 50 sketches done in 1945 and 1946. These sketches remained unknown until they were first exhibited in 1976. They provide a very important visual record of the design and operation of the gas chamber and the incinerators of crematorium 3, made before information about that building was published. The first two architectural sketches that are of great importance are pen drawings dated 1945 and 1946, and are “cleaned up” versions of pencil sketches made in 1945. One of them, done in 1945, provides a plan of crematorium 3, the second, done in 1946, a section. The plan is a composite of the basement level with the underground undressing room and the gas chamber which jotted out beyond the footprint of the building (left), and the ground floor with the incineration room with the 15 cremation ovens, the chimney, incinerator for identity papers, the coke store, and the SS guard rooms. Arrows indicate the functional relationship between the various rooms from the undressing room (1) people went through the vestibule (2) to the gas chamber (3) to be killed. SS men overseeing the operation could enter the basement by a separate

stairway connecting to the yard(13). After the gassing Sonderkommando moved the bodies to the elevator (4)which ascended to open into the incineration room (5), where other Sonderkommando filled the 15 incineration muffles of the ovens (0). The coke was brought with a truck running on a rails from the coke store(11) to the back of the ovens (0).Through five underground flues the smoke left the ovens to;the massive chimney (7) Olère's plan is fully corroborated by the plans that were found by the Russians in the building of the Central Construction Office, and which will be discussed below. One detail of particular importance which cannot be found on the blueprints recovered from the Auschwitz building archive is the staggered arrangement of the four hollow wire-mesh columns (marked 10) in the gas chamber (marked 3) through which the Zyklon-B was inserted into the room. As we will see below, there are various eye-witness accounts of these hollow columns, but they do not appear in the original blueprints as they were only added to the building shortly before completion. Olère's staggered arrangement is confirmed by air photos of Birkenau taken by the Americans on August 25,1944, and can be explained by assuming that these wire-mesh columns were attached on the west side of the first and fifth structural column that supported the roof of the gas chamber, and on the east side of the third and seventh structural column.

The corresponding section, drawn in 1946,is a complex drawing that shows much information in an economical manner. At the underground level Olère depicted the undressing room to the west or left (marked A), with on the extreme left the staircase that provided the principal access to this space. As the undressing room was not equipped with a ventilation system built-in the walls, it was equipped with metal ventilation ducts that were suspended from the ceiling. Olère also depicts the benches and the clothing hooks. To the east or right of undressing room is the vestibule with the corpse elevator to the ground floor (C), and the gas chamber (D). In order to represent the

gas chamber, which projected outwards to the north of the building at the back, and would have been hidden by the vestibule, Olère defied convention and turned it 90° from a south-north to a west-east axis, so that it is depicted under the incineration room (which had no basement). The most important information contained in this part of the drawing are the four hollow wire-mesh columns(E). For the section of the incineration hall Olère turned the five triple-muffle ovens 180° so that the muffles are visible. Important details are also to forced-air blowers to the side of each furnace, and; the coal truck which supplied the back of the furnaces with coal, while the corpses were loaded on the front.

In a number of other sketches, Olère provided additional information about crematorium 3. One drawing from 1945 shows crematorium 3 from the outside, with people filing into the compound from the road along the tracks, moving towards the end of the undressing room. A second sketch, dated 1946, shows the interior of the undressing room, with the benches, hooks, and the ventilation system. A third drawing shows the interior of the gas chamber with Sonderkommando collecting gold teeth and the hair of the women. In the back is depicted one of the hollow wire-mesh columns. Finally a fourth drawing shows the incineration hall with at the back, the corpse elevator that connects the basement level to the ground floor. The information in all of these drawings were to be corroborated in the testimony of the Sonderkommando Henryk Tauber(see below)and the blueprints found in the Central Construction Office (see below). None of these drawings could have been made on the basis of published material, as it was simply not available at the time.

Two other drawings are of interest. One, dated 1945 shows bunker 2--a peasant cottage transformed into a gas chamber in 1942, taken out of commission in 1943, and brought back into operation during the Hungarian Action. It shows not only bunker 2, but also the undressing barrack in its correct position vis-a-vis the cottage. Of particular interest

is the small window in the side of the cottage with the heavy wooden shutter. This was the opening through which the SS introduced the Zyklon-B into the room. The same way of introducing the gas was adopted in crematoria 4 and 5, and not only the plans, elevations and photographs of the crematoria show these openings, but three of these shutters still survive, and are presently stored in the coke room of crematorium 1. Even in its details, Olère's drawing is supported by surviving material evidence.

The second drawing depicts the execution of women and children at the edge of an incineration pit behind crematorium 5. It shows, to the left, crematorium 5 depicted again archaeologically correct, with to the far end the higher shed with the incineration rooms with the two chimneys, and closer to the main scene the lower wing with the gas chambers. Olère depicted again one of the small windows with the heavy wooden shutters. Drawn from memory, the elevation of the gas chamber is not perfect: the short side contained in reality a door and two of these Zyklon-B insertion points. But in its essentials Olère's representation is correct: the crematorium was a higher shed with two chimneys to which was attached a lower wing with small highly placed windows closed with heavy shutters.

On the same day that the Americans liberated Olère, May 6, 1945, the Soviet State Extraordinary Commission for the Investigation of Fascist and Nazi Crimes issued its findings, which were made available to the press a day later by the Soviet News Agency Tass. The Soviet Embassy in Washington D.C. published the English version of the whole report on May 29, 1945 under the lengthy title "Statement of the Extraordinary State Committee For the Ascertaining and Investigation of Crimes Committed by the German-fascist Invaders and Their Associates On Crimes Committed by the German-fascist Invaders in the Oswiecim Death Camp." The report began with the statement that, on the basis of the interviews with the former inmates, study of German documents found, and inspection of the remains of the crematoria, the commis-

sion had come to the conclusion that “One: By execution, starvation, poisoning, and monstrous tortures, the Germans annihilated in Oswiecim camp more than four million citizens of the Soviet Union, Poland, France, Belgium, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary and other countries. Two: German professors and doctors conducted in the camp so-called medical experiments on living men, women and children. Three: In the degree of premeditation, technical organization, and mass scale and cruelty of murder, the Oswiecim camp leaves far behind all German camps known hitherto. The Oswiecim camp had gas chambers, a crematorium, and crematoria, surgical departments and laboratories--all designed for the monstrous annihilation of people. The Germans called the gas chambers “special purpose baths.” On the entrance to the “bath” was written “For Disinfection,” and at the exit “Entrance to the baths.” People earmarked for annihilation thus unsuspectingly entered the premises for disinfection, undressed and from there were herded into the special purpose bath--that is, into the gas chambers where they were wiped out by cyclone poison. Special hospitals, surgical wings, histological laboratories and other installations were established in the camp not to heal people, but to kill them. German professors and doctors carried out wholesale experiments on perfectly healthy men, women and children in these institutions. They conducted experiments in sterilizing women and castrating men and boys, in infecting large numbers of people with cancer, typhus and malaria, conducting observations upon them; they tested the action of poisons on them.”

Following these introductory paragraphs, the report presented the issues raised in greater detail. First of all it provided a short account of the development of the camp, in which it gave prominence to the role of the firm Topf & Sons, suppliers of incineration equipment. The report mentioned that the Soviets had recovered a large correspondence between Topf and the camp administration, and it printed two letters as evidence--letters which, in the translation from German to Russian,

and back to German, lost some of their original meaning. “ I.A. Topf & Sons Erfurt February 12, 1943. Central Construction SS and Police, Auschwitz (Oswiecim) Re: Crematoriums Two and Three of camp for war prisoners. We confirm receipt of your telegram of February 10 of the following content: We again confirm receipt of your order for five triple muffle furnaces, including two electric lifts for hoisting corpses and one temporary lift for corpses. Also ordered are a practical device for feeding coal, and a device for transporting ashes. You have to deliver complete installation for crematorium No.3. We expect you to take all steps for immediate shipment of all machines and parts. Installation must absolutely begin functioning on April 10,1943. I.A. Topf and Sons. No. 12, 115/42/er/na 2 With regard to the installation of two triple muffle ovens; one each for the “special purpose baths,” engineer Pruefer has proposed taking them from furnaces prepared for shipment to Mogilev. The head of the Service Section of the SS Economic Administration of the Central Department in Berlin was immediately notified of this and requested to issue further instruction. SS-Untersturmführer (S) Oswiecim, August 21, 1942.”

A page-long description followed of the gas chambers and incinerators. The report estimated that the Germans were able to kill and burn between 10,000 and 12,000 people per day--that is between 8,000 and 10,000 arriving deportees and between 2,000 and 3,000 inmates. It quoted surviving Sonderkommando Dragon and Tauber, and repeated the assertion that the crematoria could incinerate between 10,000 and 12,000 corpses per day.

The next parts of the report considered various issues: 1. the medical experiments; 2. the constant arrivals of transports from all over Europe --between three to five trains a day, each carrying between 1,500 and 3,000 deportees. The Germans selected from each train between 300 and 500 for work, and killed the remainder; 3. the exploitation of labour at IG Farben in such a way that people were completely expendable in a terrible “moving belt of death “; 4. the murder

of hundreds of thousands of children; 5. the liquidation of intellectuals and scientists from all over Europe. 6. the mass plunder of possessions of the deportees: the report included an accurate accounting of the remaining loot found in the camp--348,820 men's suits, 836,255 women's coats and dresses, 5,525 women's shoes, 38,000 men's shoes, 13,964 carpets and so on--apart from seven railway wagons filled with another 514,843 garments ready for shipment to Germany, and 293 bags with women's hair weighing 7,000 kilos, and having probably belonged to 140,000 women.

The penultimate section of the report dealt with the German attempt to obliterate the traces of their crimes by destroying all documents concerning the number of people put to death in the Auschwitz camp. Yet the commission determined, on the basis of the remains of the crematoria, the testimonies of prisoners and other witnesses, and various documents that millions of people were annihilated, poisoned and burned in Auschwitz. Most important in their determination of the number of victims was their assessment of the capacity of the crematoria. Crematorium 1, so it was estimated, had had a monthly incineration capacity of 9,000 corpses. Having been in operation for 24 months, it was assumed that it had had a burning capacity of 216,000 bodies. Crematoria 2 and 3 were estimated to each have had a monthly capacity of 90,000 corpses. As they had been in operation for 19 and 18 months, they would have been able to incinerate together a total of 3,330,000 corpses. Crematoria 4 and 5 were estimated at 45,000 bodies per month, and as they had been in function for 17 and 18 months, they had together over that time a cremation capacity of 1,575,000 bodies. In total the five crematoria would have been able to burn, at least in theory, 5,121,000 bodies. Added to that was an extra capacity provided by the pyres. "Making allowances for possible undercapacity operation of the crematoriums and stoppages, however, the Commission of technical experts established that during the existence of the Oswiecim camp the German executioners killed in it no less than four

million citizens of the USSR., Poland, France, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary, Holland, Belgium, and other countries.” The report ended with putting the blame squarely on the shoulders of the German government.

The Soviet investigation done by the Prosecution Office of the First Ukrainian Front had been short, and hurried, as the Army Group to which it belonged was at the time involved in heavy fighting: the conquest of Silesia, the siege of Breslau, and the final “Battle for Berlin” had a substantially higher priority than a forensic investigation in what quickly became the army rear. Yet, compared to the Polevoi account, the new report heralded an important step forward, and Polevoi’s description of an extermination machine, that consisted of an “electric conveyor belt, on which hundreds of people were simultaneously electrocuted, their bodies falling onto the slow moving conveyor belt which carried them to the top of the blast furnace where they fell in,” was relegated to the dustbin of history. In general, the description of the operation of the camp and the life of the inmates was to be confirmed by the more careful investigations of the ensuing years.

Yet the report contained one very monumental error: the assertion that at least four million people had been murdered at Auschwitz. This figure was based on what was an admittedly quick and crude calculation of the supposed incineration capacity of the crematoria. Yet there were also other factors that influenced this assessment. Most importantly of all, the forensic investigation in Auschwitz was done in the wake of the publication of the Maidanek report, and according to the latter the Germans had killed about 1.5 million people in Maidanek. As we have seen it would take two years before this figure was revised downward to 360,000 victims. In 1945 Maidanek provided the measurestick to estimate the number of victims of Auschwitz, and in every aspect the latter camp was considerably larger. The six completed compounds of Maidanek held 144 barracks; the main compounds of Birkenau held more than twice that number, to which could be added

the camp at Auschwitz I, the camp at Monowitz, and the many satellite camps. In Maidanek the crematorium had five ovens; the four crematoria in Birkenau had nine times as many. Given these statistics, the commission, without any substantial data about the number of transports that had arrived at the camp, was inclined to see the number of victims as a multiple of that of Maidanek.

The response to the revelation was limited. There were many other things on people's minds. In the West, the main news concerned the collapse and official surrender of the German Reich, the chaos everywhere, and the political re-arrangement of Europe. As far as the concentration camps were concerned, attention remained focussed on the camps liberated by the English and the Americans--most specifically Bergen Belsen and Dachau. While striking visual material from these camps and the deeply emotional observations of journalists and soldiers continued to remain directly available to the media, the English-language version of the Soviet report contained only one small picture showing a close-up of the bodies of Auschwitz victims.

While the media turned their backs to the camps to report on the issues of the day, serious forensic investigations at Auschwitz acquired momentum. The camp became one of the chief objects of study by the Polish Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland. The commission, fashioned after the model of the Soviet Extraordinary State Commission, was given responsibility for producing a full account of all the Nazi crimes in Poland. Judging its work by today's standards, one must admit that it tried to establish historical truth with remarkable scholarly professionalism and following due legal form. In the foreword to the publication of the first reports, the commission took justifiable pride in the fact that they had worked "according to the principles which are valid in all judicial proceedings--i.e. impartiality, proper caution in collecting evidence, and careful veri-

fication of witnesses 'statements.' As to the reports themselves, the commission stated that "only data of unquestioned evidential value were considered fit for publication."

The commission applied a great transparency of method, and a general willingness to state the limitations of knowledge. In the case of Treblinka the commission admitted that "an accurate calculation of the number of victims is at present impossible." "It will be remembered that Treblinka ceased its activities in the autumn of 1943, so that the German authorities had enough time to wipe the traces of their crimes. The most reliable method of counting the number of victims is by counting the number of trainloads. The figures based on the dimensions of the gas chambers give no guarantee whatever of accuracy, as we do not know, firstly, how often the gas chambers were used, and, secondly, the number of people who, on average, were gassed at any one time. In establishing the number of train-loads, the commission based its findings on the evidence given by witnesses, laying special stress on the statements of railway workers and on the railway records from Treblinka station, which are in the possession of the commission of enquiry." The commission established that between the middle of August 1942 and the middle of December 1942 at least one train arrived every day at the camp, and that the average number of wagons in those trains was 50. From the middle of December to the middle of May, 1943, the average was one train per week. As a result, "the total number of wagon-loads of victims from August 1, 1942 to May 15, 1943 may be taken, with some certainty, to have been 7,550." In the late summer of 1943 another 266 wagons arrived. Taking an average load of 100 persons per wagon, the Polish commission came to a "probable" figure of 731,600 victims. And they added that, taking into consideration the great caution with which the investigators assessed the number of train-loads and the average number of persons per wagon, this must be accepted as probable, that in actual fact the number of victims was even larger." They were right. Careful and methodic re-

search on the German liquidation of the Jewish communities in Poland, done in the years that followed, showed that in total 856,190 Jews were sent to Treblinka. Very few survived.

In Auschwitz the highly competent and scrupulous Judge Dr. Jan Sehn of the Cracow court led on behalf of the commission a very thorough, year-long forensic and historical investigation in Auschwitz. In this process he and his colleagues questioned and re-questioned many witnesses, amongst which the surviving Sonderkommandos Dragon and Tauber, who had already testified for the Soviet-Polish commission, and Alter Feinsilber (alias Stanislaw Jankowski), who had only been able to return to Poland after the Soviet-Polish commission had completed its work.

Jankowski was the first Sonderkommando to testify before Sehn's commission. On April 16 he was questioned in Cracow by Sehn's deputy, Edward Pechalski. Jankowski explained that he fought in Spain on the Republican side, and that after the fall of Barcelona he had crossed into France, where he had been interned. After the German invasion he escaped, ended up in Paris, where he was arrested as a Jew, interned in Drancy, to be deported to Auschwitz in March 1942. After an initial stay in Birkenau he was transferred to Auschwitz, where he worked in a carpentry shop. In November 1942 Jankowski was detailed to work in crematorium 1. At that time, the gas chamber of crematorium 1 was only sporadically used for killing people, having reverted back to its original function as a morgue. "The only gassing I knew about had taken place in November or December 1942. Over three hundred and ninety persons were then gassed, all of them Jews of various nationalities, employed in the Sonderkommando at Birkenau. The gassing took place in the Leichenhalle. I heard from people working in the crematorium that before that gassing several other actions of that kind had taken place in the same Leichenhalle and in several rooms in the crematorium. Thanks to my own observations I know the following details of the gassing of that Sonderkom-

mando. I was already employed in the crematorium at that time. We got the order to clear the Leichenhalle which was to be used for a larger transport. As there were many corpses collected in the mortuary at that time, we worked two days and two nights and cremated all corpses. I remember that after the mortuary had been cleared on Wednesday at about 11 a.m. Those three hundred and ninety odd from Birkenau were brought into the yard under a strong escort of SS men (two SS men for every five prisoners). We, Jews, were told to leave the mortuary and to go to the coke store. When we were permitted to return to the yard after some time, we found there only the clothes of those prisoners. Then we were ordered to pass to the Leichenhalle where we found the corpses. After writing down the camp numbers of the gassed prisoners we had to carry the corpses to the cremators.”

In July 1943 Jankowski was transferred to Birkenau, to join the squad of 120 prisoners that operated crematorium 5. According to Jankowski, crematoria 2 and 3 each had an incineration capacity of 2,500 corpses, while crematoria 4 and 5 could burn 1,500 each. “At first prisoners were brought to Birkenau from the Auschwitz station by cars. They were told at the station that those who were weak or unwell could get into cars and would be brought thus to the camp. Many people believed this and in many cases they were young and healthy. All those who had come by cars went to be gassed. Moreover, old people, pregnant women and children were selected in each transport and they were also gassed. Circa 50% of each transport went to be gassed. At that time transports of Greek Jews were arriving (about 50,000), transports of French Jews (every two weeks circa 1,000 persons from the famous camp in France), Belgians, Dutchmen (circa 15,000), Germans, Italians (circa 20,000), large transports of Slovakian and Polish Jews. I remember that one week only 35,000 Jews from Katowice, Bedzin and Sosnowiec arrived to be gassed. Also Jews from Cracow went to be gassed. The Jews from Theresienstadt did not go straight to gas chambers. They were, at first, put in the families’ camp

and were gassed precisely 6 months after their arrival. The first transport from Theresienstadt consisted of about 3,500 persons; all of them were gassed and cremated in the crematorium. Moreover, several less numerous groups of Poles, who were arrested charged with affiliation to political organizations, were gassed and cremated at Birkenau. I remember the cremating of a group of 250 persons, belonging to the Union of Armed Fighting, the leader of which was a woman, Ela, I did not learn her surname. I state that all these people were cremated without having been entered in the records. And so, too, all those who went straight to be gassed at Birkenau were not registered, both old people and women, children, above all, also all those who professed to be ill. The number of those who were not registered in the camp and who were cremated in the cremators at any rate surpassed many times the number of prisoners with camp numbers. Only those who were selected from the camp went to the cremators. The number of unregistered persons who were cremated amounts to several millions.”

Later in his deposition Jankowski came back to this issue. “I have to stress here that only persons destined to do various kinds of work were included in the registers of prisoners’ strength and were given camp numbers. No camp numbers were given and no registering was effected both in the cases of all those who went straight to the gas from transports and of those who for some considerations were not liquidated at once but, being beforehand destined for cremation, awaited their turn to come in special places of isolation.”

Jankowski also testified that he had witnessed the incident in which a female deportee killed *SS Oberscharführer* Schillenger--an event which, a few days later, Janda Weiss would describe in some detail in her deposition given in Buchenwald. According to Jankowski, the zenith of killing occurred during the Hungarian Action. “It was in July 1944, I should think, that the first transport of Hungarians had arrived. This was the first transport to be conveyed in vans as far as the crematoria, using the railway siding built expressly for that purpose. The unload-

ing ramp was situated opposite crematoria 2 and 3, more or less-halfway between camps C and D. At that time about 18,000 Hungarians were daily murdered at Birkenau. Circa 30% of the then arriving transports, which kept coming one after another all day long, were selected to be put in the camp. They were registered in series A and B. The rest were gassed and cremated in the crematoria ovens. If the number of persons to be gassed was not sufficiently large, they would be shot and burned in pits. It was a rule to use the gas chamber for groups of more than 200 persons, as it was not worth while to put the gas chamber in action for a smaller number of persons. It happened that some prisoners offered resistance when about to be shot at the pit or that children would cry and then Oberscharführer Moll would throw them alive into the flames of the pits. I was eye-witness of the following incidents: Moll told a naked woman to sit down on the corpses near the pit and while he himself shot prisoners and threw their bodies into the flaming pit he ordered her to jump about and sing. She did so, in the hope, of course, of thus saving her life, perhaps. When he had shot them all he also shot this woman and her corpse was cremated." Kankowski's statements provided a solid basis for Sehn's investigation. They were to be corroborated in the testimonies and confessions taken in the two years that followed.

On May 10 Sehn took the testimony of Dragon concerning the operation of Bunker 2, the gas chamber in the grove of birch forests that had been the site of most of the mass killings in the second half of 1942 and the first months of 1943. As we have seen earlier, Dragon became a Sonderkommando in December 1942, and he was put to work at Bunker 2 to haul the bodies of those killed from the gas chambers into the yard. "We were all given masks, and were led through the door into the cottage. Moll opened the door, and only then could we see that the cottage was full of naked corpses of both sexes and all ages. Moll ordered us to remove these corpses from the cottage through the door to the yard. We started work with four men carrying one body. This an-

noyed Moll. He rolled up his sleeves, and threw a body through the door into the yard. When, despite this example, we said we were incapable of doing that, he detailed two of us to carry each body. Once the corpses were in the yard, a dental technician, assisted by an SS man, pulled out the teeth A barber, also watched by an SS man, shaved off the hair....After having removed all the bodies from the cottage, we had to clean it thoroughly, wash the floor with water, spread it with sawdust, and whitewash the walls. The interior of the cottage was divided into four rooms by partition walls. One, in which one could house 1200 naked people, the second with a capacity of 700, the third of 400, and the fourth with a capacity of between 200 and 250." Dragon told how he was later transferred to Crematorium 5, where he worked in the garden, and was employed cutting lumber in the adjacent forest. During the Hungarian action he was once more employed to remove bodies from the gas chambers of Crematorium 5. These rooms, which were attached in an annex to the main building itself, resembled in many ways the arrangement of Bunker 2. Also the procedure was similar, with an SS throwing Zyklon B crystals through a little window located in the outer wall of the gas chambers. Only in this case the window had been created at such height that one needed a small ladder to reach it. After the gassing Moll opened the doors of the gas chambers. "We put on our gas masks and pulled the bodies out of the various rooms through a short corridor into the undressing room and from there, once more through a short corridor, to the ovens. In the first vestibule, the one with the entrance doors, the barbers shaved the heads, in the second the dentists removed the teeth. In front of the ovens we put the bodies on an iron stretcher, which then were inserted into the ovens by means of iron rolls fixed to the ovens. We put the bodies on the stretchers in such a way that the first was head first, and both other corpses were with their heads to the back. In each oven we put three bodies at a time. By the time the third was put in, the first already started to burn. I saw how the hands of the corpses lifted, and later also the feet. In general we had to hurry, however, and could not observe the

whole process of incineration. We had to hurry because, when the end of the burning corpses began to rise, we often got problems in inserting the third corpse. We handled the stretcher in such a way that two inmates lifted the side that was farthest away from the oven and one at the end that was inserted first into the oven. After we moved the stretcher in one of the inmates held the corpse back with a long iron pole. We called it a rake with its end turned. The two others then pulled the stretcher out from under the dead.” Cremation lasted for 15 to 20 minutes, and after that time they just opened the door and inserted new bodies. In a three month period during the summer of 1944 the ovens were worked in two shifts, one from 6.30 am to 6.30 pm, and one from 6.30 pm to 6.30 am.

Remains at the site corroborated Dragon’s account, and on orders of Jan Sehn the local engineer M.Nosal, himself an ex-inmate of the camp, drew up detailed drawings that showed the lay-out of Bunker 2, the site plan with the undressing barracks, Bunker 2, the tracks, and the four incineration pits.

Dragon was precise and reliable when he talked about what he had witnessed in person. But he proved less reliable as an accountant. When on 17 May he was asked about the total number of Jews killed in Auschwitz, he answered that he was unable to give a precise number. “I think the total number gassed in the two bunkers and the four crematoria exceeded 4 million.”

One week after examining Dragon, Sehn interrogated the 28-year old former Sonderkommando Henry Tauber. If Dragon had been able to provide evidence about Bunker 2 and crematoria 4 and 5, Tauber had worked in crematorium 2. Tauber was very hesitant to estimate how many people had been gassed. “At present, I am incapable of giving the exact number of all the people gassed and incinerated in the Krematorium and the pits. Some of the men working in the Krematorium noted individually and in secret the figures and the most dramatic events

concerning the gassed persons. These notes were buried in different places close to the Krematorien. Some were dug up during the stay of the Soviet Commission and the Soviets took them away.” Yet in the end he was prepared to state that, during the period that he worked the crematoria(February 1943 to October 1944), two million people had been gassed. And he added that “during my time in Auschwitz, I was able to talk to various prisoners who had worked in the Krematorien and the bunkers before my arrival. They told me that I was not among the first to do this work, and that before I came another 2 million people had already been gassed in Bunkers 1 and 2 and Krematorium 1.” And he concluded that,”adding up, the total number of people gassed in Auschwitz amounted to about 4 million.”

Distinguishing clearly between what he accepted on the basis of his own observations, and what he accepted on hearsay, Tauber showed himself a reliable witness. Indeed, his testimony proved very important: his very long, and very detailed account of the operation of crematorium 1, where he worked from early February 1943 until March 4, crematorium 2, and crematorium 4 is almost wholly corroborated by the German blueprints of the buildings. Because of its importance, I will print significant parts of Tauber’s deposition.

Tauber told that he arrived in Auschwitz on 19 January 1943, and initially he was billeted in sector B1b. At the beginning of February Tauber and 19 other inmates were transferred to the main camp to work in crematorium 1. After a pep talk by an SS man who told them that they better get accustomed to some unpleasant work, the group was brought to the “bunker” or the morgue/gas chamber filled with hundreds of corpses. They dragged these corpses to the furnace room. There they were instructed to load a truck that ran on rails with the corpses. “Its strong frame was in the form of a box, and to make it heavier we weighted it with stones and scrap metal. The upper part was extended by a metal slide over two meters long. We put five corpses on this: first we put two with the legs towards the furnace and

the belly upwards, then two more the other way round but still with the belly upwards, and finally we put the fifth one with the legs towards the furnace and the back upwards. The arms of this last one hung down and seemed to embrace the other bodies below. The weight of such a load sometimes exceeded that of the ballast, and in order to prevent the trolley from tipping up and spilling the corpses we had to support the slide by slipping a plank underneath it. Once the slide was loaded, we pushed it into the muffle. Once the corpses were introduced into the furnace, we held them there by means of a metal box that slid on top of the charging slide, while other prisoners pulled the trolley back, leaving the corpses behind. There was a handle at the end of the slide for gripping and pulling back the sliding box. Then we closed the door. In crematorium 1, there were three, two-muffle furnaces, as I have already mentioned. Each muffle could incinerate five human bodies. Thirty corpses could be incinerated at the same time in this crematorium. At the time when I was working there, the incineration of such a charge took up to an hour and a half, because they were the bodies of very thin people, real skeletons, which burned very slowly. I know from the experience gained by observing cremation in Krematorien 2 and 3 that the bodies of fat people burn very much faster. The process of incineration is accelerated by the combustion of human fat which thus produces additional heat.”

Tauber went on to describe the lay-out of crematorium 1 in early 1943. At the back of the incineration room were a coke storage room and a store for urns. On inspection of the building in 1945, Tauber noted that the arrangement had changed: the door that connected in 1945 the “bunker” (morgue/gas chamber) and the furnace room had obviously been a new addition. “When I was working in crematorium 1, that door did not exist.” The only entrance to the furnace room had been through the vestibule. That same vestibule gave access to a store room, which at times was used as an undressing room. “The men from small transports, brought by truck, used to undress there. When I was working at

crematorium 1, they were shot in the bunker of the crematorium (the part of the building where they gassed people known as the “bunker”). Such transports arrived once or twice a week and comprised 30 to 40 people. They were of different nationalities. During the executions, we, the members of the *Sonderkommando* were shut up in the coke store. Then we would find the bodies of the shot people in the bunker. All the corpses had a firearm wound in the neck. The executions were always carried out by the same SS man from the Political Section, accompanied by another SS from the same Section who made out the death certificates for those shot.” Tauber told how access to the “bunker” was through a second room that opened to the vestibule. As the longer-serving members of the *Sonderkommando* told him, this “bunker” had been previously been used for gassing people, but when Tauber worked in crematorium 1 he only witnessed shootings in that space.

One of the odd things Tauber noted that while he was at work in crematorium 1, his group was actually designated “*Kommando Krematorium II*.” On March 4 everything became clear, when the whole group was sent to Birkenau to operate crematorium 2. “We had been sent there for one month’s practical training in crematorium 1 in order to prepare us for working in crematorium 2.” “Crematorium 2 had a basement where there was an undressing room and a bunker, or in other words a gas chamber (Leichenkeller/corpse cellar). To go from one cellar to the other, there was a corridor in which there came from the exterior a (double) stairway and a slide for throwing the bodies that were brought to the camp to be incinerated in the crematorium. People went through the door of the undressing room into the corridor, then from there through a door on the right into the gas chamber. A second stairway running from the grounds of the crematorium gave access to the corridor. To the left of this stairway, in the corner, there was a little room where hair, spectacles and other effects were stored. On the right there was another small room used as a store for cans of Zyklon-B. In the right corner of the corridor, on the wall facing the door from the

undressing room, there was a lift to transport the corpses. People went from the crematorium yard to the undressing room via a stairway, surrounded by iron rails. Over the door there was a sign with the inscription "*Zum Baden und Desinfektion*" (to bath and disinfection), written in several languages. In the undressing room, there were wooden benches and numbered clothes hooks along the walls. There were no windows and the lights were on all the time. The undressing room also had water taps and drains for the waste water. From the undressing room people went into the corridor through a door above which was hung a sign marked "*Zum Bade*", repeated in several languages. I remember the [Russian] word "*banya*" was there too. From the corridor they went through the door on the right into the gas chamber. It was a wooden door, made of two layers of short pieces of wood arranged like parquet. Between these layers there was a single sheet of material sealing the edges of the door and the rabbets of the frame were also fitted with sealing strips of felt. At about head height for an average man this door had a round glass peephole. On the other side of the door, i.e. on the gas chamber side, this opening was protected by a hemispherical grid. This grid was fitted because the people in the gas chamber, feeling they were going to die, used to break the glass of the peep-hole. But the grid still did not provide sufficient protection and similar incidents recurred. The opening was blocked with a piece of metal or wood. The people going to be gassed and those in the gas chamber damaged the electrical installations, tearing the cables out and damaging the ventilation equipment. The door was closed hermetically from the corridor side by means of iron bars which were screwed tight. The roof of the gas chamber was supported by concrete pillars running down the middle of its length. On either side of these pillars there were four others, two on each side. The sides of these pillars, which went up through the roof, were of heavy wire mesh. Inside this grid, there was another finer mesh and inside that a third of very fine mesh. Inside this last mesh cage there was a removable can that was pulled out with a wire to recover the pellets from which the gas had evaporated. Be-

sides that, in the gas chamber there were electric wires running along the two sides of the main beam supported by the central concrete pillars. The ventilation was installed in the walls of the gas chamber. Communication between the room and the ventilation installation proper was through small holes along the top and bottom of the side walls. The lower openings were protected by a kind of muzzle, the upper ones by whitewashed perforated metal plates. The ventilation system of the gas chamber was coupled to the ventilation ducts installed in the undressing room. This ventilation system, which also served the dissection room, was driven by electric motors in the roof space of the crematorium. The water tap was in the corridor and a rubber hose was run from it to wash the floor of the gas chamber. At the end of 1943, the gas chamber was divided in two by a brick wall to make it possible to gas smaller transports. In the dividing wall there was a door identical to that between the corridor and the original gas chamber. Small transports were gassed in the chamber furthest from the entrance from the corridor. The undressing room and the gas chamber were covered first with a concrete slab then with a layer of soil sown with grass. There were four small chimneys, the openings through which the gas was thrown in, that rose above the gas chamber. These openings were closed by concrete covers with two handles. Over the undressing room, the ground was higher than the level of the yard and perfectly flat. The ventilation ducts led to the pipes and the chimneys located in the part of the building above the corridor and undressing room. I would point out that at first the undressing room had neither benches nor clothes hooks and there were no showers in the gas chamber. These fittings were not installed until autumn 1943 in order to camouflage the undressing room and gas chamber as a bathing and disinfestation facility. The showers were fitted to small blocks of wood sealed into the concrete roof of the gas chamber. There were no pipes connected to these showers, from which no water ever flowed. As I have already said, there was a lift in the corridor or rather a goods hoist. A temporary hoist was installed pending delivery of the electric lift to carry the

corpses to the ground floor.” It is important to note that Tauber’s description of the basement level of crematorium 2 is fully corroborated by the surviving blueprints of the crematorium. These will be discussed in greater detail in Part Three of this report.

Tauber also gave a detailed description of the ground floor--an account that is likewise confirmed by the architectural drawings. The lift, he told Sehn, had two exits at this level. One led to the autopsy rooms, the other into the large furnace hall with its five triple-muffle ovens. “It was possible to put five human corpses in each muffle, which was closed by an iron door bearing the inscription ‘Topf.’ Beneath each muffle, there was a space for a bin to collect the ashes, also closed by an iron door made by the same firm.” Behind the furnaces were the pits with the fire boxes and the coke storage. To the back of the incineration hall were rooms reserved for the SS, the chief capo, and the doctor. “A stairway led up to the roof space, where there was a dormitory for the men working in the *Sonderkommando* and, at the end, the electric motors for the lift and the ventilation system.” “Facing the entrance gate to the crematorium grounds, in the centre of the building, was a wing in which rubbish was burnt in an incinerator. It was called “*Müllverbrennung*.” It was separate, reached by going down a stairway. It was surrounded by an iron platform and was coal fired. The entrance to the waste incinerator wing faced the crematorium access gate. This wing had, in addition to its entrance door with a transom window over it, two windows, one on the right and one on the left of the entrance. In the left corner of the entrance, there was an opening through which, from a walled-off area on the outside, the objects to be burned were passed inside. The incineration hearth for these things was to the left of the entrance and the firebox on the right. I would point out that it was in this particular furnace that the documents of the Political Section of the camp were always burned. From time to time, the SS would bring whole truckloads of papers, documents and files that had to be burned under their control. During the incineration of these papers, I

noticed great stacks of records of dead people and death notices. We were not able to take any of these documents because we were operating under the close and direct surveillance of the SS. Behind the waste incinerator, at the end of the wing, was a chimney for all the cremation furnaces and the incinerator. At first, there were around this chimney three electric motors used for the draught. Because of the heat given off and the proximity of the incinerator, these motors often broke down. There was even a fire on one occasion. Because of these problems, they were later removed and the smoke flues of the cremation furnaces were connected directly to the chimney. A door allowed passage between the waste incinerator wing and the part where the chimney was. This part being slightly higher, it was reached by a few steps. After the motors were removed, some wash basins for the Sonderkommando were installed next to the chimney....In the roof space above the waste incinerator wing, the hair cut from the victims was dried, tossed and put in sacks which were subsequently taken away by truck.”

Tauber continued with a very detailed account of the incineration procedure “As I have already said, there were five furnaces in crematorium 2, each with three muffles for cremating the corpses and heated by two coke-fired hearths. The fire flues of these hearths came out above the ash boxes of the two side muffles. Thus the flames went first round the two side muffles then heated the centre one, from where the combustion gases were led out below the furnace, between the two firing hearths. Thanks to this arrangement, the incineration process for the corpses in the side muffles differed from that of the centre muffle. The corpses of “*Müselmanns*” or of wasted people with no fat burned rapidly in the side muffles and slowly in the centre one. Conversely, the corpses of people gassed directly on arrival, not being wasted, burned better in the centre muffle. During the incineration of such corpses, we used the coke only to light the fire of the furnace initially, for fatty corpses burned of their own accord thanks to the combustion of the body fat. On occasion, when coke was in short supply, we would put some straw and wood in the ash bins under the muffles, and once the

fat of the corpse began to burn the other corpses would catch light themselves. There were no iron components inside the muffle. The bars were of chamotte, for iron would have melted in the furnace, which reached 1,000 to 1,200° Celsius. These chamotte bars were arranged crosswise. The dimensions of the door and the opening of the muffles were smaller than the inside of the muffle itself, which was 2 meters long, 80 centimeters wide and about 1 meter high. Generally speaking, we burned 4 or 5 corpses at a time in one muffle, but sometimes we charged a greater number of corpses. It was possible to charge up to 8 “*Müselmanns*.” Such big charges were incinerated without the knowledge of the head of the crematorium during air raid warnings in order to attract the attention of airmen by having a bigger fire emerging from the chimney. We imagined that in that way it might be possible to change our fate. The iron components, in particular fire bars, still to be found in the camp, were from the fireboxes. Crematorium 2 had fire bars of heavy angle iron. Crematoria 4 and 5 were fitted with fire bars in the form of a lance, or rather were like swords with handles.” After the description of the installation, Tauber recalled how on the first day, 4 March, they operated the ovens in the presence of observers from the Political Section, representatives of the Berlin headquarters, and engineers of Topf. For this occasion, the Political department had taken care to provide 45 bodies of well-fed victims recently killed in Bunker 2. “Via the lift and the door leading to the furnace room, we took out the bodies and placed them two or three at a time on trolleys of the type I described for crematorium 1 and charged them into the different muffles. As soon as all the muffles of the five furnaces had been charged, the members of the commission began to observe the operation, watch in hand. They opened the muffle doors, looked at their watches, expressed surprise at the slowness of the cremation process. In view of the fact that the furnaces were not yet hot enough, even though we had been firing them since the morning, and because they were brand new, the incineration of this charge took about 40 minutes.” Tauber went on to explain that later on incineration

became more efficient, and they could incinerate two loads per hour. In fact, the Sonderkommando tried to overload the muffles, because this would allow them some free time. "According to the regulations, we were supposed to charge the muffles every half hour. Ober Capo August explained to us that, according to the calculations and plans for this crematorium, 5 to 7 minutes was allowed to burn one corpse in a muffle. In principle, he did not let us put more than three corpses in one muffle. Because with that quantity we were obliged to work without interruption, for as soon as the last muffle was charged, the contents of the first had been consumed. In order to be able to take a pause during the work, we would charge 4 or 5 corpses in each muffle. The incineration of such a charge took longer, and after charging the last muffle, we had few minutes' break until the first one was again available. We took advantage of this free time to wash the floor of the furnace room, as a result of which the air became a little cooler." After this first incineration, the Sonderkommando kept the fires burning, but there were no corpses to burn. "About mid-March 1943, one evening after work, *Hauptscharführer* Hirsch, in charge of the Krematorien at that time, came and ordered us to stay in the crematorium because there was some work for us. At nightfall, trucks arrived carrying people of both sexes and all ages. Among them there were old men, women, and many children. The trucks ran back and forth for an hour between the station and the camp, bringing more and more people. As soon as the trucks began to arrive, we, the *Sonderkommando*, were shut up in a room located at the back where, as I said in my description of the crematorium, the doctors who carried out the autopsies were to be housed. From this room, we could hear the people emerging from the trucks weeping and shouting. They were herded towards a hut erected perpendicular to the crematorium building, towards the entrance gate of crematorium II. The people entered through the door facing the gate and went down by the stairway to the right of the waste incinerator wing. At that time, this hut served as an undressing room. It was used for this purpose only for a week or so, then it was dismantled. After

this hut was removed, the people were herded towards the basement area of the crematorium via a stairway leading to the underground undressing room, already described. After we had waited for two hours, we were let out and ordered to go to the gas chamber. We found heaps of naked bodies, doubled up. They were pinkish, and in places red. Some were covered with greenish marks and saliva ran from their mouths. Others were bleeding from the nose. There was excrement on many of them. I remember that a great number had their eyes open and were hanging on to one another. The bodies were most crushed together round the door. By contrast, there were less around the wire mesh columns. The location of the bodies indicated that the people had tried to get away from the columns and get to the door. It was very hot in the gas chamber and so suffocating as to be unbearable. Later on, we became convinced that many people died of suffocation, due to lack of air, just before the gassing. They fell to the floor and were trampled on by the others. They were not sitting, like the majority, but stretched out on the floor, under the others. It was obvious that they had succumbed first and that they had been trampled on. Once the people were in the gas chamber, the door was closed and the air was pumped out. The gas chamber ventilation could work in this way, thanks to a system that could both extract and blow.” Tauber recorded that the *Sonderkommandos* wore gas masks when removing the bodies to the corridor, where a barber cut off the women’s hair before the corpses were loaded on the lift for transport to the ground floor. There two dentists pulled out the gold fillings and false teeth. “They also removed the rings and earrings. The teeth were thrown into a box marked “*Zahnarztstation*.” As for the jewels, they were put into another box with no label other than a number. The dentists, recruited from among the prisoners, looked into all the mouths except those of the children. When the jaws were too tightly clamped, they pulled them apart with the pincers used to extract the teeth. The SS carefully checked the work of the dentists, always being present. From time to time they would stop a load of corpses ready for charging into the fur-

nace and already operated on by the dentists, in order to check the mouths. They occasionally found a forgotten gold tooth. Such carelessness was considered to be sabotage, and the culprit was burned alive in the furnace. I witnessed such a thing myself. A dentist, a French Jew, was burned in this way in crematorium 5. He fought and cried, but there were several SS and they threw themselves on him, overpowered him and put him in the furnace alive." Tauber also witnessed other forms of punishments. One particularly horrifying incident occurred in August 1944 in crematorium 5. "When the shifts were changing over, they had found a gold watch and wedding ring on one of the labourers, a man Wolbrom called Lejb. This Jew, aged about twenty, was dark and had a number of one hundred thousand and something. All the Sonderkommando working in the crematorium were assembled, and before their eyes he was hung, with his hands tied behind his back, from an iron bar above the firing hearths. He remained in this position for about one hour, then after untying his hands and feet, they threw him in a cold crematorium furnace. Gasoline was poured into the lower ash bin [that of the firebox at the back of the furnace] and lit. The flames reached the muffle where this Lejb was imprisoned. A few minutes later, they opened the door and the condemned man emerged and ran off, covered in burns. He was ordered to run round the yard shouting that he was a thief. Finally, he had to climb the barbed wire, which was not electrified during the day, and when he was at the top, the head of the crematoriums Moll, first name Otto, killed him with a shot. Another time, the SS chased a prisoner who was not working fast enough into a pit near the crematorium that was full of boiling human fat. At that time, the corpses were incinerated in open air pits, from which the fat flowed in to a separate reservoir, dug in the ground. This fat was poured over the corpses to accelerate their combustion. This poor devil was pulled out of the fat still alive and then shot." Tauber worked in crematorium 2 until mid-April, incinerating the remains of

Greek, French and Dutch convoys. "I cannot say how many people were gassed during this period. We worked in two shifts, a day shift and a night shift. On average, we incinerated 2500 corpses a day."

Tauber was a careful witness, clearly distinguishing between what he had seen himself, and what not. At this time he did not witness how the people were herded into the undressing room and from there into the gas chamber because, when they arrived at the crematorium, all but two of the Sonderkommando were locked up in the coke storage room--the remaining two were in the furnace room keeping the fires going. Finally he was detailed to that job, and this allowed him to witness the outside of the gassing procedure. "Through the window of the incineration room, I observed how the Zyklon was poured into the gas chamber. Each transport was followed by a vehicle with Red Cross markings which entered the yard of the crematorium, carrying the camp doctor, Mengele, accompanied by *Rottenführer* Scheimetz. They took the cans of Zyklon from the car and put them beside the small chimneys used to introduce the Zyklon into the gas chamber. There, Scheimetz opened them with a special cold chisel and a hammer, then poured the contents into the gas chamber. Then he closed the orifice with a concrete cover. As there were four similar chimneys. Scheimetz poured into each the contents of one of the smallest cans of Zyklon, which had yellow labels pasted right round them. Before opening the cans, Scheimetz put on a gasmask which he wore while opening the cans and pouring in the product. There were also other SS who performed this operation, but I have forgotten their names. They were specially designated for it and belonged to the "*Gesundheitswesen*." A camp doctor was present at each gassing. If I have mentioned Mengele, that is because I met him very often during my work. In addition to him, there were other doctors present during the gassings, like König, Thilo and a young, tall, slight doctor whose name I do not recall." Unlike the practice of crematorium 1, the Sonderkommandos operating crematorium 2 soon abandoned using the trolleys for transporting and

inserting the corpses into the muffles. They were replaced by metal stretchers. They were loaded according to procedure. "The procedure was to put the first corpse with the feet towards the muffle, back down and face up. Then, a second corpse was placed on top, again face up, but head towards the muffle. This method was used so that the legs of the upper corpse blocked that below and did not get in the way when the corpses were introduced into the furnace. Two prisoners loaded the stretchers. One end of the stretcher was put in front of the muffle, below the bar, alongside which stood two prisoners. While the corpses were being loaded on the stretcher, one of these opened the door of the muffle and the other positioned the rollers. Then, they lifted the stretcher and put it on the rollers, while a fifth prisoner, positioned at the handles at the other end of the stretcher, lifted it at the same time as them and pushed it into the muffle. As soon as the corpses were inside, a sixth prisoner held them there with a fire iron while the fifth withdrew the stretcher. The sixth man also had to cool the stretcher as it came out of the furnace by pouring over it water in which soap had been dissolved so that the next load of corpses would slide easily on the metal of the stretcher without sticking to it. The same procedure was used for the following charge destined to be incinerated in the same muffle. We had to work fast, for the corpses put in first soon started to burn, and their arms and legs rose up. If we were slow, it was difficult to charge the second pair of corpses. During the introduction of these other two corpses, I was able to observe the cremation process. It appeared that the trunk of the body rose and the arms stretched towards the sky before contracting. The same thing happened with the legs. The bodies became covered in blisters. Gassed bodies that had remained in the store room for two days were swollen, and in the fire their diaphragm burst and their intestines poured out. I was also able to observe how cremation proceeded while I was moving the corpses in the furnace with a fire iron, to accelerate the combustion. After each charging, the SS head of the Kommando checked to make sure that the furnaces were properly filled. We had to open each muffle for him and

at that moment we could see what was happening inside. We burned the bodies of children with those of adults. First we put in two adults, then as many children as the muffle could contain. It was sometimes as many as five or six. We used this procedure so that the bodies of children would not be placed directly on the grid bars, which were relatively far apart. In this way we prevented the children from falling through into the ash bin. Women's bodies burned much better and more quickly than those of men. For this reason, when a charge was burning badly, we would introduce a woman's body to accelerate the combustion."

Tauber remembered that the ovens needed little coles when in use for some time. "The furnaces burned thanks to the embers produced by the combustion of the corpses." "So, during the incineration of fat bodies, the fires were generally extinguished. When this type of body was charged into a hot furnace, fat immediately began to flow into the ash bin, where it caught fire and started the combustion of the body. When "*Müselmann*" were being cremated, it was necessary to constantly re-fuel the fireboxes. The shift boss wrote in a notebook the number of corpses incinerated per charge and the head of the *Kommando*, an SS man, checked these entries. After an entire transport had been cremated, he took away the notebook." Tauber continued his testimony with detailed reports on the various personalities that operated the crematoria.

In April 1943, he was transferred to the newly completed crematorium 4. It was of a different design. Instead of having five triple-muffle ovens, this crematorium had one double-four-muffle furnace. Like in the case of crematorium 2, Tauber's description of crematorium 4 is fully corroborated by a surviving blueprint. "The muffles were in pairs on each side. One firebox heated two muffles, which together made up half of a furnace. Each furnace had its own chimney. the undressing room and the gas chambers were installed on the ground floor, and the part of the building where they were located was not so high as the fur-

nace room so that it had the appearance of an annex to the crematorium. The boiler room was separated from the undressing room by a narrow corridor with four internal doors, allowing passage between the two rooms. The undressing room was illuminated by four small barred windows giving on the exterior. Another door led to a corridor whose entrance door opened onto the yard of the Krematorium. This entrance was flanked by two windows. Opposite the entrance door in the corridor, there was a door that opened on a room with a window which was the kitchen for the SS working in the crematorium, a kitchen where the dishes were prepared by members of the Sonderkommando. This room was next to that of the Sonderkommando prisoners....The third door in the corridor led to a corridor with a barred window and a door leading to the crematorium yard. From this corridor, the door on the right gave access to the first of the gaschambers and that opposite to the smallest of the chambers, communicating by another door with the biggest. This corridor, and the three following rooms were used as chambers for gassing people. All had gas-tight doors, and also windows that had bars on the inside and were closed by gas-tight shutters on the outside. These small windows, which could be reached by the hand of a man standing outside, were used for throwing the contents of cans of Zyklon-B into the gas chambers full of people. The gas chambers were about two meters high and had an electric lighting installation on the walls but they had no ventilation system, which obliged the Sonderkommando who were removing the bodies to wear gasmasks. The corpses were dragged along the floor into the access corridor, where the barbers cut off the hair and then into the undressing room, which also served, in this kind of crematorium, as a store room for the corpses. It was a big hall where the bodies were put while the gas chambers were being cleaned up. Then they were taken through the narrow corridor between the undressing room and the furnace room, where at each end a dentist tore out the gold teeth. In the furnace room, there was the room of the head of the Kommando and beside it another one for the rest of the SS. This was followed by a

narrow corridor, which originally led to the east yard of crematorium 4, the SS washroom and WC and the coke store. The building was entirely brick-built, with a wooden roof, covered with asbestos sheets and roofing felt. The yards of all the crematoriums were separated from the outside world by a thick enclosure of wicker and a hedge to which straw hurdles were attached. In the yard, there were watchtowers, where SS armed with machine guns kept guard. Furthermore, the whole area was surrounded by electrified barbed wire and the yards were lit by powerful lamps. In May 1944, the SS ordered us to dig five pits in the yard of crematorium 5, between the building itself and the drainage ditch, five pits which were used later for incinerating the corpses of gassed people from the Hungarian transports. Although a track for the trolleys was laid between the building and the pits, we never used it because the SS considered it to be inconvenient, so we had to drag the corpses straight from the gas chambers to the pits. At the same time, the old Bunker 2, with its incineration pits, was also made ready for re-use. I never worked there. It was realized that the pits burned the corpses better, so the crematoria closed down one after the other after the pits came into operation. The first to be stopped was crematorium 4, apparently in June 1944, then, in October 1944, I think, Krematorien 2 and 3. Crematorium 5 kept going until the Germans fled. Towards the end, it was used to incinerate the bodies of prisoners who died naturally or were executed. Gassing ceased in October 1944.” Tauber recalled how after the gassing ceased the Germans began to dismantle the equipment. “The parts were taken to the goods platform and loaded onto trains.”

Tauber’s testimony is, without doubt, the most important record of the extermination procedure taken immediately after the war. It is largely corroborated by the contemporary testimonies of Jankowski and Dragon, and by the later memoirs of Filip Müller. It is in almost all its details corroborated by the surviving blueprints of crematoria 1, 2 and 4. The only piece for which there is no corroboration in the archives

are the metal columns in the gas chamber of crematorium 2. Attached to the four structural concrete columns, which carried the roof, these columns allowed for the introduction of the Zyklon. They were retroactively fitted into the space, but do not appear on the blueprints which, with one exception, were all drawn before the decision was made to use *Leichenkeller 1* as a gas chamber. Yet their existence is independently confirmed in eye-witness accounts of the gas chamber, the drawings made by David Olère (see below), and the following testimony of Michael Kula, who manufactured these columns.

On 11 June Sehn interviewed the 32-year old former inmate Michael Kula. The Roman Catholic Kula, a mechanic by training and before his incarceration in Auschwitz a resident of the neighbouring town of Trzebinia, had been brought to the camp on 15 August 1940. In his testimony he gave an account how, exactly at the even of the first anniversary of his arrival, the Germans had initiated experiments to gas 250 inmates with Zyklon B in the basement of Block 11. He had been able to witness some of it, because he had the afternoon off on the 15th of August, in honour of the Feast of Assumption. The killing had taken two days, and only on the night of the 16th did the nurses of the lazaret retrieve the corpses to take them out of the camp. Kula had been able to witness this from a window of the dental station in Block 21. Right in front of Kula's observation point a cart loaded with corpses broke down, and many fell on the ground. "I saw then that they were greenish. The nurses told me that the corpses were cracked, and the skin came off. In many cases they had bitten fingers and necks."

Kula worked in the metal workshop of the camp, and had forged many of the metal pieces for the crematoria. For crematorium I, for example, he and his colleagues had made the trucks for inserting the corpses into the ovens, the tracks, and the iron framework that braced the brickwork of the ovens. Furthermore they had made "the supporting framework for the fire boxes and the ventilation pipes from the gas chamber. In addition to that we did small repairs in that room." Kula

gave a detailed account of the work done for the crematoria in Birkenau. This included the iron braces for all the ovens, all scaffolds, the tools for retrieving the corpses, the metalwork of the doors, as well as the hooks, shovels and all that was necessary to run the ovens and the pit incinerations. His most important testimony concerned the construction of the four wire-mesh columns in the large gas chambers of crematoria 2 and 3. As we have seen, Tauber had described them as three structures of ever finer mesh. Within the innermost column there was a removable can to pull after the gassing the Zyklon "crystals," that is the porous silica pellets that had absorbed the hydrocyanide. Kula, who had made these columns, provided some technical specifications. "Among other things the metal workshop made the false showers intended for the gas chambers, as well as the wire-mesh columns for the introduction of the contents of the tins with Zyklon into the gas chambers. These columns were around 3 meters high, and they were 70 centimetres square in plan. Such a column consisted of 6 wire screens which were built the one within the other. The inner screen was made from 3 millimeter thick wire, fastened to iron corner posts of 50 by 10 millimeters. Such iron corner posts were on each corner of the column and connected on the top in the same manner. The openings of the wire mesh were 45 millimeters square. The second screen was made in the same manner, and constructed within the column at 150 millimeters distance from the first. The openings of the second were around 25 millimeters square. In the corners these screens were connected to each other by iron posts. The third part of this column could be moved. It was an empty column with a square footprint of around 150 millimeters made of sheet zinc. At the top it was closed by a metal sheet, and at the bottom with a square base. At a distance of 25 millimetres from the sides of this columns were soldered tin corners supported by tin brackets. On these corners were mounted a thin mesh with openings of about one millimeter square. This mesh ended at the bottom of the column and from here ran in the [Verlaenderung] of the screen a tin frame until the top of the column.

The contents of a Zyklon tin were thrown from the top on the distributor, which allowed for an equal distribution of the Zyklon to all four sides of the column. After the evaporation of the gas the whole middle column was taken out. The ventilation system of the gas chamber was installed in the side walls of the gas chambers. The ventilation openings were hidden by zinc covers, provided with round openings.”

The wire mesh columns had been totally dismantled after the cessation of gassings and before the demolition of the crematoria, and no remains were found. Yet the dismantling crews had not been able to remove the ventilation system as they were a structural part of the walls, and consequently had overlooked to remove the zinc covers mentioned by Kula. They were dislocated when the demolition squads dynamited the gas chambers, but six of them were retrieved in the rubble of crematorium II and sent for analysis in the forensic laboratory in Cracow. The laboratory report noted that these were covered with a thin, white-coloured and strongly smelling deposit. The laboratory retrieved 7.2 grams of the deposit and dissolved it in water. Sulphuric acid was added to this solution, and the resulting gas was absorbed in an absorbent material. This was divided in two and subjected to two different tests, each of which revealed the presence of hydrocyanide.

Sehn and Dawidowski did not only study the remains of the bunkers and the crematoria, interview witnesses and send material for chemical analysis. They also studied the plans for the crematoria. These plans were part of the archive of the *Zentralbauleitung der Waffen SS und Polizei, Auschwitz O/S* (Central Building Authority of the Waffen-SS and the Police, Auschwitz in Upper Silesia), located in a compound of barracks at some distance from the main camp. When the Germans burned the archives of the camp Kommandantur prior to their evacuation from Auschwitz in January 1945, they overlooked the archive of the building office that had been closed some months earlier, and as a result they

were found more or less intact. The Soviet commission had paid scant attention to the massive amount of paperwork. It was up to the Poles to fully exploit the evidentiary value of this source.

Building at the concentration camp had been subject to normal civilian procedures as well as to the wartime superstructure of special permissions, and as a result multiple copies of many documents survive with the comments and signatures of the individual bureaucrats or businessmen to whom they were sent. The result was that Sehn and Dawidowski found a wide paper trail that included tens of thousands of different items such as plans, budgets, letters, telegrams, contractors' bids, financial negotiations, work site labour reports, requests for material allocations, and the minutes of meetings held in the Building Office among the architects themselves, with camp officials, and with high-ranking dignitaries from Berlin.

Comparing the results of the site visits with the blueprints and the other documentation that had been recovered, Roman Dawidowski wrote a (roughly) 10,000 word-long expert report on the technology of mass extermination in Auschwitz. Dawidowski's text was never published as a whole, but Sehn was to summarize its most important conclusions in the official account of the operation of the camp published by the Central Commission in 1946. The relative obscurity of the Dawidowski report is troublesome, as it erroneously suggests that the Poles did not do their homework in the post-war years. To be sure: today we know more about the construction of Auschwitz and the crematoria than Dawidowski. Yet, given the short time available to him and the general chaos in post-war Poland, it is still quite remarkable that most of his observations and conclusions have been confirmed over time.

Study of the archives quickly revealed that the creation of the crematoria and the gas chambers had been less straightforward than the language used by the Soviet experts and the journalists suggested: the development of Auschwitz as a "factory of death" had followed a twisted

course. Correspondence suggested, for example, that the Germans had an important change of mind in early 1942. Originally, they had planned to construct a large crematorium with five triple ovens in Auschwitz, and two small crematoria with two triple-muffle ovens in Birkenau. At the end of February the chief of construction in the SS, Hans Kammler, decided in consultation with the Auschwitz Zentralbauleitung to erect the large crematorium with the five triple incinerators in Birkenau. Dawidowski did not know the exact circumstances for this change in plan, but correctly inferred that it had to do with the adaptation of Birkenau into an extermination camp.

In studying the blueprints and the correspondence, Dawidowski discovered that the role of the crematoria in the Final Solution was veiled in innocuous-sounding code words. Whenever they were designated as extermination installations, the crematoria were referred to as *Spezialeinrichtungen* (special installations) for the *Sonderbehandlung* (special treatment) of inmates. The latter term referred to killing. Dawidowski also found that the architects only once made a direct reference to the underground gas chambers of crematoria 2 and 3 as *Vergasungskeller* (gassing cellar) and only once to the adjacent space as *Auskleideraum* (undressing room). In general they designated the gas chamber of crematoria 2 and 3 as *Leichenhalle* (morgue), *Halle* (hall), *Leichenkeller 1*, *L-Keller 1*, *Keller 1* while the undressing room was *Leichenkeller 2* or simply *Keller 2*. Given all the other evidence he had found, Dawidowski was not particularly fascinated by the document with the reference to the *Vergasungskeller*, and he did not find it necessary to quote it. Yet more recently negationists have argued that this document is the “only” evidence for the genocidal use of the crematoria, and have spent considerable effort to challenge the common sense interpretation that the word *Vergasungskeller* refers to a homicidal gas chamber. Therefore it is good to print the letter in full. “ 29 January 1943 To the Chief Amtsgruppe C, SS-Brigadeführer and General-Major of the Waffen-SS, Dr. Ing. Kammler. Subject: Crematorium II, condition

of the building. crematorium has been completed--save for minor constructional work--by the use of all the forces available, in spite of unspeakable difficulties, the severe cold, and in 24 hour shifts. The fires were started in the ovens in the presence of Senior Engineer Prüfer, representative of the contractors of the firm of Topf and Sons, Erfurt, and they are working most satisfactorily. The planks from the concrete ceiling of the cellar used as a mortuary could not yet be removed on account of the frost. This is, however, not very important, as the gassing cellar (*Vergasungskeller*) can be used for that purpose. The firm of Topf and Sons was not able to start deliveries of the installation in time for aeration and ventilation as had been requested by the Central Building Management because of restrictions on use of railroad cars. As soon as the installation for aeration and ventilation arrive, the installing will start so that the complete installation may be expected to be ready for use 20 February 1943. We enclose a report of the testing engineer of the firm Topf and Sons, Erfurt. The Chief of the Central Construction Management, Waffen-SS and Police Auschwitz, SS-Hauptsturmführer [Bischoff] Distribution: 1 – SS Ustuf Janisch and Kirschneck 1 – Filing office (file crematorium) Certified true copy: [signature] SS--Ustuf (F)” Cross-referencing this letter with blueprints of the basement of crematorium 2, Dawidowski concluded that the designation “*Vergasungskeller*” applied to morgue 1. He noted that the blueprints showed that the section of this morgue differed from that of morgue 2 in that the former was equipped with two built-in ventilation ducts on each side. Correspondence explained that these ventilation ducts were connected to a ventilator driven by 3.5 horsepower electric motor, and that the space was also equipped with a separate system for introducing warm air into it--an arrangement that made no sense if the space was used as a morgue (because corpses must be stored cold) but which made a lot of sense if the space was used as a Zyklon B gas chamber (because hydrogen cyanide, with a boiling point of around 27° Celsius, works much faster when used in a pre-heated space--an

issue Dawidowski was to discuss at length later in his report). Both eyewitness testimonies, blueprints and correspondence corroborated each other.

Not all of Dawidowski's observations were equally valid. For example, he stressed the fact that the location of the crematoria was determined by the desire to achieve maximum camouflage, both to the outside world, and to the victims, who had to be fooled until the very end. In fact, the issue of camouflage only seems to have become of concern after the crematoria were completed, and does not seem to have determined their original location. Dawidowski also showed an unusual interest in an issue that seems rather arcane in hindsight: the fact that both the design and the operation procedures of the crematoria in Birkenau violated the German Law on Cremation promulgated on May 15, 1934. Contrary to the stipulations of the law, which decreed that crematoria should be dignified in appearance, the Auschwitz crematoria had a factory-like appearance. More seriously than the question of aesthetics, the design of the Auschwitz incinerators violated the very important principle that only one corpse ought to be incinerated at a time, and that the ashes of the deceased ought to be identifiable and collected in an urn. The ovens designed by Topf did not heed the law: they had three (crematoria 2 and 3) or eight muffles (crematoria 4 and 5), and as up to five corpses could be incinerated in every muffle at the same time, it was unavoidable that the ashes were to be mixed. Finally, Dawidowski complained that the SS did not obey the law in its demand that the wishes of the persons or their immediate family as to burial or cremation were to be honoured." It is clear that the prisoners who had been given registration numbers, or the millions who were brought straight from the station to the gas chambers, were not asked before their murder if they wished that their corpses would be incinerated, or buried. And neither their family was asked, as this is stipu-

lated by the German law (§2).” Dawidowski’s outrage about this issue seems oddly misplaced, yet it does remind us of the fact that, even in 1945, the reality of the camps were still largely unimaginable.

On the basis of the documents Dawidowski reconstructed the development of the crematoria in its relation to the growth of the camp. The construction of crematorium 1 dated from 1940, and was equipped with two double muffle ovens. Dawidowski noted that the oven was initially heated by gasses created through the burning of coke. Once they had reached the ideal incineration temperature, the corpses were inserted. From that moment onwards the remains provided the most important fuel. He calculated that the original daily capacity of the crematorium was 200 corpses. After the addition of an third double-muffle oven in 1941 and the modification of the flues, the capacity rose to 350. This capacity was needed, as the mortality in the camp had risen at days up to 390 people per day. Causes of death were the general violence, starvation, exhaustion, and murder by means of phenol injections, and executions by rifle. According to Dawidowski, Zyklon B was first used as a killing agent in August 1941. Initially rooms in the basement of Block 11 were used as gas chambers. Later the SS adapted the morgue of the crematorium to that purpose.

When transports with Jews began to arrive in 1942, the gas chamber of the crematorium in Auschwitz proved inappropriate, and the SS transformed two buildings in Birkenau, the cottages of farmers Wiechuja and Harmata, into gas chambers. In his description of these extermination installations--bunkers 1 and 2--Dawidowski relied on Dragon’s testimony and the remains of the buildings, as he had not found any documents or blueprints describing the two buildings. In fact, none were ever found. It seems that the two cottages were transformed without much fuss.

From a description of the bunkers Dawidowski went to a lengthy description of the chemical properties of Zyklon B, and the unusual form the agent had been shipped to Auschwitz. Violating three decrees, the Zyklon B used in Auschwitz had not been provided with a warning agent. As the hydrogen cyanide contained in the Zyklon grains evaporated more easily as the environment was warmer, Dawidowski noted that the gas chambers were either pre-heated with portable stoves or, in the case of crematoria 2 and 3, by warm air generated by the ovens. And he presented the results of the laboratory analysis on the presence of hydrogen cyanide in the six zinc covers found in crematorium 2 and the bags of hair.

Initially the SS buried the corpses of those killed in the bunkers in large mass graves. On the basis of the testimony of Kula, Dawidowski came to the conclusion that in 1942 these corpses had begun to smell terribly. In response the SS ordered the opening of the mass graves and the destruction of the remains with the help of flame throwers. (As we have seen before, the War Refugee Report described this episode in great detail). This, so he argued, had triggered the decision to equip the camp with virtual “death factories”: crematoria equipped with gas chambers and powerful incinerators. “In this case negotiations were undertaken with the largest crematorium construction firm in Germany, J.A. Topf and Sons in Erfurt. This firm proposed projects and the SS headquarters in Berlin accepted them (letter of 3 .8.1942 No. 11450/Bi/Ha). The latter demanded the completion of the crematoria at the beginning of 1943 (letter of the Firm Topf of 22.12.1942 No. 20420/42, as well as letter from Berlin of 18.12.1942 No.Geh./42/Er/Z). In the course of 1942 the Firm Topf began with the construction of two very large crematoria, designated in Birkenau with numbers 2 and 3. At the same time that firm transported to Auschwitz, to ensure a faster progress of construction, parts of crematoria ovens intended by the SS for Mogilev, and built in Birkenau two more, somewhat smaller crematoria, designated with the numbers 4 and 5. All this haste explains

that the crematoria, built by the same firm, represented two different types, and well the type of the similar crematoria 2 and 3, and the second type of crematoria 4 and 5.” Later research, comparing the design and construction schedules of the various crematoria, was to show that the difference between the two types of crematoria derived from the fact that the type used in crematoria 2 and 3 was developed before the transformation of Auschwitz into an extermination camp, while crematoria 4 and 5 were designed from the very beginning to serve the Final Solution.

Dawidowski provided a detailed description of the technical equipment and interior arrangement of the crematoria, giving special attention to the killing installations, providing at every point cross references to the blueprints and the correspondence. Dawidowski noted that the plans for the basement of crematorium 2 provided for a room indicated as *Goldarb.[eitors]*(Goldworkers)--the space where the dental gold removed from the dead was melted. With the two adjacent spaces, the undressing room designated as morgue 2 and the gas chamber designated as morgue 1, “these spaces formed a unit that was carefully planned with the sole aim for the mass extermination of people using poison gas.” The gas chambers of crematoria 4 and 5 had been above ground, and of various sizes.

The report continued with a lengthy description of the killing procedures in the various crematoria, based on the testimonies of Dragon and Tauber. This was followed by Dawidowski’s calculations of the incineration capacity of the ovens. He assumed that each muffle could incinerate up to five corpses simultaneously, and that the average cremation duration was between 25 and 30 minutes. On the basis of these figures, he came to an hourly incineration rate of 175 corpses for crematoria 2 and 3, and a daily capacity of 2,500 persons for each crematorium--a reduction of 16 per cent from the figure estimated by the Soviet-Polish commission shortly after the liberation of the camp, but a figure that was a little over 60 per cent higher than the official ca-

capacity calculated by Topf of 1,440 corpses per day. Crematoria 4 and 5 had according to Dawidowski an incineration capacity of 1,500 corpses per day--a figure that was equal to the assumed capacity of the gas chambers, equal to the earlier Soviet estimate, and around double the official German figure of 768 corpses per day. During the Hungarian Action, however, actual incineration capacity exceeded, however, the total capacity of the crematoria of 8,000 corpses per day. Two incineration pits created in the spring of 1944 had a capacity of 5,000 corpses each, which brought the total incineration capacity at Birkenau to 18,000--a figure far below the (theoretically) maximum killing rate of 60,000 people in all the gas chambers.

In his conclusion, Dawidowski summarized the results: crematoria 2,3,4 and 5 were purposefully designed and built as extermination installations following an industrialized system of mass production. "One finds a planned sequence of living and dead material from the entrance to the undressing room to the ovens," and the factory also allowed for the production of "secondary products, such as dental gold." A final development in German perversity was the attempt to use the heat generated in the ovens to warm water. Throughout the history of the camp, the SS was engaged with an "intensive, yes even feverish attempts to improve the gassing action, as also to make it more efficient and more economically. In this effort local initiatives were in competition with the headquarters in Berlin."

Dawidowski's report was not without flaws, but it did mean an enormous step forwards compared to the Soviet report. Studying the remains of the crematoria in relation to the testimonies of Dragon, Tauber and Kula, and cross referencing these to the documents in the archive of the Central Building Office, the report put the history of the extermination installations at Auschwitz on a solid historical basis. If we may today quarrel with some of Dawidowski's conclusions as to the capacity of the crematoria or the motivations for the design changes between various crematoria types, we must also acknowledge that sub-

sequent discoveries or the confessions of Kommandant Höss, made after Dawidowski had done his work, largely corroborated the Dawidowski report.

The Central Commission accepted Dawidowski's conclusions, and integrated them in the first report on the history of the camp, written by Jan Sehn and published in 1946. For better and for worse, Sehn's history became the foundation of all subsequent histories of Auschwitz. "For better," because in what it describes, the text is both responsible and accurate. "For worse," because Sehn emplotted the history in such a manner that he subtly suppressed the contingency of the camp's history in order to stress an assumed universality of its impact. In other words, he gave an impetus to the formation of a myth.

I use the word *myth* in the sense that Barthes gave to it in his essay "Myth Today." Mythification, he argued, occurs when language empties a narrative of its historical contingency to fill it with an unchanging nature. "In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them simplicity of essences." The result is a "blissful clarity" in which there are no contradictions because statements of fact are interpreted as explanations; "things appear to mean something by themselves."

The beginning of Sehn's narrative stresses the fact of Auschwitz's isolation from the rest of the world. "The small, provincial Polish town of Oswiecim is situated far from the main railway centres and the more important lines of communication," Sehn claimed. It set the tone for a theme that was to continue all through the text: the Germans chose Oswiecim as a location for an extermination camp because the site offered isolation and camouflage. Yet, even more important, the site was unhealthy. "It is sufficient to look at a topographical map (Fig.2) to see that the place where Oswiecim is situated and the centre of the camp is like the bottom of a flat basin with no regular slope for draining away water. It is encircled by a series of fishponds, which permeate

the whole land with damp, mist, and mud. The earth at the bottom of the basin is impervious to water owing to its geological structure, (Fig. 3) consisting of a 60 to 80 metres thick layer of marl, at the bottom of the basin. The surface consisting of sand and pebbles is always muddy, due to its underlying substances. Besides, the quality of this stagnant water is very bad due to the rotting of organic substances which poison the air. It could be improved only by installing very expensive purifying works. For all these reasons Oswiecim and its surrounding [s] are not only damp but also abound with malaria and other diseases, which endanger man's life." The geological conditions of the site where the Germans chose to erect a concentration camp resembled that of the "unlimited, quaggy and damp moorland, dim with fog," at Dachau. This proved, Sehn argued," that the choice of Oswiecim for a place of punishment was not accidental." "Dachau became the topographical model for the Nazi places of execution. Such places as Dachau and Oswiecim, in the opinion of Prof. Romer, were avoided by life for thousands of years, as death kept watch there. The German authorities used the climate and geographical character of Oswiecim with premeditation in their criminal design."

Thus the town of Oswiecim was somehow cursed to host a German death camp, and the SS consciously acted to realize that destiny. Sehn saw therefore a direct causal link between geography, geology, and the creation of Birkenau, which he described in the following chapter entitled "'Sonderbehandlung' and 'sonderaktion.'" "To understand the proper character of the camps at Auschwitz and Birkenau, attention must be drawn to the following facts: In the autumn of 1941 on the moor of Brzezinka (Birkenau) 3 km. Away from the base camp, the construction of a special camp was proposed, ostensibly for prisoners of war (kriegsgefangenenlager--Official abbreviation K.G.L.) According to that the original plan of the Berlin Centre it was calculated to contain 200,000 prisoners (order of construction of Nov.1.And Dec. 16.1941--Assignment of credits and allotment of funds Jan 9th 1942)."

Sehn had no doubt that the original designation of Birkenau as a prisoner of war camp was mere camouflage to hide a more sinister purpose. One of the clues which led him to this conclusion was the fact that the building office created to design and oversee the construction of the camp was called *Sonderbauleitung* which was rather ominous as correspondence clearly stated that the camp was meant for the *Durchführung der Sonderbehandlung* ("to carry out special treatment.")--a purpose that was realized when the trains that started arriving were designated as Sondertransporte ("Special Transports") and when their passengers were led to a *Badeanstalt für Sonderaktion* (Bathing Establishment for Special Action). Sehn emphasized that all these terms that began with the adjective *sonder*(special) "were concealing the mass murder of millions of people, and that the special camp constructed for the carrying on of this Sonderbehandlung was already by assumption a huge extermination camp (Vernichtungslager)." "According to this assumption it grew in practice into the largest extermination camp, not only in Poland, but also in the whole of Europe, in which only those were left alive among the prisoners who were indispensable to the munition factories and other industrial establishments working for the Army and for the war at Auschwitz and in the whole of Silesia. The highest authorities of the IIIrd Reich as well as those who carried out orders on the spot at Auschwitz were conscious of the purpose of the camp, and did everything to enable this camp to fulfil completely its mission of extermination of the conquered nations of Europe with the Slav nations and the Jews in first order of importance. The only buildings calculated for long-lasting and constant use were the four big crematoria with gas-chambers, and the barracks for the SS-men who staffed the camp. The rest of the settlements, and particularly the huts for the prisoners, were destined from the beginning for the short and transitory existence in them of a constantly changing tide of prisoners."

Let there be no confusion: Birkenau became the largest extermination center in Europe. But does this mean that it was meant to become that center? Sehn felt the need to introduce from the very beginning of his narrative a sense of foreboding: Oswiecim had been a place avoided by life for thousands of years, and the fact that the building office that constructed Birkenau was called a *Sonderbauleitung* seemed to point to the camp's future use as a center of *Sonderbehandlung*. It is here, however, that Sehn's inexperience as a writer and a professional historian caught up with him. He fell in a trap that Sartre described in his philosophical novel *La Nausée* (1938): in narrative, unlike in life, the beginning always announces the end. "Nothing happens while you live. The scenery changes, people come in and go out, that's all. There are no beginnings. Days are tacked on days without rhyme or reason, an interminable, monotonous addition.... That's living. But everything changes when you tell about life; it's a change no one notices: the proof is that people talk about true stories. As if there could possibly be true stories; things happen one way and we tell about them in the opposite sense. You seem to start at the beginning: "It was a fine autumn evening in 1922. I was a notary's clerk in Marommès." And in reality you have started at the end. It was there, invisible and present, it is the one which gives to words the pomp and value of a beginning. "I was out walking, I had left the town without realizing it, I was thinking about my money troubles." This sentence, taken simply for what it is, means that the man was absorbed, morose, a hundred leagues from an adventure, exactly in the mood to let things happen without noticing them. But the end is there, transforming everything. For us, the man is already the hero of the story. His moroseness, his money troubles are much more precious than ours, they are all gilded by the light of future passions. And the story goes on in the reverse: instants have stopped piling themselves in a lighthearted way one on top of the other, they are snapped up by the end of the story which draws them and each one of them in turn, draws out the preceding instant: "It was night, the street was deserted." The phrase is cast out negligently, it seems su-

perfluous; but we do not let ourselves be caught and we put it aside: this is a piece of information whose value we shall subsequently appreciate. And we feel that the hero has lived all the details of this night like annunciations, promises, or even that he lived only those that were promises, blind and deaf to all that did not herald adventure. We forget that the future was not yet there; the man was walking in a night without forethought, a night which offered him a choice of dull rich prizes, and he did not make his choice. ”

A competent judge and experienced forensic researcher, Sehn was, at least in 1945-46, an amateur writer, and did not sufficiently realize that the ultimate transformation of Birkenau into an extermination camp was not a foregone conclusion when the camp was established as a prisoner of war camp. He did not negotiate the paradox that underlies every historical narrative and which Sartre and before him Robert Musil so brilliantly analyzed: that while in everyday life--even in Auschwitz--each moment unfolds with no certainty of outcome, “history” is based on a known conclusion that charges an otherwise tedious chronicle with portent and pregnancy. Yet, in criticizing Sehn, one must also remember that he wrote his account without the aid of the confessions of memoirs of Rudolf Höss, which only became available later in 1946 and 1947. Without any sources that provided a possibility to reconstruct the changing motivations of the SS in Auschwitz, the blueprints and correspondence of the Central Building Office *could* be plausibly interpreted as pointing to a unified development following an unchanging purpose --that is as long as one forgot the beginning of Dawidowski’s report that suggested a change of mind in the beginning of 1942, when Kammler decided to cancel two small incinerators in Birkenau, and build there a large crematorium originally planned for the main camp.

Whatever its flaws in describing the origin and development of the camp, Sehn's history of Auschwitz provided much useful information on the arrangement and administration of the camp, the housing conditions, the life and death of the prisoners, the medical experiments, the selections within the camp, and selections of Jews on arrival.

The report ended with a discussion, largely based on Dawidowski's forensic report, of the gas chambers, the crematoria, and the attempts to wipe out the traces of the crime. Sehn mentioned that after a first experimental gassings in Block 11, a gas chamber was created near crematorium 1, and after that, in the Fall of 1941, two peasants cottages in the Birkenau forest. "In the summer of 1942 it was decided to extend enormously gassing operations and to improve them technically, entrusting the construction of huge crematoria to the firm of J.A. Topf and Sons at Erfurt (ms. of Aug.3,1942, No.11450/42/Bi/H). This was done just after SS. Reichsfürer Himmler's visit of inspection. The construction began immediately, and in the early months of 1943 four huge modern crematoria were ready for the use of the camp authorities; their fundamental and essential part consisted of a set of gaschambers of a type unknown before. These crematoria were distinguished by the numbers 2, 3, 4 and 5. Crematoria 2 and 3 had underground areas, called on the construction drawing Nos. 932 and 933 of Jan. 28, *Leichenkeller* 1, and 2, both of which were intended for the gassing of human beings. Cellar 2 had an area of 400 sq. metres (480 sq. yards) and was 2.3 metres high. Cellar 1 had an area of 210 sq. metres and was 2.4 metres (7 ft.9 in.) high. In crematoria 4 and 5 chambers were built on the surface, each having an extent of 580 sq. metres (694 sq. yards), which were officially called Badeanstalt für Sonderaktion ("Baths for Special Action") (*Aktenvermerk* of Aug 21,1942, No. 12115/42). From the specifications of the central building board of Feb.19, May 6,1943 and Apr.6,1943 it appears that both cellar No.1 in crematoria 2 and 3 and the Badenanstalten in crematoria 4 and 5 had gas-tight doors with grated observation windows of un-

breakable 8 mm glass. The true purpose of all these rooms variously described is revealed by Bischoff's letter of Jan. 29, 1943, to the Chief of the Official Group C. Kammler, 22250/43, in which he called them gas-chambers (*Vergasungskeller*). "Sehn followed with a description of the gassing procedure. "After undressing they were driven through a corridor to the actual gas chamber(Leichenkeller 1), which had previously been heated with the aid of portable coke braziers. This heating was necessary for the better evaporation of the hydrogen cyanide. By beating them with rods and setting dogs on them about 2000 victims were packed into a space of 210 sq. metres (250 sq. yds.) From the ceiling of this chamber, the better to deceive the victims, hung imitation shower-bays, from which water never poured. After the gas-tight doors had been [c]losed the air was pumped out and through four special openings in the ceiling the contents of cans of cyclon, producing cyanide hydrogen gas, were poured in. The contents of the cans fell down a cylindrical shaft constructed of four corner pieces covered with wire mesh-work of varying density. In the case of the surface gas-chambers in crematoria 4 and 5, the contents of the cans of cyclon were poured in through openings in the side-walls."

Both the cruel regime and the gas chambers produced many corpses. Initially they were buried in mass graves, but as the War Refugee Board report had already described, the mass graves created an ecological problem. Following Dawidowski's assessment, Sehn argued that the ecological problems caused by the mass burials necessitated the construction of the four new crematoria. "The first pair (2 and 3) had 5 furnaces of three retorts each, heated by two halfgenerator fires. Crematoria 4 and 5 were constructed at a distance of about 750 metres (820 yards) from the two previously mentioned, and had twin furnaces of 8 retorts each, heated by two fires on either side. Together, therefore, the four new crematoria had 46 retorts, each with a capacity of 3-5 corpses. The burning of one retort load lasted about half an hour, and as the cleaning of the fireplaces took about an hour per day, so all the

four crematoria could burn about 12,000 corpses in 24 hours, which would give 4,380,000 a year.” It is unclear why Sehn chose to change Dawidowski’s assessment that the capacity of the four crematoria in Birkenau was 8,000 per day. Sehn’s calculations do not make sense: even if we assume a load of 5 corpses per muffle, and an incineration time of 30 minutes, and an operation period of 23 hours per day, we come to a capacity of “only” ($46 \times 5 \times 2 \times 23 =$) 10,580 corpses per day.

The report continued with how in the summer of 1944, during the Hungarian Action, even the crematoria could not cope, and how the practice of open-pit burning was reintroduced. It then went on to address the total number of victims. “On the basis of calculations made by experts of the Investigation Technical Commission under the guidance of Prof. Dawidowski it was stated during the inquiry that the installations for disposing of corpses in pits and crematoria could have burnt more than 5 million bodies during the period in which they were active. As is well known, the Soviet Legal and Medicinal Commission, which arrived at Auschwitz immediately after the flight of the Germans, has stated that the number of prisoners murdered exceeded 4,000,000.”

Finally Sehn dealt with the obliteration of the traces. The Germans did not only remove documents and killed prisoners who knew too much, but also destroyed the crematoria. “As early as May, 1944, the old crematorium at Auschwitz was transformed into an air-raid shelter. Crematorium 4 was burnt on Oct.7, 1944, during a fire which broke out when the members of the *Sonderkommando* tried to avoid being gassed. The technical installations at crematoria 2 and 3 were dismantled in November, 1944, and part of them sent up to the camp at Gross Rosen, and the buildings were blown up. Crematorium 5 was burnt and its walls blown up in the night of Jan.20, 1945.” In conclusion, Sehn reiterated once more that Auschwitz was an extermination camp which “already at its foundation was designed by the Nazi authorities as a place of execution for millions of people.” n=“337”>

Using the findings of the Central Commission and cross-referencing these with their own experiences, the Czech former inmates Ota Kraus and Erick Schön/Kulka published in 1946 their *Tovarna Na Smrt (Factory of Death)*. Both Kraus and Schön had been employed in Auschwitz as locksmiths, and as such they had been able to move throughout the camp. Their book was an in general careful and well-organized account of the operation of the camp, and the chapter entitled “Masinerie smrto” (“Machinery of Death”) calmly presented the terrible facts without recourse to histrionics.

Kraus and Kulka located the beginning of mass destruction by gas in the spring of 1942 with the killing of 700 Slovak Jews in crematorium 1. According to them, crematorium 1 was only an experimental killing station. Once the Germans had devised a workable method there, “work was started at Birkenau on the construction of four large crematoria complete with gas chambers.” On their completion, crematorium 1 was closed down. The program of extermination overtook, however, the schedule of the architects, and therefore the SS was forced to adopt a stop-gap solution and adapt two cottages into gas chambers. After a description of bunkers 1 and 2, Kraus and Kulka described the gassing operation, and the disposal of the corpses in mass graves. “After a few months, although the corpses were covered with chlorine, lime and earth, and intolerable stench began to hang around the entire neighbourhood. Deadly bacteria were found in springs and wells, and there was a severe danger of epidemics. To meet this problem, the Sonderkommando was increased in size. Day and night, working in two shifts, the prisoners in the squad dug up decaying corpses, took them away on narrow-gauge trucks and burnt them in heaps in the immediate vicinity. The work of exhuming and burning 50,000 corpses lasted almost till December 1942. After this experience the Nazis stopped burying their victims and cremated them instead. Such were the emergency methods used for destroying people at Birkenau in the

early days. They continued in use until February, 1943, when the crematoria were completed and brought into use--first Crematorium I, and then the others."

Kraus and Kulka stressed that these new crematoria were ultra-modern "factories of corpses." Their book reproduced the blueprints of the crematoria which, as they claimed, the inmate architect Vera Foltynova had removed from the architectural office in August 1944. Foltynova had given the plans to Kraus and Kulka, who in turn had been able to smuggle the plans out of the camp and send on their way to Czechoslovakia "because at that time we assumed that both the crematoria and ourselves would be liquidated as witnesses to German crimes." "At first sight the crematoria--one-storey buildings in the German style, with steep roofs, barred windows and dormer windows--presented the appearance of large bakeries. The space around them was enclosed by high tension barbed wire and was always well kept. The roads were sprayed with sand, and well-tended flowers bloomed in the beds on the lawn. The underground gas chambers, projecting some 50 cm. Above ground level, formed a grassy terrace. A person coming to the crematoria for the first time could have no idea what these industrial buildings were actually for. Crematoria I and II were close to the camp itself and were visible from all sides. Crematoria III and IV, on the other hand, were hidden in a little wood; tall pine trees and birches concealed the tragedies that befell millions. This place was called Brzezinka, from which the name Birkenau is derived."

Kraus and Kulka followed with a description of the interior arrangement of the basement of crematoria 2 and 3 (I and II in their numbering system). "At Crematoria I and II there were two underground rooms. The larger of these was an undressing room and was occasionally used as a mortuary; the other was a gas chamber. The white-washed undressing-room had square concrete pillars, about 4 meter apart. Along the walls and round the pillars there were benches, with coat-hooks surmounted by numbers. A pipe with a number of water

taps ran the entire length of one of the walls. There were notices in several languages: KEEP CALM! KEEP THIS PLACE CLEAN AND TIDY! And arrows pointing to the doors bearing the words: DISINFECTION BATH-ROOM The gas chamber was somewhat shorter than the undressing-room and looked like a communal bathroom. The showers in the roof, of course, never held water. Water taps were placed along the walls. Between the concrete pillars were two iron pillars, 30 cm x 30 cm, covered in thickly plaited wire. These pillars passed through the concrete ceiling to the grassy terrace mentioned above; here they terminated in airtight trap-doors into which the SS men fed the cyclon gas. The purpose of the plaited wire was to prevent any interference with the cyclon crystals. These pillars were a later addition to the gas chamber and hence do not appear in the plan. Each of the gas chambers at Crematoria I and II was capable of accommodating up to 2,000 people at a time. At the entrance to the gas chamber was a lift, behind double doors, for transporting the corpses to the furnace rooms on the ground-floor, with their 15 three-stage furnaces. At the bottom stage air was in by electric fans, at the middle the fuel was burnt, and at the top of corpses were placed, two or three at a time, on the stout fire-clay grate. The furnaces had cast-iron doors which were opened by means of a pulley. There was also a dissecting-room on the ground-floor where the prisoner-doctors in the Sonderkommando carried out various experiments and post mortems under the supervision of SS doctors."

One of the great services of Kraus and Kulka's book was that it was the first to provide reliable plans of Auschwitz and Birkenau. For example, their description of the crematoria was accompanied by a fold-out sheet with a set of three annotated plans, showing the basement of crematorium 3, the first floor of the same building, and the plan of crematorium 4. They also provided two photographs of a model of

crematorium 3, which showed the underground gas chamber, the incineration hall with the five triplemuffle ovens, and the living quarters of the Sonderkommando in the attic.

Kraus and Kulka provided lengthy descriptions of the arrival procedures both before and after the completion of the spur line that connected Birkenau to the main railway lines. Before the spring of 1944, transports arrived at a special ramp outside the camp, adjacent to the railway corridor, and were greeted by the SS and inmates of the so-called Canada Squad who had orders to take care of all the deportees' belongings. "As the men got out of the trucks, they were separated from women and children. Then an SS doctor and SS officer, after a superficial examination of each man, would show by a jerk of the thumb whether they were to go to the right or left--life or death. Children were assigned to death, and women who did not want to be separated from their children went with them. Of the remaining women only those from sixteen to thirty who were young and healthy were selected for the camp; the rest were sent to the gas chambers. Of the men some 15 to 20% were classified fit for work. People destined for the gas chambers were loaded on to waiting lorries. Those classified as fit for work had to walk to the camps on foot, but before they left they were given the option of going on the lorries, if they thought they could not walk--which meant death in the gas chambers. We shall never forget the sight of those long convoys of fast-moving lorries, packed full of people. We were unable to give them the last word or sign to show them where they were heading--but they were really better off if they did not know. One of the most cynical touches in the whole affair was the use of an ambulance, marked with the Red Cross. The vehicle waited at the ramp, to give the impression that it was performing the normal function of an ambulance, and then moved off at the tail of the convoy. But instead of medicines and patients it carried tins of deadly cyclon B crystals for the gas chambers." Well-written and filled with

observations based on personal experience, Kraus and Kulka's *Factory of Death* was to become a classic, going through many and increasingly expanded editions in both Czech and other languages.

In the years that followed, enormous amounts of eye-witness evidence became available, some of which Sehn was to include in the subsequent editions of his initial forensic report. There is little use to review the various testimonies of survivors, as they do not substantially challenge or alter the knowledge that had been based on the evidence given in 1945 and 1946. It is, however, useful to include at this point a short discussion about the attempts of Holocaust deniers to challenge the testimonies of eye-witnesses such as Dragon, Tauber, and others. In general, Holocaust deniers have not spent too much energy on attempts to refute these statements. Their major effort has been directed to cast doubt on German documents such as Bischoff's letter containing the reference to the gassing cellar (*Vergasungskeller*), or the confessions of SS men who worked in Auschwitz, such as Pery Broad and Dr. Johann Paul Kremer, or camp Kommandant Rudolf Höss. The attacks on pieces of contemporary documentary evidence, or the self-incriminating statements made by SS personnel, are often of an intensively technical nature, and will be discussed in detail in Part Four of this report.

Attempts by deniers to discredit Jewish eye-witnesses such as Dragon, Tauber, and others have, in general, not taken the form of detailed hermeneutical analysis. Instead, Holocaust deniers have limited themselves to cast general suspicion on the evidentiary validity of such historical sources. The basic negationist position vis-a-vis survivor testimony was developed by, the "father of Holocaust denial," the Frenchman Paul Rassinier. During the war Rassinier, belonged to the French resistance, and after his arrest on November 29, 1943, Rassinier spent fourteen months as an inmate in the concentration camps at Buchenwald and Dora. According to his own account, he met there an inmate named Jirsczah, who had been in Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Dachau and

Oranienburg before being transported to Buchenwald, and who became his mentor. Jirczah told Rassinier not to trust the atrocity stories told by the other inmates. "He told me the story of Buchenwald and the other camps. "There is a lot that is true in all that is said about the horrors for which they are the setting, but there is a lot of exaggeration, too. You have to reckon with the complex of Ulysses' lie, which is everyone's, and so it is with all of the internees. Human beings need to exaggerate the bad as well as the good and the ugly as well as the beautiful. Everyone hopes and wants to come out of this business with the halo of a saint, a hero, or a martyr, and each one embroiders his own Odyssey without realizing that the reality is quite enough in itself."

Liberated in April 1945, Rassinier returned to France physically a broken man, but mentally he had hardened in the ideological stance prepared for by his pre-war revolutionary ideology and shaped by Jirczah's lectures. He had no patience for or empathy with his fellow deportees. "The deportees came back with hatred and resentment on their tongues and in their pens. They were not tired of war, rather they had an axe to grind and they demanded vengeance. Moreover, since they suffered from an inferiority complex--there were only some 30,000 of them out of a population of 40 million inhabitants--they wantonly created a story of horror for a public that always clamored for something more sensational in order the more surely to inspire pity and recognition. The inflammatory fabrications of one deportee soon inspired similar stories by others, and the progressively were caught on a treadmill of lies. Although some deportees were duped by others in this process, most of them managed quite consciously to blacken the picture even more in their zeal to hold the limelight. So it was with Ulysses who, during the course of his voyage, each day added a new adventure to his Odyssey, as much to please the public taste of the times as to justify his long absence in the eyes of his family."

Rassinier became a crusader against the horror stories told by the deportees. It was not difficult to show inconsistencies and errors in detail. These were important to him. "I would like to make the observation ...that the whole is composed of details," Rassinier observed, "and an error of detail, whether made in good or bad faith, regardless of whether it is of a kind that is intended to mislead the observer, must logically make the observer doubt the reliability of the whole." And he added the rhetorical question: "and if there are many errors in detail...? And if they are almost all shown to be made in bad faith?"

Following Rassinier, Holocaust deniers routinely dismiss survivor testimonies concerning the Holocaust as "Lies of Ulysses," and their mental disposition as the "Odysseus Complex." They will try to find one "error of detail," and on the basis of this dismiss the whole statement. For example, during the First Zündel Trial held in Toronto in 1985, the Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson argued that the War Refugee Board report had no value because the plan of the crematorium drawn by Vrba contained errors. "[Defense Counsel]: "Now, in respect to this W.R.B. Report, you say because of the drawings respecting the gas chambers that are in the W.R.B. Report, and that in relation to the plans you found; is that right?" [Faurisson]: "Yeah." Q.: "Any other reason why you say we should not believe the W.R.B. Report of Dr. Vrba and others?" A.: "The plan of Auschwitz, the plan of the crematorium." Q.: "What about them?" A.: "They do not--they are nothing." Q.: "What do you mean, they're nothing?" A.: "When you see the reality of the place ..." Q.: "Yes." A.: "...It does not stand, that's all. When you see on the same level a gas chamber, then a track to put the people, the bodies in the furnaces, and when you see that in fact this place which was a mortuary was underground, that you had a little lift, and on the--at the other level you had the furnaces..." Q.: "Yes." A.: "...And the furnaces are not at all like they have been drawn by Dr.Vrba, and he said..." Q.: "What do you conclude from that, doctor?" A.: "I conclude that it is not exact." Q.: "What do you conclude about the author of that, if he says it

is exact? A.: "I say, 'You say something which is not exact.'" Q.: "All right. So is there any other reason why we should not believe the W.R.B. Report?" A.: "Yes, because, for example, you have the report of the Polish major." Q.: "Yes, which is part of the W.R.B. Report?" A.: "Yes, I remember that, that there are many things; this Polish major says that the people were gassed by a hydrocyanic bomb." After a diversion on the statement of another witness, Christie asked Faurisson if he had any other reasons to say that the War Refugee Board report should not be considered credible. He answered: "I think it's sufficient for me."

The Spanish negationist Enrique Aynat Eknes tried to demolish the credibility of the War Refugee Board report by quoting its description of crematorium 2. His treatment of the Vrba-Wetzlar account followed that of the testimonies of a) Rudolf Höss, b) Pery Broad, 3) Dr. P. Bendel--testimonies that will be discussed in the following chapter. In each case, Eknes quoted a selected passage describing the killing installations, and provided his "critique."

"d) Alfred Wetzler (Auschwitz internee): *At present there are four crematoriums in operation in Birkenau, two large ones, I and II, and two small, III and IV. Those of type I and II consist of three parts: a) the furnace room; b) the great hall; c) the gas chamber. An enormous chimney rises above the furnace room, around which are grouped nine furnaces, each with four openings, each opening can receive three normal cadavres at one time, and at the end of an hour and a half the corpses are completely consumed. That represents a daily capacity of around 2,000 bodies. Near this room there is a large reception hall arranged so as to give the impression of being the lobby of a public bath. It holds 2,000 people and apparently there is a similar waiting room on the floor below. From there, a door and several stairsteps take you to the gas chamber which is very long and narrow. The walls of this room appear to contain shower entrances, for the purposes of deceiving the victims. In the ceiling are fixed three little doors that can be sealed hermetically from the outside. A track leads from the gas chamber towards the crematory room. The administering of the gas is done as follows: the unfortunate victims are taken to the hall (b) where they are ordered to disrobe . . . Next*

the victims are brought together into the gas chamber (c). In order to squeeze this crowd into the cramped space, shots are frequently fired for the purposes of inducing them those who have already got to the far end to move still closer together. When everyone is inside, the heavy doors are closed. Then comes a short pause, probably to let the temperature of the room rise to a certain level, after which the SS men, wearing gas masks, climb to the roof, open the little doors, and drop a preparation in powder form taken from metal canisters labelled "Cyclon," "For use against parasites." ... At the end of three minutes everyone in the room has died. No one ever survived this treatment, whereas it is was not uncommon to discover signs of life in those who had been executed in the birch forest, because of the primitive methods employed there. Next the room is opened, ventilated, and the Sonderkommando piles up the bodies on flatbed trucks and transports them to the crematory rooms where the incineration takes place. Critique: --We already know that each crematorium was provided with five crematories of three muffle furnaces each. The reference to the nine furnaces and four openings is pure invention. --The "Great hall" is also a product of Wetzler's imagination, just like the "waiting room" on the ground floor. The "gas chamber" and the "crematory room" were not connected by a "track" but, as we know, by an elevator. --Accordingly, if the only means of access to the crematories from the supposed gas chamber was the freight elevator, the "flatbed truck" mentioned in the text would serve no purpose. --It would not be necessary for the SS men wearing gas masks to "climb" to the gas chamber, since the latter was underground, and its ceiling was practically at ground level. --But the best way of convincing ourselves that we are faced with apocryphal evidence is to compare the plan contained in Wetzler's supposed original document(see figure 12) with Figure 5, put out by the Auschwitz museum. The conclusion is obvious: Wetzler has never seen the place he describes."

Indeed, neither Wetzlar nor Vrba were ever inside the crematoria, and they did not claim that they were. In his 1963 memoir *I Cannot Forgive*, Vrba was very explicit about the fact that he had never been inside a

crematorium, and that he got his information from Sonderkommando Philip Müller. In 1985, during the Zündel Trial, Vrba came back to the issue as a witness for the prosecution. In cross-examination by Zündel's defense counsel Christie, Vrba had given the following explanation when challenged on the reliability of the description and the accompanying drawing included in the War Refugee Board report. "Mr.Christie: "How do you explain the fact that you've drawn on the diagram that I showed you every crematorium the same shape in 1944, when you drew the diagram upon your escape?" A.: "Because I had only two days to write the whole report, and to try to depict the crematoria. There was a great urgency with that plan, because the objective of the plan was to get it to Hungary and to use this whole report towards the Hungarian Jews of imminent deportation. Under that conditions I didn't lose much time with details like what is the difference between Krematorium I and II and Krematorium II and III, but I limited myself to depict the position of the gas chambers and crematoria [on] one side, and the geographic position of the whole murderous complex on the other side." Q: "Sure. I now produce and show to you a diagram which came from, I suggest, your War Refugee Report of 1944 in which you depicted a crematoria. Correct?" A.: "That's right." Q.: "Is it accurate?" A.: "This I cannot say. It was said that as we were not in the large crematoria, we reconstructed it from messages which we got from members of the Sonderkommando working in the crematorium, and therefore, that approximately how it transpired in our mind, and in our ability to depict what we have heard." In other words, the question is not if the reconstruction Vrba and Wetzlar made after their escape is an exact description of the crematoria, but if it is probable that they had indeed been in some regular contact with a Sonderkommando who knew the crematoria, and who gave them information about these installations and the extermination procedures therein. Reading the passage with this in mind, it is important first of all to observe that Eknes did not provide a full quote, but omitted to passages that provide specific detail. "The administering of the gas is done as

follows: the unfortunate victims are taken to the hall (b) where they are ordered to disrobe. *To complete the fiction that they are going to bathe, each person receives a towel and a small piece of soap issued by two men clad in white coats.* Next the victims are brought together into the gas chamber (c). [...] and drop a preparation in powder form taken from metal canisters labelled “Cyclon,” “For use against parasites,” *which is manufactured by a Hamburg concern. It is presumed that this is a “Cyanide” mixture of some sort which turns into gas at a certain temperature.* At the end of three minutes everyone in the room has died.” Both details were later confirmed by independent sources, and Eknes’ decision to drop them in his “quotation” from the War Refugee Report seems a brazen attempt to remove evidence contrary to this thesis.

If we consider the text as a whole, and identify the various elements of the description, then it becomes clear that most of them can be accounted for in the design of either crematoria 2 and 3, or crematoria 4 and 5, and that the compilation of these elements into a composite “crematorium” reconstructed by two escapees without any architectural training is as good as one could expect, given the circumstances. First of all, as Vrba and Wetzlar mentioned, there were four crematoriums in operation in Birkenau, consisting of two large crematoria--I (2) and II (3)--and two small crematoria--III (4) and IV (5). The information about the number of incinerators is obviously wrong, but the statement that each opening can receive three normal cadavers at one time was confirmed by Tauber and Höss. The “large reception hall arranged so as to give the impression of being the lobby of a public bath” must refer to the undressing rooms of crematoria 4 and 5, which were indeed located next to the incineration rooms. The description of the gas chambers, with the “little doors” in the ceiling can refer to either crematoria 2 and 3, or to crematoria 4 and 5. The description of the extermination procedure is more or less correct, as is the use of metal tins containing the Zyklon delousing agent and the way the solid substance “turns into gas at a certain temperature.” Finally “flatbed trucks” were

at times used in crematorium 2 to transport corpses from the elevator to the ovens. The tracks are still to be seen in the ruins of this crematorium.

The description of the crematoria in the War Refugee Board report contains errors, but given the conditions under which information was obtained, the lack of architectural training of Vrba and Wetzlar, and the situation in which the report was compiled, one would become suspicious if it did not contain errors. Vrba and Wetzlar did not claim to provide an exact description of the crematoria. Their report was not a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment for a graduate degree in archeology. Their reconstruction of the killing installations was a good-faith attempt, based on whatever information they had been able to obtain, to convince the world that an unimaginable event was taking place in the heart of Europe--an event that still staggers and numbs the mind.

Confronted with the lengthy and very detailed testimony of Tauber, Eknies applied a technique of evasion. He implicitly dismisses the importance of Tauber's statement with one sentence: "In general, this testimony is in agreement with the official thesis." Like so many other Holocaust deniers, Eknies prefers to deal with inconvenient evidence by ignoring it. Yet he does not want to let one opportunity slip to use Tauber against "the official thesis." "In general, this testimony is in agreement with the official thesis. However, it contains a contradiction where he states that he was assigned to the Sonderkommando of crematorium II on 4 March 1943, inasmuch as this crematorium was not turned over to the camp administration until the 31st day of that month. H. Tauber further declared: "Between these two rooms [the disrobing room and the gas chamber] there was a corridor to which there was access from the outside by way of few stairs, and a chute down which they flung the cadavers coming from the camp, to convey them to the crematories." This chute for cadavers establishes at least that the Germans had designed the crematoriums *also* for the incineration

of prisoners who died from natural causes or epidemics, since, as we shall see, the “circuit” followed by those destined for extermination in the gas chambers was different. The tacit acknowledgement of the mixed use of the crematoriums that is derived from Tauber’s statement is per se disturbing for the credibility of the official doctrine. It is difficult to accept that the Germans had established a “circuit” for the cremation of the deceased from non-criminal causes which interfered with that followed by the victims of the gas chambers. It would have been much simpler to take the ones who died from natural causes directly to the crematory furnaces, avoiding their passage through the crowded basement of the crematorium.”

Eknes probably felt that he could ignore the bulk of Tauber’s testimony because he had identified the one contradiction that, according to Rassinier, was to make the whole account irrelevant: while Tauber claimed that he had been assigned to the Sonderkommando of crematorium 2 on March 4, 1943, documents showed that crematorium 2 was only turned over to the camp administration on March 31. But is there really a contradiction? It is clear that the official transfer of the crematorium occurred when the building had been fully completed but tests of the incinerators, undertaken in the presence of visitors from Berlin, had taken place as early as March 5, and the first experimental gassings had taken place on March 13. Both operations required a team of Sonderkommando. Only when the crematorium was deemed fully operational was it signed over to the camp authorities. As a result, there is no contradiction between the fact that Tauber was assigned to the Sonderkommando of crematorium 2 on March 4, and the official transfer of the building more than three weeks later.

As to the second part of Tauber’s testimony that raised Eknes’ interest the following: Eknes claims that Tauber stated that “there was a corridor to which there was access from the outside by way of few stairs, and a chute down which they flung the cadavers coming from the camp, to convey them to the crematories.” The translation made by

Dorota Ryszka and Adam Rutkowski, used by Pressac and consequently by myself, states that “there was a corridor, in which there came from the exterior a stairway and a slide for throwing the bodies that were brought to the camp to be incinerated in the crematorium.” Thus while Eknes makes a claim about a practice (of “flunging” “cadavers” into the basement of crematorium 2), Tauber refers to the intention of the slide--an intention that preceded the transformation of morgue 1 into a gas chamber. It is unclear to what extent that intention was actually realized during the operation of crematorium 2. What is clear is that even if the slide was used, there is no necessary contradiction with the use of the basement as an extermination installation. Eknes claims that “[i]t is difficult to accept that the Germans had established a ‘circuit’ for the cremation of the deceased from non-criminal causes which interfered with that followed by the victims of the gas chambers. It would have been much simpler to take the ones who died from natural causes directly to the crematory furnaces, avoiding their passage through the crowded basement of the crematorium.” He assumes, therefore, that there are two continuous processes, represented by two “circuits” that ought not interfere with each other. Yet the basement of crematorium 2 was not constantly crowded. Especially before the Hungarian Action, there were many days that no gassings took place, and there was ample time and space for corpses of inmates who had died in the camp to be brought to the basement of the crematorium, where their numbers would be registered in the death books and, if any, their golden teeth would be removed.

The Holocaust deniers have preferred to bury Tauber’s testimony in silence.

As to the countless testimonies of those survivors who were not employed as Sonderkommando, but who arrived in the camp, were subjected to selection, lost their family at that moment, and who were admitted to the camp never to see their beloved ones back, admitted to eke out a miserable existence marked by monthly selections, which led

to the disappearance of one's comrades, one's bunkmates--as to these survivor testimonies the Holocaust deniers claim that the source of all their stories is, in the words of the German negationist Wilhelm Stäglich, "mass suggestion." "The investigation of this phenomenon, in regard to the alleged extermination of Jews in the "gas chambers" of so-called extermination camps, would certainly be a worthwhile task for psychologists and sociologists. For even if the extermination of Jews had taken place, it would be unrealistic to assume that the laws of mass suggestion could not have had any influence on the description of the extent and nature of killings of Jews that actually took place. Probably this influence was far greater than one would imagine." According to Stäglich, the camps were closed off from the world, and were therefore ruled by rumour and provided therefore the perfect context for the emergence of mass suggestion. Invoking the work of the French psychologist Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) on self-delusions of "psychological crowds," Stäglich claimed that "the many accounts of the alleged mass gassings in Birkenau have their origin in mass hallucinations or mass suggestion inspired by propaganda." In short, inmates would have heard Allied radio broadcasts claiming gassings in the camps, and as a result have started to fantasize about such gassings in their own situation. "It is easy to find examples substantiating the view that many accounts of the alleged mass gassings in Birkenau have their origin in mass hallucinations or mass suggestion inspired by propaganda, for the observations upon which such reports are based can usually be explained in a completely natural way," Stäglich argued. That those deemed "unfit for work" left the place of selection in the direction of the crematoria can be explained because in that vicinity was also a hospital for inmates, and a bath house. "An equally natural explanation can be given for the observation, variously reported, that corpses were removed from the cellar of one of the crematoria, or a room next to the crematorium, to the incineration area of the crematorium. It is well-known that the death-rate in the Auschwitz camps was high at times-- especially during the frequent typhus epi-

demics. It is understandable that all these dead people could not be cremated at once. They must have been stored in a special area until they could be cremated. This was the “corpse cellar” of the crematorium, mentioned in various documents, or an annex serving the same purpose. The removal of corpses from such an area was a completely normal procedure. But many an inmate who observed such a procedure may, under the mass suggestive influence of rumors that were in circulation, have come in all good faith to the conclusion that he was witness to a “gassing.” But then, what about the testimonies about living people descending into those “corpse cellars.”

Stäglich was not concerned about the fact that so many people unanimously attest that gassings occurred. “In the nature of things,” he observed, “the unanimity of many groups of witnesses is itself the result of mass suggestion.” Stäglich then formulated his rules for accepting eye-witness evidence. “As evidence for the alleged gassing of the Jews, reports that do not contain specific details about it, but are limited to quite vague allegations of this type--as is usually the case--must be rejected at once. Such general statements are just as worthless as hearsay testimony, since they cannot be proved. Further, only statements free of contradictions, which do not stand in contradiction to other circumstances and facts, may lay claim to credibility. Finally, to have probative value, a statement must contain nothing improbable, something that may seem obvious to most people, but--as we shall see--is not always the case with reports about the Birkenau crematoria.” Stäglich had no trouble finding some obscure accounts published immediately after the war that did, indeed, have little probative value. Especially Eugène Aroneau’s 1946 collage of unrelated quotes taken from 125 different eyewitness accounts of various quality, proved an easy victim. Aroneau had submerged all the individual differences between the camps in order to evoke something that could be called “the essence of the concentration camp.” He reserved a particular scorn for Aroneau because it was the “original source of the later and

often-modified story of a woman who allegedly snatched a pistol from an SS officer, in front of the gas chamber at Birkenau, and shot him to death. “In this case, it was an “Israelite of extraordinary beauty” from Belgium, whose child had been “smashed against a concrete wall” by that SS officer. Kogon, on the other hand, tells this story as that of an Italian dancer who, on orders of the SS, had “to dance naked in front of the crematorium” before her gassing. Kogon even knows the name of the SS officer who was shot to death because he was so careless about his pistol: It was “Rapportführer Schillinger.” Karl Barthel also repeats this tale, in his book *Die Welt ohne Erbarmen* [The World Without Pity]. According to him, however, the heroine was a “French actress,” for whose “courage” Barthel has words of praise. Barthel himself was only in Buchenwald, but he probably found it necessary to make his own account a little bit more interesting with this and other such gossip. Other authors vary the tale of this “martyr” even further. She is an unusually instructive example of the imaginings of former concentration camp inmates.”

Aroneau was an easy target, but Stäglich studiously avoided the accounts published in this chapter--the posthumous testimony of Salmen Gradowski, statements made by Walter Blass, Shlomo Dragon, Henry Tauber, and Michael Kula. And he ignored the corroborating statements of the Polish inmate Stanislaw Klodzinski, “The Polish Major,” Stanislaw Jankowski, Janda Weiss, and an SS-man named Pery Broad who, independently from each other, corroborated the event. Klodzinski did so in a letter written to Teresa Lasocka-Estreicher, smuggled out of the camp shortly after the event. “The Polish Major” did so in early 1944, when he wrote about the incident in his report. Stanislaw Jankowski testified about the incident immediately after the war in Auschwitz, and Janda Weiss talked about it in Buchenwald--more or less at the same time that SS-man Pery Broad provided information about the event whilst imprisoned in a British prisoner-of-war camp. All these witnesses told of that extraordinary woman who on October

23, 1943 could not tolerate her fate and that of her companions any longer, snatched Schillenger's pistol, and killed him. As the story that Stäglich judged "an unusually instructive example of the imaginings of former concentration camp inmates" has indeed proven to be based on fact, what about all those other stories, all those testimonies full of instructive details, all those statements free of major contradictions?

V Confessions, 1945–47

But good sense, founded in experience, will answer, that they who record matters, concerning which they are strongly biased by their affections, their passions and their prejudices, and wherein they have directly, or indirectly, an immediate and great private interest to serve by inventing falsehoods, or by disguising truths, are never to be received as good witnesses, unless their testimony be confirmed by collateral and disinterested evidence....When are less liable to be deceived by the concurrence of authors, more independent and more indifferent than these, though they may not be all of equal credit: because when their motives and designs are not the same, when they had no common principle, and when they cannot be suspected to have had any concert together, nothing out of the notoriety of facts can make their relations coincide. Lord Bolingbroke, *"The Substance of Some Letters."*

By the end of the 1945 the major elements of the story had been established on the basis of on-site inspections, testimonies of witnesses, and study of the crematoria files in the archive of the *Zentralbauleitung*. Yet the Poles had not been able to interview any of the men who had constructed and run the camp, and who could give some insight into the aims that had shaped the development of the camp. Two documents that became available to the Poles in late 1945 were, while extremely important as corroborating evidence, not very informative as to the actual operation of the camp. The first was the war-time diary of Dr. Johann Paul Kremmer, *Dozent* of Anatomy at the University of Münster. Kremer had volunteered as a member of the General SS in 1935,

and he had been detailed to Auschwitz in August 1942 to replace a physician who had fallen ill. There he served until November 20. An avid diarist since he was sixteen, Kremer recorded his impressions at the time. Kremer was not part of the overall command structure, and on temporary duty in Auschwitz he showed remarkably little curiosity as to the historic events he witnessed and, in a subordinate role, helped to shape. Yet this very lack of engagement also marks the great historic interest of the diary. One of the remarkable aspects of the Holocaust was that it was conceived, initiated, executed, and completed by ordinary men who had learned to kill as part of their ordinary activities.

Kremer's diary was found when he was arrested, and was immediately recognized as an important piece of evidence of the atrocities committed in Auschwitz. We give here, in the common English translation, a few excerpts. "August 30, 1942. Departure from Prague 8.15 a.m. through Böhmisches Trübau, Olmütz, Prerau, Oderberg. Arrival at Concentration Camp Auschwitz at 5.36 p.m. Quarantine in camp on account of numerous contagious diseases (typhus, malaria, dysentery). Received to secret order through garrison physician *Hauptsturmführer* [Kurt] Uhlenbrock and accommodation in a room (no. 26) in the Waffen-SS club-house [Home]. August 31, 1942. Tropical climate with 28° Centigrade in the shade, dust and innumerable flies! Excellent food in the Home. This evening, for instance, we had sour duck livers for 0.40 RM, with stuffed tomatoes, tomato salad, etc. Water is infected, so we drink seltzer-water which is served free (mattoni). First inoculation against typhus. Had photo taken for the camp identity card. September 1, 1942. Have ordered SS officer's cap, sword-belt and brace from Berlin by letter. In the afternoon was present at the gassing of a block with Cyclon B against lice. September 2, 1942. Was present for the first time at a special action at 3 a.m. By comparison Dante's inferno seems almost a comedy. Auschwitz is justly called an extermination camp!" After his arrest, Kremer was extradited to Poland, and he became one

of the defendants in the Auschwitz Trial held before the Supreme National Tribunal in Cracow in November and December 1947. During his pre-trial interrogation Kremer was asked to elucidate the various entries of his diary. On August 18, 1947, he stated that “by September 2, 1942, at 3 a.m. I had already been assigned to take part in the action of gassing people.” “These mass murders took place in small cottages situated outside the Birkenau camp in a wood. The cottages were called “bunkers” in the SS-men’s slang. All SS physicians on duty in the camp took turns to participate in the gassings, which were called *Sonderaktion* [special action]. My part as a physician at the gassing consisted in remaining in readiness near the bunker. I was brought there by car. I sat in front with the driver and an SS hospital orderly sat in the back of the car with oxygen apparatus to revive SS-men, employed in the gassing, in case any of them should succumb to the poisonous fumes. When the transport with people who were destined to be gassed arrived at the railway ramp, the SS officers selected from among the new arrivals persons fit to work, while the rest--old people, all children, women with children in their arms and other persons not deemed fit to work--were loaded onto lorries and driven to the gas chambers. I used to follow behind the transport till we reached the bunker. There people were driven into the barrack huts where the victims undressed and then went naked to the gas chambers. Very often no incidents occurred, as the SS-men kept the people quiet, maintaining that they were to bathe and be deloused. After driving all of them into the gas chamber the door was closed and an SS-man in a gas mask threw the contents of a Cyclon tin through an opening in the side wall. The shouting and screaming of the victim could be heard through that opening and it was clear that they were fighting for their lives. These shouts were heard for a very short while. I should say for some minutes, but I am unable to give the exact length of time.”

Three days later Kremer witnessed another gassing, and dutifully recorded it in his diary. "September 5, 1942. At noon was present at a special action in the women's camp(Moslems)--the most horrible of all horrors. *Hschf* Thilo, military surgeon, was right when he said to me today that we are located here in the *anus mundi*. In the evening at about 8 p.m. another special action with a draft from Holland. men compete to take part in such actions as they get additional rations--1/5 litre vodka, 5 cigarettes, 100 grammes of sausage and bread. Today and tomorrow (Sunday)on duty." In Poland, Kremer gave again a full explanation of this entry. On July 17,1947 he testified that "the action of gassing emaciated women from the women's camp was particularly unpleasant." "Such individuals were generally called *Muselmänner* [Moslems]. I remember taking part in the gassing of such women in daylight. I am unable to state how numerous that group was. When I came to the bunker they sat clothed on the ground. As the clothes were in fact worn out camp clothes, they were not let into the undressing barracks but undressed in the open. I could deduce from the behaviour of these women that they realized what was awaiting them. They begged the SS-men to be allowed to live, they wept, but all of them were driven into the gas chamber and gassed. Being an anatomist I had seen many horrors, had dealt with corpses, but what I then saw was not to be compared with anything ever seen before. It was under the influence of these impressions that I noted in my diary, under the date of September 5, 1942 "The most horrible of all horrors. *Hauptsturmführer* Thilo was right when he said to me today that we are located here in the *anus mundi*." I used this expression because I could not imagine anything more sickening and more horrible." Yet by the next day Kremer was sufficiently recovered to enjoy an "excellent" Sunday dinner consisting of "tomato soup, one half chicken with potatoes and red cabbage (20 grammes of fat), dessert and magnificent vanilla ice-cream."

Three more entries are of interest. The first one is of October 3. "October 3, 1942. Today I preserved fresh material from the human liver, spleen and pancreas, also lice from persons infected with typhus, in pure alcohol. Whole streets at Auschwitz are down with typhus. I therefore took the first inoculation against abdominal typhus. *Obersturmbannführer* Schwarz ill with typhus!" During his trial Kremer commented at length on the first sentence of this entry. "In my diary I mentioned in several entries the taking, for research purposes, of fresh human material. It was like this: I had been for an extensive period interested in investigating the changes developing in the human organism as a result of starvation. At Auschwitz I mentioned this to Wirths who said that I would be able to get completely fresh material for my research from those prisoners who were killed by phenol injections. To choose suitable specimens I used to visit the last block on the right [Block 28], where prisoners who acted as doctors presented the patients to the SS physician and described the illness of the patient. The SS physician decided then--taking into consideration the prisoner's chances of recovery--whether he should be treated in the hospital, perhaps as an outpatient, or be liquidated. Those placed by the SS physician in the latter group were led away by the SS orderlies. The SS physician primarily designated for liquidation those prisoners whose diagnosis was *Allgemeine Körperschwäche* [general bodily exhaustion]. I used to observe such prisoners and if one of them aroused my interest, owing to his advanced state of emaciation, I asked the orderly to reserve the given patient for me and let me know when he would be killed with an injection. At the time fixed by the orderly the patients selected by me were again brought to the last block, and were put into a room on the other side of the corridor opposite the room where the examinations, during which the patient had been selected, had taken place. The patient was put upon the dissecting table while he was still alive. I then approached the table and put several questions to the man as to such details which pertained to my research. For instance, I asked what his weight had been before the arrest, how much weight he had lost since

then, whether he took any medicines, etc. When I had collected my information the orderly approached the patient and killed him with an injection in the vicinity of the heart. As far as I knew only phenol injections were used. Death was instantaneous after the injection. I myself never made any lethal injections.”

The second entry is of October 12. “October 12, 1942.(Hössler!) The second inoculation against typhus; strong reaction in the evening (fever). In spite of this was present at night at another special action with a draft from Holland (1,600 persons). Horrible scene in front of the last bunker! This was the 10th special action.” On July 18, 1947, Kremer elucidated this entry as follows: “In connection with the gassing described by me in the diary under the date of October 12, 1942, I have to explain that around 1,600 Dutchmen were then gassed. This is an approximate figure which I noted down after hearing it mentioned by others. This action was conducted by the SS officer Hössler. I remember how he tried to drive the whole group into one bunker. He was successful except for one man, whom it was not possible by any means to squeeze inside the bunker. This man was killed by Hösler with a pistol shot. I therefore wrote in my diary about horrible scenes in front of the last bunker, and I mentioned Hössler’s name in connection with this incident.”

Finally there is the entry for October 18. “October 18, 1942. In wet and cold weather was on this Sunday morning present at the 11th special action (from Holland). Terrible scenes when 3 women begged merely to have their lives spared.” Again, Kremer explained this entry during his trial. “During the special action, described by me in my diary under the date of October 18, 1942, three women from Holland refused to enter the gas chamber and begged for their lives. They were young and healthy women, but their begging was to no avail. The SS-men, taking part in the action, shot them on the spot.”

If Kremer's diary provides those who seek to deny the gassings in Auschwitz with some direct German evidence that support the "gassing claim," and if it provides the historian with important clues as to the mental state of one class of perpetrators, it lets us down in that it provides little factual knowledge of the gassing operations. A second document, the testimony of *SS-Unterscharführer* Pery Broad, proved rather more informative. Broad, who served in the Political Department (the "camp Gestapo") at Auschwitz, wrote it shortly after the German capitulation while in British captivity. By all accounts he wrote the report voluntarily while working in the camp as a translator for the British counter-intelligence unit. In 1964, during the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, Broad's British superior Cornelis van het Kaar testified that in the beginning of June, 1945, Broad approached him, and told him the history of Auschwitz. "Van het Kaar: "It seemed so important to me, that I immediately took him out of the camp, and gave him an English uniform. I told him: 'Write everything down, especially write about the daily life there.' Broad lived in the same house as we, and wrote everything down in two or three days. Later Broad went to the Munsterlager camp and began to help us with weeding our war criminals from the camps. Representative of Adjunct-Prosecutor [Henry] Ormond: "Did other people cooperate with the writing of the report? Did that possibility even exist?" Van het Kaar: "No. Broad has written the report by himself. He came voluntarily to us. We did not search him. He came to us around 15 June. It was a kind of confession. He wanted to unload his heart." Broad created six copies of his report. One of them was given to van het Kaar's superior Hermann Rothmann, who provided it to the Frankfurt court for Broad's trial. Examined during the trial under oath, Rothmann declared that Broad had written it by himself, and that the report roughly covered what Broad had told him in person.

Broad admitted, after some hesitation, that the report was his. “Presiding Judge: “Accused Broad, what do you say about the document that has just been read.” Broad: “Without hesitation I recognize some parts as my own notes, but not the whole document.” Presiding Judge: “You had in Auschwitz much knowledge about what happened there.” Broad: “Yes, I had much knowledge.” Presiding Judge: “You expressed at the time, that it concerned a crime.” Broad: “That is also my conviction today. Every act in Auschwitz aided and abetted that. I believe there are more versions of this report. It seems to me there is much unfamiliar knowledge in this report.” Presiding Judge: “The report is written in one style and it is homogeneous in character. Does it not seem that it was written by one man, that means by you?” Broad: “Yes, that is right. I only do not know the source of the numbers mentioned. That I could not know.”

The Broad report, which was of independent origin, corroborated important elements of the picture that had begun to emerge in Sehn’s investigation, and added important new descriptions. Perhaps most important was Broad’s recollection of the first gassings in crematorium 1, which was located adjacent to his own office in the barrack that housed the camp’s Political Department. “From the first company of the *SS-Totenkopfsturmbannes*, stationed in the Auschwitz concentration camp, *SS-Hauptscharführer* Vaupel selected six particularly trustworthy men. Among them were those who had been members of the black General SS for years. They had to report to *SS-Hauptscharführer* Hössler. After their arrival Hössler cautioned them to preserve the utmost secrecy as to what they would see in the next few minutes. Otherwise death would be their lot. The task of the six men was to keep all roads and streets completely closed around the area near the Auschwitz crematorium. Nobody should be allowed to pass there, regardless of rank. The offices in the building from which the crematorium was visible were evacuated. No inmate of the SS garrison hospital was allowed to come near the windows of the first floor which looked onto the roof of the nearby

crematorium and the yard of that gloomy place. Everything was made ready and Hössler himself made sure that no uncalled-for persons would enter the closed area. Then a sad procession walked along the streets of the camp. It had started at the railway siding, located between the garrison storehouse and the German Armaments Factory (the siding branched off from the main railway line, which led to the camp). There, at the ramp, cattle vans were being unloaded, and people who had arrived in them were slowly marching towards their unknown destination. All of them had large, yellow Jewish stars on their miserable clothes. Their worn faces showed that they had suffered many a hardship. The majority were elderly people. From their conversation one could gather that up to their unexpected transportation they had been employed in factories, that they were willing to go on working and to be as useful as they could. A few guards without guns, but with pistols well hidden in their pockets, escorted the procession to the crematorium. The SS-men promised the people, who were beginning to feel more hopeful, that they would be employed at suitable work, according to their preoccupations. Explicit instructions how to behave were given the SS-men by Hössler. Previously the guards had always treated new arrivals very roughly, trying with blows to make them stand in ranks "at arm's length," but there were no uncivil words just now! The more fiendish the whole plan! Both sides of the big entrance gate to the crematorium were wide open. Suspecting nothing the column marched in, in lines of five persons, and stood in the yard. There were three or four hundred of them. Somewhat nervously the SS guard at the entrance waited for the last man to enter the yard. Quickly he shut the gate and bolted it. Grabner and Hössler were standing on the roof of the crematorium. Grabner spoke to the Jews, who unsuspectingly awaited their fate, "You will now bathe and be disinfected, we don't want any epidemics in the camp. Then you will be brought to your barracks, where you'll get some hot soup. You will be employed in accordance with your professional qualifications. Now undress and put your clothes in front of you on the ground." They will-

ingly followed these instructions, given them in a friendly, warm-hearted voice. Some looked forward to the soup, others were glad that the nerve-racking uncertainty as to their immediate future was over and that their worst expectations were not realized. All felt relieved after their days full of anxiety. Grabner and Hössler continued from the roof to give friendly advice, which had a calming effect upon the people. "Put your shoes close to your clothes bundle, so that you can find them after the bath." "Is the water warm? Of course, warm showers." "What is your trade? A shoemaker? We need them urgently. Report to me immediately after!" Such words dispelled any last doubts or lingering suspicions. The first lines entered the mortuary through the hall. Everything was extremely tidy. But the special smell made some of them uneasy. They looked in vain for showers or water pipes fixed to the ceiling. The hall meanwhile was getting packed. Several SS-men had entered with them, full of jokes and small talk. They unobtrusively kept their eyes on the entrance. As soon as the last person had entered they disappeared without much ado. Suddenly the door was closed. It had been made tight with rubber and secured with iron fittings. Those inside heard the heavy bolts being secured. They were screwed to with screws, making the door air-tight. A deadly paralyzing terror spread among the victims. They started to beat upon the door, in helpless rage and despair they hammered on it with their fists. Derisive laughter was their only reply. Somebody shouted through the door, "Don't get burned, while you make your bath!" Several victims noticed that covers had been removed from the six holes in the ceiling. They uttered a loud cry of terror when they saw a head in a gas mask at one opening. The "disinfectors" were at work. One of them was *SS-Unterscharführer* Teuer, decorated with the Cross of War Merit. With a chisel and a hammer they opened a few innocuous-looking tins which bore the inscription "Cyclon, to be used against vermin. Attention, poison! To be opened by trained personnel only!" The tins were filled to the brim with blue granules the size of peas. Immediately after opening the tins, their contents was thrown into the holes which were quickly

covered. Meanwhile Grabner gave a sign to the driver of a lorry, which had stopped close to the crematorium. The driver started the engine and its deafening noise was louder than the death cries of the hundreds of people inside, being gassed to death. Grabner looked with the interest of a scientist at the second hand of his wrist watch. Cyclon acted swiftly. It consists of hydrocyanic acid in solid form. As soon as the tin was emptied, the prussic acid escaped from the granules. One of the men, who participated in the bestial gassing, could not refrain from lifting, for a fraction of a second, the cover of one of the vents and from spitting into the hall. Some two minutes later the screams became less loud and only an indistinct groaning was heard. The majority of the victims had already lost consciousness. Two minutes more and Grabner stopped looking at his watch. It was over. There was complete silence. The lorry had driven away. The guards were called off, and the cleaning squad started to sort out the clothes, sotidily put down in the yard of the crematorium. Busy SS-men and civilians working in the camp were again passing the mound, on whose artificial slopes young trees swayed peacefully in the wind. Very few knew what terrible event had taken place there only a few minutes before and what sight the mortuary below the greenery would present. Some time later, when the ventilators had extracted the gas, the prisoners working in the crematorium opened the door to the mortuary. The corpses, their mouths wide open, were leaning on one another. They were especially closely packed near to the door, where in their deadly fright they had crowded to force it. The prisoners of the crematorium squad worked like robots, apathetically and without a trace of emotion. It was difficult to tug the corpses from the mortuary, as their twisted limbs had grown stiff with the gas. Thick smoke clouds poured from the chimney.--This is how it began in 1942!" Broad's testimony was important, but as any observer will notice, not without its problems. He showed some literary ambition in his account, and his flowery and sentimental descriptions clashed with the evidentiary import of his recollections.

According to Broad, the main motivation to build the four new crematoria in Birkenau was the difficulties the Germans had in keeping the killings at bunkers 1 and 2 secret. The inhabitants of Wola, located at the opposite shore of the Vistula, had been able to observe the proceedings. "Thanks to the bright flames from the pits, where corpses were continually burnt, they could see the processions of naked people from the barracks, where they had undressed, to the gas chambers. They heard the cries of the people, brutally beaten because they did not want to enter the chambers of death; they also heard the shots which finished off those who could not be squeezed into the gas chambers, which were not roomy enough." The burning pyres produced a terrible stench and coloured the sky red at night. "[I]t was by reason of the unmistakable sweet smell and the nightly flames that the neighbourhood of Auschwitz learnt about the goings-on in the camp of death. Railwaymen used to tell the civilian population how thousands were being brought to Auschwitz every day, and yet the camp was not growing larger at a corresponding rate. The same information was supplied by police escorts of the transports. The result was that a party speaker, when making his speech in the town of Auschwitz, had to retreat as most of the audience was hostile."

The completion of four new crematoria, which ended the need to incinerate the corpses on large pyres, allowed the Germans to restore secrecy. "Two of them had underground gas chambers, in each of which 4,000 people could be killed at the same time. The other two smaller crematoria had two gas chambers partitioned into three sections, built on the ground floors. In each of these death factories there was an immense hall where "evacuees" had to undress. The halls of crematoria I [2] and II [3] were also underground. Stone stairs, about two metres wide, led down to them. Crematoria I [2] and II [3] had fifteen ovens each, and each oven was equipped to hold four or five corpses." But even the large crematoria could not keep the murders secret. Remarkably enough, Broad credited the architects with one

very peculiar leak. "The building section of the Auschwitz concentration camp was so proud of their achievements that they placed a series of pictures of the crematoria in the hall of their main building for everybody to see. They had overlooked the fact that the civilians, coming and going there, would be less impressed with the technological achievements of the building section; on seeing the enlarged photos of fifteen ovens, neatly arranged side by side, they would, instead, be rather apt to ponder on the somewhat strange invention of the Third Reich. Grabner soon took care to quash the bizarre publicity. But he could not prevent the numerous civilian workers, employed by the building section to construct the crematoria, from talking to outsiders about the construction plans, with which they were naturally thoroughly acquainted." Working in an administrative capacity in the Political Department of the camp (the in-house Gestapo office), Broad gave some valuable information regarding record keeping. "When information was requested by the Reich Main Security Office concerning a past transport, as a rule nothing could be ascertained. Former transport lists were destroyed. Nobody could learn anything in Auschwitz about the fate of a given person. The person asked for "is not and never has been detained in camp," or "he is not in the files"--these were the usual formulas given in reply. At present, after the evacuation of Auschwitz and the burning of all papers and records, the fate of millions of people is completely obscure. No transport or arrival lists are in existence any more."

Broad was called as one of the witnesses in the trial of Bruno Tesch, Joachim Drosihn and Karl Weinbacher. Tesch had been the owner of the firm of Tesch and Stabenow, which had supplied Zyklon B--the commercially sold fumigation product that had hydrogen cyanide as its active agent--to Auschwitz and other camps; Weinbacher had been a manager in the firm and Droshin the chief technician. According to the indictment, the defendants had known since 1942 that Zyklon B was used not only for its normal fumigation purposes, but also to kill

human beings. Nevertheless Tesch and his subordinates had continued to supply the product. According to the prosecution, “knowingly to supply a commodity to a branch of state which is using that commodity for the mass murder of Allied civilian nationals is a war crime, and the people who did it were war criminals for putting the means to commit the actual crime into the hands of those who actually carried it out.”

During the trial, Broad testified on behalf of the prosecution. He testified that he had witnessed a gassing at crematorium 1 at some 40 to 45 meters distance. “Q.: “Will you tell us what you saw in connection with exterminations at the old crematorium? A.: “The installation at the crematorium was the following. The roof was plain, and there were six holes of the diameter of ten centimetres. Through these holes, after the tins had been opened, the gas was poured in.” Q.: “How many people were they putting in at a time in the old crematorium?” A.: “At the time when I observed it, there were about 300 or 400 or there might have been even 500.” Q.: “How long did the gassing take to finish the 500 off?” A.: “One could hear the screaming of the people who were killed in the crematorium for about two or three minutes.” Q.: “Did you later get to know more about the gassing operations?” A.: “Yes; later on I got to know the name of that particular gas; it was Zyklon.” Q.: “Did you ever see any gassings at the new crematoriums at Birkenau?” A.: “I have seen those gassing actions from a rather bigger distance.” Q.: “At Birkenau?” A.: “Yes.” Q.: “How many gas crematoriums were there at Birkenau?” A.: “There were four crematoriums at Birkenau.” Q.: “How many people a day were they gassing at Birkenau?” A.: “In the months of March and April 1944 about 10,000.” Q.: “Per day?” A.: “Yes, per day.” Broad was asked to identify the labels of the Zyklon B cans, and then to explain who were the victims. He estimated the total number of victims between 2.5 and 3 million. Then he described the gassing and incineration procedures at the crematoria, and the renewed use of pyres in 1944 when the killing exceeded the incineration capacity of

the ovens. "Q.: Who were the men who actually did the gassing? What type of man was that in the camp?" A.: "They were called disinfectors." Q.: "Will you tell us about these disinfectors shortly?" A.: "They were under the orders of the doctor and their duties comprised, apart from killing human beings, also the disinfection and the delousing of the internees' clothes." Q.: "How was that delousing and disinfection carried out?" A.: "In airtight rooms. The clothing was dealt with in the same way as the human beings." Q.: "Will you look at this extract from this report and tell me if you know anything about it? Who wrote that report, which is set out there in inverted commas?" A.: "I myself." Q.: "The disinfectors are at work ...With an iron rod and hammer they open a couple of harmless looking tin boxes, the directions read 'Cyclon [sic], vermin destroyer, Warning, Poisonous. 'The boxes are filled with small pellets which look like blue peas. As soon as the box is opened the contents are shaken out through an aperture in the roof. Then another box is emptied in the next aperture, and so on. And in each case the cover is carefully replaced on the aperture....Cyclon works quickly, it consists of a cyanic compound in a modified form. When the pellets are shaken out of the box they give off prussic acid gas (Blausaugas).... After about two minutes the shrieks die down and change to a low moaning. Most of the men have already lost consciousness. After a further two minutes ...It is all over. Deadly quiet reigns.... The corpses are piled together, their mouths stretched open....It is difficult to heave the interlaced corpses out of the chamber as the gas is stiffening all their limbs. Is that based on your experience?" A.: "Yes."

The Kremer Diary and the Broad Report were available to researchers of Auschwitz since their discovery or compilation in 1945. A third, and important document, created in the summer of 1945, was to remain hidden in the Public Record Office until it was released for study in 1992. Ironically, the first to see them was David Irving. Irving, however, initially chose not to go public with his discovery of the five accounts

about Auschwitz created shortly after the war by Höss's one-time deputy Hans Aumeier. Seeking to make the best from a very bad situation, he buried a reference to Aumeier's statement in a footnote in his 1996 book on the Nuremberg Trials.

SS-Hauptsturmführer (Captain) Hans Aumeier became in early 1942 *Lagerführer* (Camp Leader) of Auschwitz, and as such he was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the *Schutzhaftlager* (literally "Protective Custody Camp"), the inmate compound of the concentration camp. He remained in function until the end of that year, and therefore oversaw the transformation of Auschwitz from a "normal" concentration camp into a camp that, amongst other functions, also served as an extermination camp for Jews. Aumeier was not very effective, and in early 1943 he was transferred to run a concentration camp in Estonia. Finally he ended up running a concentration camp in Norway. Arrested after the German capitulation in May 1945, he was initially interrogated in Norway. In a first account written by Aumeier, dated June 29, 1945, he stated that during his tenure as *Lagerführer* 3,000 to 3,500 prisoners died in Auschwitz. He denied knowledge about gas chambers.

A month later, Aumeier admitted that gas chambers had been in operation in Auschwitz, and that they were used for the killing of Jews. "As far as I can remember, the first gassings of some 50 to 80 Jewish prisoners took place in the month of November or December 1942. This happened in the morgue of the crematorium in camp I [crematorium 1], under supervision of the camp doctor, of *Untersturmführer* Grabner, the camp commandant, and various medical orderlies. I was not present at that time, and also did not know beforehand that this gassing was going to take place. The camp commandant always remained distrustful towards me, and did not tell me much. Only the next day did the camp doctor, Grabner, *Obersturmführer* H[öss]ler, *Hauptsturmführer* Schwarz and I have to go to the camp commandant, and he told us that he had received via the Reich Security Main Office the order of the *Reichsführer* SS that, in order to prevent further epidemics, all Jewish

prisoners incapable of work, and all ill inmates, who in the opinion of the doctor could not be brought back to work, ought to be gassed. He further told us that in the preceding night the first inmates had been gassed, but that the crematorium was too small and could not handle the incineration of the corpses, and that therefore in the new crematorium in Birkenau also gas chambers were to be built. We were all very shocked and upset, but he added that the whole affair was a secret Reich matter, and that because of our oath of allegiance we would be condemned to death by the *Reichsführer SS* if we were to talk about it to others. We had to sign a declaration to this effect, which was given for safekeeping by the camp commandant. All the men who later had something to do with the commando were instructed by *Untersturmführer* Grabner, and also had to sign such a declaration in his presence. In the time that followed some three to four gassings were undertaken in the old crematorium. These always occurred in the evening hours. In the morgue were two to three air vents and medical orderlies, wearing gas masks, shook blue [cyanide] gas into these. We were not allowed to come close, and only the next day the bunker [gas chamber] was opened. The doctor told that the people died within half a minute to a minute. In the meantime in Birkenau, close to the burial sites, two empty houses were equipped by the construction office with gas chambers. One house had two chambers, the other four. These houses were designated as bunkers 1 and 2. Each chamber accommodated about 50 to 150 people. At the end of January or February, the first gassings were undertaken. The Kommando was called SK [*Sonderkommando*], and the camp commandant had put it under direct authority of *Untersturmführer* Grabner and was again led and brought into action by [...] H[öss]ler. The area was surrounded by notices and marked as a security zone, and moreover encircled by eight guard posts from the Kommando. From that moment onwards the camp doctors sorted from the arriving transports immediately the inmates, and those who were destined to be gassed. They had instructions to select for gassing those crippled by illness, those over 55 years of age who could not work, and

children up to 11 or 12 years. [...] Near bunkers 1 and 2 two barracks were built, and in this one inmates had to undress, and there they were told that they were to be deloused and bathed. Then they were brought to the chambers. Air vents were set in the side walls of these chambers. In the same manner as described above, gassings took place under control of the doctor. The bunker was always opened the next day. On the next day gold teeth would be broken out of the corpses under supervision of a dentist or a medical orderly, and after that the corpses were burned in trenches in a manner described above. At the same time doctors also selected seriously ill Jewish prisoners in the sick wards of the camp, and from time to time led to the gassing. It must have been around the middle of April 1943 that crematorium I [2] in Birkenau was completed and brought into operation. In the basement of the crematorium (I believe it had eight ovens) had been built a concrete bunker that had place for between 600 to 800 people. In front of the crematorium was also built a hut for undressing. Gassing occurred likewise through air vents from above. The Bunker had a system to introduce fresh air, so that after gassings the bunker could be opened after five to eight hours. The corpses were then brought with an elevator directly to the ovens for incineration. Additionally it is worth to mention that valuables were taken from the Jews and were sent by the administration to the SS-Wirtschafts-verwaltungshauptamt. After delousing, the clothes were partly issued in the [Auschwitz] camps, and partly sent to other camps. At the beginning of May 1943 crematorium II (5 ovens) was completed and alternately gassings also took place there. Its gas chamber was smaller and held perhaps 400 to 500 people. It did not have a system to bring in fresh air, and gassings happened by means of air vents in the side walls. At the time of my transfer crematorium III was still under construction and not ready. It was roughly planned on the same model as crematorium II (5 ovens). My estimate is that during my tenure between 15,000 and 18,000 Jewish prisoners were gassed.”

Aumeier's statement is important. While there are many errors, especially as it concerns dates or the number of Jews gassed, he is basically correct in his description of bunkers 1 and 2, and the gas chambers in crematorium 2 and 4. Less detailed, Aumeier's confession provide important independent corroboration of Broad's account, the statements made in Poland by surviving *Sonderkommandos*, and the forensic investigations done by Roman Dawidowski. Aumeier was to further elaborate on his statement in the months that followed, providing more details about the gassing operation. In these statements he stressed again, at various occasions, that "there was a Reichsführer-SS order to this effect which banned all written reports, counts, statistics, or the like in this context," or "no lists were kept of those gassed and those were also not recorded by name from the transports. As already mentioned, it was forbidden to make notes or lists about it."

Both Kremer's diary, Broad's report, and Aumeier's explanations provided in the months immediately after the end of the war in Europe important additional evidence about the history of Auschwitz as an extermination camp. Yet the immediate impact of these documents was small. This was different with the so-called Belsen Trial, held by a British Military Tribunal in the fall of 1945 in the German city of Lüneburg to try the captured SS personnel of Bergen Belsen. It did not merely generate valuable evidence, but also focussed attention on Auschwitz, as most of the defendants had, at one time or another, worked in Auschwitz before being transferred to Bergen-Belsen. Kommandant Josef Kramer, for example, had also served as *Lagerführer* of Birkenau during the Hungarian Action. Hence there were two distinct charges upon which the accused were arraigned. The first concerned the criminal and inexcusable neglect that characterized the SS' rule in Belsen, and the second focussed on the carefully designed and executed policy of extermination in Auschwitz.

the opening speech for the prosecution, Colonel T. M. Backhouse stated that he was to provide evidence to show that the conditions in Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz were caused not only by criminal neglect, but also “that they were caused by deliberate starvation and ill-treatment, with the malicious knowledge that they must cause death.” “In respect of Auschwitz I will go further and say that not only will the Prosecution ask you to say that it was done with deliberate knowledge that the conditions would cause death, but that there was deliberate killing of thousands and probably millions of people, quite deliberate cold-blooded extermination of millions of people in that camp, and that each of the accused who was serving at Auschwitz and is charged in the second charge had his or her share in this joint endeavour in this group of persons who were carrying out this policy of deliberate extermination.”

The first witness for the prosecution to testify on the conditions in Auschwitz was the Polish-Jewish physician Dr. Ada Bimko. She arrived in Auschwitz in August 1943 with 5,000 other Jews from Sosnowitz. Of this transport, 4,500 were sent directly to the crematorium. “My father, mother, brother, husband and small son of six years of age were included in that number.” “[Colonel Backhouse]: “After that date did you attend any other selections of this kind?” A.: “Yes. I was working as a doctor in the hospital and was present at several selections. The first of these happened on the day of the greatest feast of the Jews, the Day of Atonement. There were three methods of selection. The first one immediately on the arrival of the prisoners; the second in the camp among the healthy prisoners; and the third in the hospital amongst the sick. The camp doctor was always present and other S.S. men and S.S. women.” Dr. Bimko testified that she seen one of the gas chambers. In her original deposition, she discussed the circumstances that made the visit possible. “In the Birkenau section of Auschwitz Camp there were five brick buildings. These five buildings were similar in appearance and different from all the other buildings in the camp. They were

commonly known by all the prisoners in the camp as crematoria. When selections were held I saw the condemned persons driven to these buildings in lorries. I did not see the persons actually enter the buildings as it was not possible to get sufficiently close to do so. Both men and women were in the parties taken to these buildings. Usually the condemned women were ordered to undress and leave their clothes behind in Block 25, and sometimes they undressed at the gas chamber. Occasionally they were allowed to take blankets with them to the gas chamber, but this was all according to the S.S. Man in charge. Hospital blankets were used for this purpose. The crematorium and gas chambers were in an area of the camp known as Brzezinki.”

Attached to the hospital in the women’s camp, Dr. Bimko was responsible for recovering the blankets which the naked prisoners used after having undressed in Block 25, the holding pen in the women’s camp for those selected for the gas chambers. During the trial, she explained how this brought her into the crematoria. “Q.: “Have you ever been into one of the gas chambers?” A.: “Yes. In August, 1944. I was working in a portion of the camp as a doctor. A new crowd of those selected for the gas chamber had arrived, and as they were sick they came covered with a blanket. After two days we were told to fetch all those blankets from the gas chamber. I took the opportunity, as I always wanted to see with my own eyes this ill-famed gas chamber, and I went in. It was a brick building and there were trees around in a way as if it were camouflaged. In the first room I met a man who came from the same town as I do. There was also an S.S. man with a rank of Unterscharführer, and he belonged to the Red Cross. I was told that in this first big room the people left their clothes, and from this room were led onto a second, and I gained the impression that hundreds and hundreds might go into this room, it was so large. It resembled the shower-baths or ablution rooms we had in the camp. There were many sprays all over the ceiling in rows which were parallel. All these people who went into this room were issued with a towel and a cake of soap so that they

should have the impression that they were going to have a bath, but for anybody who looked at the floor it was quite clear that it was not so, because there were no drains. In this room there was a small door which opened to a room which was pitch dark and looked like a corridor. I saw a few lines of rails with a small wagon which they called a lorry, and I was told that prisoners who were already gassed were put on these wagons and sent directly to the crematorium. I believe the crematorium was in the same building, but I myself did not see the stove.”

One of the other witnesses for the prosecution was Dr. Charles Sigismund Bendel, a Rumanian Jewish physician living in Paris. Arrested in November 1943, he had been taken first to the transit camp at Drancy, and from there to Auschwitz. At the end of February, 1944, Bendel was detailed as a doctor to the Gipsy camp in Birkenau, where he witnessed Dr. Mengele’s medical experiments on twins. “[Colonel T. M. Backhouse]: “In June, 1944, was your employment changed?” [Bendel]: “Indeed, it was changed. Dr. Mengele gave me the honour to attach me to the crematorium. The men who worked there were called Sonderkommando, a Special Kommando numbering 900. They were all deported people. Just as there existed a Sonderkommando amongst the prisoners so there was a Sonderkommando also amongst the S. S. They enjoyed special privileges, for instance, in alcohol, and were completely separated from the other S.S. There were about fifteen S.S. in this Sonderkommando, three for each crematorium. The prisoners amongst the Sonderkommando lived in the camp in two blocks which were always locked, and were not allowed to leave them. Some of S.S. of the Sonderkommando were on night duties and others did their duty in rotas. They were always relieved by the others. At first I lived in the camp with the other prisoners, but later on in the crematorium itself. The first time I started work there was in August, 1944. No one was gassed on that occasion, but 150 political prisoners, Russians and Poles, were led one by one to the graves and there they were shot. Two days later, when I was attached to the day group, I saw a gas chamber

in action. On that occasion it was the ghetto at Lodz--80,000 people were gassed. Q.: "Would you describe just what happened that day?" A.: "I came at seven o'clock in the morning with the others and saw white smoke still rising from the trenches, which indicated that a whole transport had been liquidated or finished off during the night. In Crematorium No.4 the result which was achieved by burning was apparently not sufficient. The work was not going on quickly enough, so behind the crematorium they dug three large trenches 12 metres long and 6 metres wide. After a bit it was found that the results achieved even in these three big trenches were not quick enough, so in the middle of these big trenches they built two canals through which the human fat or grease should seep so that work could be continued in a quicker way. The capacity of these trenches was almost fantastic. Crematorium No.4 was able to burn 1000 people during the day, but this system of trenches was able to deal with the same number in one hour." Q.: "Will you describe the day's work?" A.: "At eleven o'clock in the morning the chief of the Political Department arrived on his motor cycle to tell us, as always, that a new transport had arrived. The trenches which I described before had to be prepared. They had to be cleaned out. Wood had to be put in and petrol sprayed over so that it would burn quicker. About twelve o'clock the new transport arrived, consisting of some 800 to 1000 people. These people had to undress themselves in the court of the crematorium and were promised a bath and hot coffee afterwards. They were given orders to put their things on one side and all the valuables on the other. Then they entered a big hall and were told to wait until the gas arrived. Five or ten minutes later the gas arrived, and the strongest insult to a doctor and to the idea of the Red Cross was that it came in a Red Cross ambulance. Then the door was opened and the people were crowded into the gas chambers which gave the impression that the roof was falling on their heads, as it was so low. With blows from different kinds of sticks they were forced to go in and stay there, because when they realized that they were going to their death they tried to come out again. Finally,

they succeeded in locking the doors. One heard cries and shouts and they started to fight against each other, knocking on the walls. This went on for two minutes and then there was complete silence. Five minutes later the doors were opened, but it was quite impossible to go in for another twenty minutes. Then the Special Kommandos started work. When the doors were opened a crowd of bodies fell out because they were compressed so much. They were quite contracted, and it was almost impossible to separate one from the other. One got the impression that they fought terribly against death. Anybody who has ever seen a gas chamber filled to the height of one and a half metres with corpses will never forget it. At this moment the proper work of the Sonderkommandos starts. They have to drag out the bodies which are still warm and covered with blood, but before they are thrown into the ditches they have still to pass through the hands of the barber and the dentist, because the barber cuts the hair off and the dentist has to take out all the teeth. Now it is proper hell which is starting. The Sonderkommando tries to work as fast as possible. They drag the corpses by their wrists in furious haste. People who had human faces before, I cannot recognize again. They are like devils. A barrister from Salonica, an electrical engineer from Budapest--they are no longer human beings because, even during the work, blows from sticks and rubber truncheons are being showered over them. During the time this is going on they continue to shoot people in front of these ditches, people who could not be got into the gas chambers because they were overcrowded. After an hour and a half the whole work has been done and a new transport has been dealt with in Crematorium No.4." Cross-examined by Captain L. S. W. Cranfield, one of lawyers for the defence, Bendel gave more details about the arrival procedures of the selected deportees at the crematoria. "[Cranfield]: "When a party arrived for the gas chamber, was it brought down by one of the doctors?" A.: "No. There was one S.S. In front and one at the back. That is all." Q.: "Did these parties usually arrive in trucks?" A.: "It varied--some prisoners arrived marching; on the other hand, sick people arrived in trucks.

These trucks were so constructed that they could be tipped over, and the drivers found amusement in doing so, and throwing the people out.”

Perhaps the most important witness was the Kommandant of Bergen-Belsen, Josef Kramer. Initially, during the pre-trial interrogations, the former *Lagerführer* of Birkenau had maintained that there had been no gas chambers in Auschwitz. “I have heard of the allegations of former prisoners in Auschwitz referring to a gas chamber there, the mass executions and whippings, the cruelty of the guards employed, and that all this took place either in my presence or with my knowledge. All I can say to all this that it is untrue from beginning to end.” Yet he changed his story when the prosecution was able to present him with proof that he had constructed and operated during his tenure as Kommandant of the camp at Natzweiler-Struthof a gas chamber. Confronted with this material, Kramer decided that it was better to confess to the existence of gas chambers in both Natzweiler-Struthof and Auschwitz, but to deny any direct responsibility. In the case of Auschwitz, where he served as *Lagerführer* of Birkenau, his denial of direct authority over the crematoria was, probably, justified. The crematoria were located outside the prisoner compound, and were under the direct responsibility of the Political Department and the Kommandant. “The first time I saw a gas chamber proper was at Auschwitz. It was attached to the crematorium. The complete building containing the crematorium and gas chamber was situated in camp No.2 (Birkenau), of which I was in command. I visited the building on my first inspection of the camp after being there for three days, but for the first eight days I was there it was not working. After eight days the first transport, from which gas chamber victims were selected, arrived, and at that time I received a written order from Hoess, who commanded the whole of Auschwitz camp, that although the gas chamber and crematorium were situated in my part of the camp, I had no jurisdiction over it whatever. Orders in regard to the gas chamber were, in fact, always given by Hoess, and I

am firmly convinced that he received such orders from Berlin. I believe that had I been in Hoess's position and received such orders, I would have carried them out, because even if I had protested it would only have resulted in my being taken prisoner myself. My feelings about orders in regard to the gas chamber were to be slightly surprised, and wonder to myself whether such action was really right."

Kramer testified on Monday, October 8. Major T.C.M. Winwood, his counsel, first examined the discrepancy between Kramer's two depositions. "Q.: "Will you explain to the Court how it is that, in the first statement you made, you said the allegations referring to gas chambers, mass executions, whipping and cruelty were untrue, whereas in your second statement you said they were true?" A.: "There are two reasons for that. The first is that in the first statement I was told that the prisoners alleged that these gas chambers were under my command, and the second and main reason was that Pohl, who spoke to me, took my word of honour that I should be silent and should not tell anybody at all about the existence of the gas chambers. When I made my first statement I felt still bound by this word of honour which I had given. When I made the second statement in prison, in Celle, these persons to whom I felt bound in honour--Adolf Hitler and Reichsführer Himmler--were no longer alive and I thought then that I was no longer bound." During cross-examination, Colonel Backhouse once more confronted Kramer with the issue of the conflicting statements. "Q.: "Do you believe in God?" A.: "Yes." Q.: "You remember the oath which you took when you first went into the witness box. Do you realize that to lie after you have taken that oath is deliberate perjury?" A.: "Yes." Q.: "In the first statement you made at Diest did you make precisely the same oath before you signed your statement?" A.: "I am not sure whether it was before or after." Q.: "I put it to you that you took precisely the same oath that you took in this court before you made your statement and that you lied and knew you were lying when you made that statement

in which you said that there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz at all?" A.: "I have already said that, at that time, I felt still bound to my word of honour on that subject."

Examined by his counsel, Kramer gave a description of whom was responsible for what, carefully distancing himself from the whole issue. "Q.: "Did Kommandant Hoess say anything to you about the gas chambers?" A.: "I received a written order from him that I had nothing to do with either the gas chambers or the incoming transports. The Political Department which was in every camp had a card index system of prisoners and was responsible for personal documents and for any sort of prisoners and was responsible for personal documents and for any sort of transports or incoming prisoners. At Auschwitz the Political Department was also responsible for all the selections from incoming transports for the gas chamber. In the crematorium the S.S. And prisoners -Sonderkommando -were under the command of the Kommandant of Auschwitz, Hoess. As the place where transports generally arrived was in the middle of my own camp I was sometimes present at their arrival. The people who took part in supervising and who were responsible for the security were partly from Auschwitz No.1, and partly from my own camp at Birkenau, but the selection of these people who had to supervise was done by the Kommandant of Auschwitz No.1. The actual selection of the internees were made only by the doctors. Those who were selected for the gas chambers went to the different crematoria, those who were found to be fit for work came into two different parts of my camp, because the idea was that in a few days they were to be re-transferred to different parts of Germany for work." Q.: "Did you yourself ever take part in the selections?" A.: "No, I never took part, nor did the other S.S. members of my staff. I do not know exactly who the doctors got their orders from, but I think it was probably from Dr. Wirths, the senior doctor of the camp. The doctors lived together in Auschwitz No.1 where the headquarters were." Q.: "What did you personally think about the whole gas chamber business?" A.: "I

asked myself, 'Is it really right about these persons who go to the gas chambers, and whether that person who signed for the first time these orders will be able to answer for it?' I did not know what the purpose of the gas chamber was."

Mrs. Rosina Kramer testified on behalf of the defence of her husband. During crossexamination, Colonel Backhouse raised the issue of the gassings. "Q.: "You said that Hoess had been sent to Auschwitz for the incoming transports. What transports were these?" A.: "I believe these were the transports which were destined for the gas chambers." Q.: "You know about the gas chambers, then?" A.: "Everybody in Auschwitz knew about them."

One of the main defendants was Dr. Fritz Klein, an ethnic German from Rumania who had been drafted into the SS. As a physician, he participated in many selections. In his initial deposition he gave a very concise description of his responsibility, or lack thereof. "When transports arrived at Auschwitz it was the doctor's job to pick out those who were unfit or unable to work. These included children, old people and the sick. I have seen the gas chambers and crematoria at Auschwitz, and I knew that those I selected were to go to the gas chamber. But I only acted on orders given me by Dr. Wirths. I cannot say from whom Dr. Wirths received his orders and I have never seen any orders in writing relating to the gassing of prisoners. All orders given to me were given verbally." Examined by his counsel Major Winwood, Dr. Klein discussed the selection in greater detail. "Q.: "Will you tell us what happened on selections?" A.: "Dr. Wirths, when the first transport arrived, gave me orders to divide it into two parts, those who were fit to work and those who were not fit, that is those who, because of their age, could not work, who were too weak, whose health was not very good, and also children up to the age of fifteen. The selecting was done exclusively by doctors. One looked at the person and, if she looked ill, asked a few questions, but if the person was healthy then it was decided immediately." Q.: "What happened to those people who were se-

lected as capable of work?” A.: “The doctor had only to make the decision. What happened to them afterwards was nothing to do with him.” Q.: “What happened to those people whom the doctors selected as unfit for work?” A.: “The doctor had to make a selection but had no influence on what was going to happen. I have heard, and I know, that part of them were sent to the gas chambers and the crematoria.” Later on Klein admitted that he had visited a gas chamber when not in operation. Asked his opinion about “this gas chamber business,” he answered that he did not approve, and added “I did no protest because that was no use at all.”

The third important defendant was Franz Hoessler, who in 1944 had served as *Lagerführer* at Auschwitz I. In his deposition he admitted to the existence and use of the gas chambers. “Everyone in the camp knew about the gas chamber at Auschwitz, but at no time did I take part in the selection of prisoners who were to go to the gas chamber and then be cremated. Whilst I was there selection of prisoners for the gas chamber was done by Dr. Klein, Dr. Mengele and other young doctors whose names I do not know. I have attended these parades, but my job was merely to keep order. Often women were paraded naked in front of the doctors and persons selected by the doctors were sent to the gas chamber. I learnt this through conversation with the doctors. I think those selected were mostly those who were not in good health and could not work. When transports of prisoners arrived the prisoners were taken from the train and marched to the camp. On arrival they were paraded in front of the doctors I have mentioned, and persons were selected for the gas chamber, the remainder being sent to the concentration camp. I have also attended these parades, but only when I have been Orderly Lagerführer, as this was part of his duties. Train-loads of 2000 and 3000 arrived at the camp and often as many as 800 went to the gas chamber. The doctors were always responsible for these selections. Whilst I was at Auschwitz the Kommandant, until June, 1944, was Hoess and he was succeeded by Baer. I made many

complaints to Hoess about the way people were being sent to the gas chamber, but I was told it was not my business. The camp was inspected once a year by Himmler and also Obergruppenführer Glücks and Obergruppenführer Pohl from Berlin. Himmler knew people at Auschwitz were gassed because it was he who gave the orders that this would be done. These orders could only have come from the top. Hitler must also have known that this was going on as he was the head of the country.”

Examined by his counsel Major A.S.Munro, Hoessler went into greater detail. “Q.: “Did you have to attend selections for the gas chambers?” A.: “Yes, I attended these selections because I had to guard the prisoners. I did not make selections myself, and there were no selections without doctors.” Q.: “What did you think when you were told to attend a selection parade for the first time?” A.: “When they told me for the first time, in summer 1943,I did not know even what it meant. I only thought I had to see that the people got out of their wagons and came into the camp.” Q.: “Did you later learn the real purpose of these parades?” A.: “Yes, I heard about it and did not think that that was right. Once when Hoess arrived in his car I asked him if it was all right what was going on, and he just told me to do my duty. I received the order to go on selection parade personally and verbally from Hoess.” Q.: “Will you explain exactly what happened when transports arrived in the camp?” A.: “The transport train arrived at the platform in the camp. It was my duty to guard the unloading of the train and to put the S.S. sentries like a chain around the transport. The next job was to divide the prisoners into two groups,the women to the left, the men to the right. Then the doctors arrived, and they selected the people. The people who had been inspected by the doctors and found to be fit for work were put on one side, the men and the women. The people who were found to be unfit for work had to go into the trucks, and they were driven off in the direction of the crematorium.”

Within the difficult circumstances of the time, the Belsen Trial was conducted with due regard to proper procedure. Some of the court-appointed defenders put up a spirited fight. For example, Major T.C.M. Winwood, counsel for Kramer, argued that really Heinrich Himmler was responsible, and that if anyone deserved the epithet “Beast of Belsen” it was the Reichsführer-SS, and not Kramer who had the misfortune to have become the “Scapegoat of Belsen.” And the fact that the latter had volunteered to work in a concentration camp should not be held against him, certainly not by an English court. “The concentration camp is not a German copyright. The first concentration camp in modern times was set up by the British authorities during the South African war to keep undesirable elements away until the fighting was over. The most modern concentration camp was set up in Egypt by the British in order to keep undesirable elements from Greece out of the reach of the ordinary people. The object of the German concentration camp was to segregate the undesirable elements, and the most undesirable element, from the German point of view, was the Jew.” After having explained why one should not judge the Germans too harshly in confining Jews to camps, Winwood proceeded effortlessly to put the blame for the conditions within the camps on the inmates. “As regards these German concentration camps, there were large numbers of people housed in them, and it is a fact that they were very overcrowded. The guards were few, and the administration staff was even fewer in proportion. The result was that it was left to the internees to do the ordinary “interior economy” of the camp, and that is the principle applied to prisoner of war and internee camps. The type of internee who came to these concentration camps was low, and had very little idea of doing what they were told, so that the control of these internees was a great problem.”

Then there was Major L.S.W. Cranfield, who did his best to assault the credibility of witnesses, and to create reasonable doubt as to the operation of Auschwitz as an extermination camp. The summary of his

closing speech reads in many ways as the founding document of negationism. “The court had first of all to decide what were the facts about the selections for the gas chamber at Auschwitz and what actually had happened,” Cranfield argued. How did people know that those who had been selected ended up in the gas chambers? “From the evidence it appeared that the usual grounds for inferring people had been gassed was that they disappeared, but the same thing would have happened if they had been sent away to a factory or to another camp. With regard to Block 25, it might well have been that that block was used as a staging block for any party that was to leave the camp after a selection. When parties had been chosen they would obviously have to be segregated until they got away. Witnesses had spoken about people staying in Block 25 for days. If the authorities had decided to have a gas chamber selection they would not have done that unless they knew that the gas chamber was ready to take the people selected. Would they have selected 1000 people for the gas chamber and put them in Block 25 and kept them there for three days?” And thus Cranfield began the search for alternative explanations that, as we will see below, became a hallmark of negationist reasoning.

Cranfield also tried another route. In his opening speech for the defendants Irma Grese and three others, Cranfield argued that the concentration camps were, under German law, prisons and that their inmates were legally imprisoned. He admitted that even if the camps had been legally established, the defendants should have refused to obey their superiors as they should have known that they were participating in a crime against humanity. “I answer that by saying that the accused can only judge what is a crime against humanity by their own environment,” Cranfield retorted. “What is alleged to have been done in these concentration camps was to the accused nothing else than common form in Europe.”

Obviously, Cranfield's reasoning was less than satisfactory, and therefore Colonel Smith, sometime Professor of International Law at London University, was added to the defense team to help them deal with the legality of the indictment from the perspective of international law. Smith first of all argued that what happened in the concentration camps was no war crime because it did not involve an offence against the legitimate conduct of the operations of war. "This policy of concentration camps was started by Hitler within a few weeks of his ascension to power in early 1933. It was continued with ever increasing intensity throughout the whole time of peace, and it would have continued after the war if the Germans had won the war. It was part of a national German policy, a policy which we are all agreed is detestable, primarily the degradation and ultimate extermination of the Jewish race. More than that, in addition to the unfortunate Jewish race the Germans regarded as their inferiors the Slavonic races, who were treated with scarcely less severity. So I would like to submit to the Court, and as strongly as I can, that we are dealing here with incidents which occur, it is true, in time of war, but which have no logical connection with the war whatever --a policy which was begun in peace as a peace-time policy and was intended to be carried on as a permanent and long-term policy." As a result, it was inappropriate to indict the defendants with a war crime and try them before a Military Court.

Colonel Smith even maintained that the orders that had been given to build and operate the gas chambers had been legal within the admittedly unusual legal structure of the Third Reich, and that Kramer could therefore not be tried, as he merely had obeyed the law. Smith observed that, by the mid 1930s, Hitler had become the law, and that he had chosen to delegate some of his powers to Himmler, and that the latter had placed his instruments of power--the Gestapo, the concentration camps--outside the control of the courts. "Apply that to the most important thing in the charges, the gas chamber at Auschwitz," Smith asked. "If you ask me to produce a law legalizing the gas cham-

bers at Auschwitz and Belsen, of course I could not do it," Smith admitted. But this did no matter. All that mattered was Himmler saying "Have a gas chamber." "If Himmler said a gas chamber was to be erected, he did not need a special law for it. His order was sufficient, and everyone concerned had to obey it. That is my proposition and believe it to be a perfectly sound one. What it leads to is this. In the case of the average German it was impossible to have the kind of conflict which might arise in England, where a man might question the order of his superior officer and say: "You cannot give me that order under the Army Act," and so on. An order as an order is perfectly legal, and where there is a conflict between internal law and the international law the individual must always obey the law." Because Kramer and his colleagues had not built the gas chambers on their own initiative, and because they had sent people there on orders of others which, ultimately, came from Hitler, he could not be held accountable under International Law.

Observers who followed the trial were in fact quite troubled by the amount of leeway given to the defence. "Impatience over the Belsen trials seems to be growing, and ought to be," the British weekly *The Spectator* reported as early as October 5. "It is perfectly right, and in true accord with the best traditions of British justice, that the accused should be adequately defended and anything that can be said for them said. But there are limits. It would almost appear as if the relevant authorities were determined to go Kramer and his Kramerish colleagues acquitted at any price." More than a month later public opinion had not changed much. "The Belsen trial is at last reaching its end, and justice will at last be done," the representative of Jewish relief organizations at the trial Norman Bentwich observed. "The general verdict that is passed on its protracted hearing is that, while it was an example of British administration of justice, conducted with dignity and with every regard for the accused, it involved an efflorescence of legal procedure. The twelve defending officers put all the forty-five accused per-

sons into the box to tell a long story; and people began to believe the wisecrack, that was passed around Luneburg in the first week of the trial, that they would save their clients from the gallows by boring them to death.”

The prosecution rested its case on November 13, 1945. Colonel Backhouse made it clear that he had no doubts as to the historical record. “There is only one general picture of Auschwitz. Here was a camp in Poland, in a place where even the S.S. objected to being posted, and you have seen the type of place it was from the film supplied by the Russian government and heard what went on there from a variety of people. Can the Court have the slightest doubt, first of all, about the gas chamber or the selections which were made? It is freely admitted that there were in the camp Birkenau five gas chambers attached to the crematoria, and that when they were really busy the latter could not keep up, so that they had in addition to dig pits where bodies were thrown and burned by oil or petrol being poured upon them. People were gassed night and day. We have been told that these gas chambers could carry 1000 people at each gassing and that during some periods people were saved up until there were 1000 in order to save wasting gas. In the busy period the Sonderkommando was working so that there was a gassing every hour and they were working in double shifts day and night. You have heard that utterly foul picture painted by Dr. Bendel. Can you have any doubt about it? The persons who were being put into these gas chambers were not people who had committed any crime or offence, they were not people who had been submitted to any trial; they were pure and simply persons who were no longer fit to work for the Reich, and although Kramer would not admit it to me in cross-examination, when it was put to him in re-examination he said: “It was a doctrine of my party to destroy the Jewish race. “Whatever other places may also have been used in the course of this destruction, in Auschwitz alone literally millions of people were gassed for no other reasons than that they were Jews. The people who were gassed were

the old, the weak, the pregnant women, and children under 14. Those were the people who were being selected and put into these gas chambers and quite blatantly murdered. No one could for a moment believe that that was anything but murder and an obvious crime against humanity.” Given all the hesitation the Russian report--the only one available at the time of the Belsen Trial--had shown in even mentioning the word “Jew,” Backhouse’s closing speech was a remarkably straightforward and honest assessment of whom had been the principal victims of the gas chambers. And these were not, as Kramer had suggested, “the dregs of the ghettos “ without whom the world was better off. “This is manifestly untrue from the evidence,” Backhouse asserted. “The people who were going through this gas chamber were going through without regard to class or ability; without regard to anything at all except for the fact of their religion, their race, or that they could work no longer as slaves. This is why they went through the gas chamber.”

Conforming the customs of military justice, the Judge Advocate--the professional lawyer C. L. Stirling--provided a summary of the arguments, laying out the legal issues, and the questions the court should consider. “Now I want to remind you that in every trial in a British court there are two main issues which have to be established, and you will forgive me if I perhaps repeat things which are known to you because of your experience and standing in the Army. I feel it is my duty in a case of this gravity to emphasize these points although it may well be they have already occurred to you. The two broad issues that have to be established to your satisfaction beyond all reasonable doubt are, first, has the crime set out in the charge-sheet been established? Secondly, if it has been established, have the accused or any of them before you in the charge-sheet been proved to your satisfaction to have committed it?” As far as the first issue was concerned, Stirling had the following to say: “Rightly or wrongly (it is, of course, for you to decide whether or not you accept it) in my view there is a tremendous general

body of evidence going to establish that at Auschwitz the staff responsible for the well-being of internees were taking part in these gassings....I am not for a moment suggesting that the prisoners in the dock necessarily committed what I call that general crime. I will consider that later in detail under the second heading. There is that evidence before you and I must leave it to you to decide whether you accept it or not. As, however, the evidence is before you I am satisfied to say that there is evidence upon which you could find that the war crime set out in the first charge had been committed.” At the end of his summation, Stirling reminded the court of their duty. “You are about, in the next few minutes, to go to the peace and quiet of your own room to decide the fate of these men and women in the light of evidence. When you go I would ask you to take with you the words of Lord Sankey in the famous case of *Woolmington v. The Director of Public Prosecutions*, 1935 A.C. 462, a case that is known throughout the length and breadth of every English court. “Throughout the web of the English Criminal Law one golden thread is always to be seen, that is the duty of the prosecution to prove the prisoner’s guilt. If at the end of and on the whole of the case there is a reasonable doubt created by the evidence given by either the prosecution or the prisoner, the prosecution has not made out the case and the prisoner is entitled to an acquittal no matter what the charge or where the trial.” The principle that the Prosecution must prove the guilt of the prisoner is part of the common law of England, and no attempt to whittle it down can be entertained, and no attempt has been made in this case by the Prosecution to whittle it down. If you have a reasonable doubt in regard to any one of these accused, it is your duty to record a finding of not guilty. On the other hand, if the Prosecution have established their case to your satisfaction, and have excluded reasonable doubt by producing that judicial certainty which excludes such a doubt, then, gentlemen, it would be your duty to convict and to mete out that stern justice which a conviction on charges of this kind not only requires but demands.”

The court withdrew, and returned with 30 guilty verdicts and 14 acquittals. Of the 30 guilty verdicts, ten included a guilty for having committed a war crime in Auschwitz. Kramer, Klein and Hoessler were amongst those convicted. They were sentenced to death.

The proceedings of the Belsen Trial were published in 1949, and in the introduction the editor, Raymond Phillips, observed that in some future the trial would perhaps be remembered “for the achievement of the British Legal System in refusing to be stampeded into the wild justice of revenge.” Confronted with charges that had aroused “the resentment and horror of humanity,” the court had brought “a cool, calm, dispassionate and unhurried determination.” I agree with Phillips. On reading and re-reading the proceedings, one is not left with the sense that there were many, if any, loose ends. The prosecution did establish that the crime happened, that gas chambers operated in Auschwitz, and that the many of the accused shared a responsibility for it.

For the first time in the West, people entrusted with judicial authority had to pass formal judgement on the evidence according to traditional and proven methods. At the conclusion of the trial, the editors of *The Spectator* who had shown so much criticism for the proceedings before, finally admitted that all the attention to judicial form had served an important purpose. “There has been much criticism of the proceedings, chiefly directed to their length and the pains taken to ensure that justice shall be done and shall be seen to be done. Now the trial is over, such criticism seems very near praise. The trial has served a valuable purpose in exposing in detail some of the horrible crimes which were common form in the Germany of the concentration camps and in ensuring that they met with the strictest justice. One of the most interesting features was that the accused, who were capable of such inhuman cruelty, presented no appearance of abnormality and regarded their crimes as honourable services to their fatherland.”

With the Belsen Trial, the gas chambers at Auschwitz formally entered the historical record as what Colonel Backhouse rightly identified as “a war crime which has never been equalled.”

On August 8, 1945 the four Great Powers had signed an accord to establish an International Military Tribunal that was to prosecute and punish leading war criminals. The tribunal was initially given jurisdiction over three types of crimes: 1. Crimes against peace; 2. War crimes; and 3. Crimes against humanity. The last included the extermination, enslavement, and deportation of civilians and persecution on political, racial or religious grounds. The tribunal charged 22 political and military leaders of the Third Reich, including Ernst Kaltenbrunner, who had been since January 30, 1943 chief of the Reich Security Main Office--the central agency charged with the coordination of the so-called Final Solution of the Jewish Problem. Of all the defendants, Kaltenbrunner was the only SS official, and had had as such most business with Auschwitz. But even so, Kaltenbrunner had had only a relative little significance in the history of the camp: the main architect of the camp's history, and its transformation from a regular concentration camp into an extermination camp, *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Heinrich Himmler, was dead, as was his aide Reinhard Heydrich. As a result, the war-time history of Auschwitz had little *direct* bearing on the proceedings against the defendants. Only in the case against Kaltenbrunner was there an explicit connection between the camp and a defendant's direct responsibility. And, as we will see, it was in the case against Kaltenbrunner that the most important testimony was to occur.

The first time that the role of Auschwitz was highlighted was on January 3, 1946 in the testimony of Dieter Wisliceny, who had been an aide to Eichmann. Wisliceny, told the court about his involvement, in 1942, with the deportation of Slovak Jews as forced labour to Auschwitz, and of his involvement in early 1943 with the preparations for the deportation of more than 50,000 Saloniki Jews in between 20 and 25 transports of between 2,000 and 2,500 people each to Auschwitz. “Lt.Col.

Brookhart: "And what was the ultimate disposition of the Jews sent to Auschwitz from Greece?" Wisliceny: "They were without exception destined for the so-called final solution." Wisliceny also testified that he had participated in the deportation of some 450,000 Jews from Hungary. "Q.: "What became of the Jews to whom you have already referred-approximately 450,000?" A.: "They were, without exception, taken to Auschwitz and brought to the final solution." Q.: "Do you mean they were killed?" A.: "Yes, with the exception of perhaps 25 to 30 percent who were used for labor purposes. I here refer to a previously mentioned conversation on this matter between Hoess and Eichmann in Budapest."

Later that January Auschwitz took, for a short time, center stage in the presentation of the French case against the defendants. It was appropriate that the French would raise the issue, as they had suffered under Nazi rule, and 69,000 French citizens had been deported to Auschwitz. Interestingly, the French described the world of the camps as the center of a conspiracy against *civilisation* itself--that very civilisation of which France had been such a staunch defender. The Chief Prosecutor, Francois de Menthon defined "the organized and vast criminality" of National Socialism as a denial of "all spiritual, rational, and moral values by which the nations have tried, for thousands of years, to improve human conditions." Its aim, he said, was to "plunge humanity back into barbarism, no longer the natural and spontaneous barbarism of primitive nations, but into a diabolical barbarism, conscious of itself and utilizing for its ends all material means put at the disposal of mankind by contemporary science." Indeed, to de Menthon, the defendants did not stand accused because of war crimes committed "in the excitement of combat," or "under the influence of a mad passion," or out of "a warlike anger," or out of "an avenging resentment," but "as a result of cold calculation, of perfectly conscious methods, of a pre-existing doctrine."

Given this approach, the concentration camps were important evidence of the German assault against civilisation. Three witnesses described life and death in Mauthausen, and two testified about conditions in Buchenwald. On January 28, 1946, Marie Claude Vaillant-Couturier, deputy of the Constituent Assembly and Knight in the Legion of Honor, provided a long, precise and important testimony on the situation in Auschwitz. Vaillant-Couturier--a gentile--had been a member of the resistance, and she was arrested in 1942 and deported to Auschwitz in 1943. Examined by Deputy Prosecutor Charles Dubost, she provided a detailed account of the atrocious conditions in the women's camp at Birkenau, the sterilization of women, the killing of babies born of women who had arrived pregnant, and so on. "Dubost: "What do you know about the convoy of Jews which arrived from Romainville about the same time as yourself?" Vaillant-Couturier: "When we left Romainville the Jewesses who were there at the same time as ourselves were left behind. They were sent to Drancy and subsequently arrived at Auschwitz, where we found them again 3 weeks later, 3 weeks after our arrival. Of the original 3,000 only 125 actually came to the camp; the others were immediately sent to the gas chambers. Of these 125 not one was left alive at the end of 1 month." The transports operated as follows: When we first arrived, whenever a convoy of Jews came, a selection was made; first the old men and women, then the mothers and the children were put into the trucks together with the sick or those whose constitution appeared to be delicate. They took in only the young women and girls as well as the young men who were sent to the men's camp. Generally speaking, of a convoy of about 1,000 to 1,500, seldom more than 250--and this figure really was the maximum--actually reached the camp. The rest were immediately sent to the gas chamber. At this selection also, they picked out women in good health between the ages of 20 and 30, who were sent to the experimental block; and young girls and slightly older women, or those who had not been selected for that purpose, were sent to the camp where, like ourselves, they were tattooed and shaved. There was also, in the spring of 1944, a spe-

cial block for twins. It was during the time when large convoys of Hungarian Jews--about 700,000--arrived. Dr.Mengele, who was carrying out the experiments, kept back from each convoy twin children and twins in general, regardless of their age, so long as both were present. So we had both babies and adults on the floor at that block. Apart from blood tests and measuring I do not know what was done to them.” Q.: “Were you an eye witness of the selections on the arrival of the convoys?” A.: “Yes, because when we worked at the sewing block in 1944, the block where we lived directly faced the stopping place of the trains. The system had been improved. Instead of making the selection at the place where they arrived, a side line now took the train practically right up to the gas chamber; and the stopping place, about 100 meters from the gas chamber, was right opposite our block though, of course, separated from us by two rows of barbed wire. Consequently, we saw the unsealing of the cars and the soldiers letting men, women, and children out of them. We then witnessed heart-rending scenes; old couples forced to part from each other, mothers made to abandon their young daughters, since the latter were sent to the camp, whereas mothers and children were sent to the gas chambers. All these people were unaware of the fate awaiting them. They were merely upset at being separated, but they did not know that they were going to their death. To render their welcome more pleasant at this time--June-July 1944--an orchestra composed of internees, all young and pretty girls dressed in little white blouses and navy blue skirts, played during the selection, at the arrival of the trains, gay tunes such as “The Merry Widow,” the “Barcarolle” from “The Tales of Hoffman,” and so forth. They were then informed that this was a labor camp and since they were not brought into the camp they saw only the small platform surrounded by flowering plants. Naturally, they could not realize what was in store for them. Those selected for the gas chamber, that is, the old people, mothers, and children, were escorted to a red-brick building.” Q.: “These were not given an identification number?” A.: “No.” Q.: “They were not tattooed?” A.: “No. They were not even counted.” Q.:

“You were tattooed?” A.: “Yes, look.[*The witness showed her arm*]. They were taken to a red brick building, which bore the letters ‘Baden,’ that is to say ‘Baths.’ There, to begin with, they were made to undress and given a towel before they went into the so-called shower room. Later on, at the time of the large convoys from Hungary, they had no more time left to play-act or pretend; they were brutally undressed, and I know these details as I knew a little Jewess from France who lived with her family at the ‘Republique’ district.” Q.: “In Paris?” A.: “In Paris. She was called ‘little Marie’ and was the only one, the sole survivor of a family of nine. Her mother and her seven brothers and sisters had been gassed on arrival. When I met her she was employed to undress the babies before they were taken into the gas chamber. Once the people were undressed they took them into a room which was somewhat like a shower room, and gas capsules were thrown through an opening in the ceiling. An SS man would watch the effect produced through a porthole. At the end of 5 or 7 minutes, when the gas had completed its work, he gave the signal to open the doors; and men with gas masks--they were too interneers--went into the room and removed the corpses. They told us that the interneers must have suffered before dying, because they were closely clinging to one another and it was very difficult to separate them. After that a special squad would come to pull out gold teeth and dentures; and again, when the bodies had been reduced to ashes, they would sift them in an attempt to recover the gold....” By the time Dubost finished his presentation of the evidence of the concentration camps, there were few doubts left that the French prosecution had achieved its aim. Judge Sir Norman Birkett noted in his diary that “the evidence is building up a most terrible and convincing case of complete horror and inhumanity in the concentration camps.” And he added that one did not need much more. “The case has been proved over and over again.”

Yet the Russian prosecutors did not see any reason not to confront the court once more with Auschwitz. On February 27, 1946 they presented Severina Shmaglevskaya, a Polish inmate in Auschwitz, with the single aim to receive testimony about the attitude of the SS. "Mr. Counsellor Smirnov: "Tell me, Witness, did you yourself see the children being taken to gas chambers?" Shmaglevskaya: "I worked very close to the railway which led to the crematory. Sometimes in the morning I passed near the building the Germans used as a latrine, and from there I could secretly watch the transport. I saw many children among the Jews brought to the concentration camp. Sometimes a family had several children. The Tribunal is probably aware of the fact that in front of the crematory they were all sorted out." Q.: "Selection was made by the doctors?" A.: "Not always by doctors: sometimes by SS men." Q.: "And doctors with them?" A.: "Yes, sometimes, by doctors too. During such a sorting, the youngest and healthiest Jewish women in very small numbers entered the camp. Women carrying children in their arms or in carriages, or those who had larger children, were sent into the crematory with their children. The children were separated from their parents in front of the crematory and were led separately into gas chambers. At that time, when the greatest number of Jews were exterminated in the gas chambers, an order was issued that the children were to be thrown into the crematory ovens or the crematory ditches without previous asphyxiation with gas." Q.: "How should we understand that? Were they thrown into the ovens alive or were they killed by other means before they were burned?" A.: "The children were thrown in alive. Their cries could be heard all over the camp. It is hard to say how many there were." Q.: "Nevertheless, there was some reason why this was done. Was it because the gas chambers were over-worked?" A.: "It is very difficult to answer this question. We don't know whether they wanted to economize on the gas or whether there was no room in the gas chambers. I should also add that it is impossible to determine the number of these children--like that of the Jews--because they were driven directly to the crematory, were not registered, were

not tattooed, and very often were not even counted. We, the internees, often tried to ascertain the number of people who perished in gas chambers; but our estimates of the number of children executed could only be based on the number of children's prams which were brought to the storerooms. Sometimes there were hundreds of these carriages, but sometimes they sent thousands." Q.: "In one day?" A.: "Not always the same. There were days when the gas chambers worked from early morning until late at night." That same day the prison psychologist at the Nuremberg Trial, Gustave M. Gilbert, noted in his diary that Karl Doenitz's lawyer, Otto Kranzbuehler, had asked him "Didn't *anybody* know *anything* about *any* of these things?" Doenitz had just shaken his head, shrugging sadly. Gilbert had gone over to Alfred Jodl to ask him if it was possible that nobody knew anything about the camps. "Of course, somebody knew about it," Jodl said quietly. "There was a whole chain-of-command from the Chief of the RSHA down to the people who executed those commands. I then walked over to Kaltenbrunner. "I suppose you didn't know anything about these things either." "Of course not," he whispered. "The people who did are all dead.--Hitler, Himmler, Bormann, Heydrich, Eichmann--" "Did those few people have the sole knowledge and responsibility for the murder of millions of people and the burning of children alive?" "Well, no--the people who actually participated in it did--. But I had nothing to do with it." "Even as Chief of the RSHA?" "Concentration camps were not my responsibility. I never found out anything about any of this."

By the end of February, no-one felt that there was a need for more testimony about Auschwitz in the trial. The French and Russian prosecutors rightly assumed they had made their point, and the lawyers for the defendants felt no inclination to call attention to the camp. Then, on March 11, 1946, everything changed: British soldiers found Auschwitz Kommandant Rudolf Höss, who had been in hiding since the end of the war.

By his own account, initially the British treated Höss roughly. At the end of March his treatment improved, and he was flown to Nuremberg to serve as a defence witness for Kaltenbrunner. As we have seen, Kaltenbrunner maintained that he had nothing to do with Auschwitz--"Concentration camps were not my responsibility. I never found out anything about any of this "--and Kaltenbrunner's lawyer Kurt Kauffman believed that Höss could confirm Kaltenbrunner's claims in the matter of Auschwitz. In Nuremberg Höss was interrogated. At the certain moment he was asked if he could confirm that Jews started to arrive in great numbers in 1942. Höss did, and then gave a detailed list of the numbers: 250,000 from Poland, 65,000 from Greece, 100,000 from Germany, 90,000 from Holland, 110,000 from France, 90,000 from Slovakia, 20,000 from Belgium and 400,000 from Hungary. The conversation continued as follows: "Q.: "Now you just told us that you had facilities for 130,000. If you add all those figures they amount to a much greater number than 130,000. How could you accommodate all those people?" A.: "They were not supposed to be employed in work there, but they were supposed to be exterminated."

On 5 April Höss was given an affidavit which he corrected and ultimately signed. In that he admitted that he had overseen the extermination, "by gassing and burning," of at least two and half million human beings--mostly Jews. "6. The "final solution" of the Jewish question meant the complete extermination of all Jews in Europe. I was ordered to establish extermination facilities at Auschwitz in June 1941. At that time there were already in the general government three other extermination camps; BELZEK, TREBLINKA and WOLZEK. These camps were under the Einsatzkommando of the Security Police and SD. I visited Treblinka to find out how they carried out their exterminations. The Camp Commandant at Treblinka told me that he had liquidated 80,000 in the course of one-half year. He was principally concerned with liquidating all the Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. He used monoxide gas and I did not think his method were very efficient. So when I set up the

extermination building at Auschwitz I, I used Cyclon B, which was crystallized Prussic Acid we dropped into the death chamber from a small opening. It took from 3 to 15 minutes to kill the people in the death chamber depending upon climatic conditions. We knew when the people were dead because their screaming stopped. We usually waited about one-half hour before we opened the doors and removed the bodies. After the bodies were removed our special commandos took off the rings and extracted the gold from the teeth of the corpses.

7. Another improvement we made over Treblinka was that we built our gas chambers to accommodate 2,000 people at one time, whereas at Treblinka their 10 gas chambers only accommodated 200 people each. The way we selected our victims was as follows: we had two SS doctors on duty at Auschwitz to examine the incoming transport of prisoners. The prisoners would be marched by one of the doctors who would make spot decisions as they walked by. Those who were fit for work were sent into the Camp. Others were sent immediately to the extermination plants. Children of tender years were invariably exterminated since by reason of their youth they were unable to work. Still another improvement we made over Treblinka was that at Treblinka the victims almost always knew that they were to be exterminated and at Auschwitz we endeavoured to fool the victims into thinking that they were to go through a delousing process. Of course, frequently they realized our true intentions and we sometimes had riots and difficulties due to that fact. Very frequently women would hide their children under the clothes but of course when we found them we would send the children in to be exterminated. We were required to carry out these exterminations in secrecy but of course the foul and nauseating stench from the continuous burning of bodies permeated the entire area and all of the people living in the surrounding communities knew that exterminations were going on at Auschwitz.” On Monday, 15 April Höss was called to the witness stand. Examined by Kaltenbrunner’s lawyer Kauffmann, Höss tried to serve Kaltenbrunner’s case as well as he could. “Dr. Kaufmann: “I ask you whether Himmler inspected the

camp and convinced himself, too, of the process of annihilation? Höss: “Yes. Himmler visited the camp in 1942 and he watched in detail one processing from beginning to end.” Q.: “Does the same apply to Eichmann?” A.: “Eichmann came repeatedly to Auschwitz and was intimately acquainted with the proceedings.” Q.: “Did the Defendant Kaltenbrunner ever inspect the camp?” A.: “No.” Q.: “Did you ever talk with Kaltenbrunner with reference to your task?” A.: “No, never....”

Kauffmann’s examination did not help Kaltenbrunner’s case. American prosecutor Colonel John Harlan Amen’s cross-examination proved damaging for all the defendants. Initially Amen asked Höss a few simple questions concerning the practice of high German functionaries of visiting the camps, and more specifically about Kaltenbrunner’s connection to Auschwitz. Then he turned to the affidavit, and asked if Höss had signed it voluntarily. Höss answered in the affirmative.

Höss’ testimony created great gloom amongst the accused. Dr. Gilbert noted in his diary that the former Governor General of Poland, Hans Frank, told him that “That was the low point of the entire Trial--to hear a man say out of his own mouth that he exterminated 2 1 /2 million people in cold blood--. That is something that people will talk about for a thousand years.” Gilbert, however, was not surprised by Höss willingness to testify. He had got to know him during two visits. On April 9 Gilbert visited Höss in his cell. “He readily confirmed that approximately 2 1 /2 million Jews had been exterminated under his direction. The exterminations began in the summer of 1941. In compliance with Goering’s scepticism, I asked Hoes how it was technically possible to exterminate 2 1 /2 million people. “Technically?” he asked. “That wasn’t so hard--it would not have been hard to exterminate even greater numbers.” In answer to my rather naive questions as to how many people could be done away with in an hour, etc., he explained that one must figure it on a daily 24-hour basis, and it was possible to exterminate up to 10,000 in one 24-hour period. He explained that there were actually 6 extermination chambers. The 2 big ones could accommod-

ate as many as 2,000 in each and the 4 smaller ones up to 1500, making a total capacity of 10,000 a day. I tried to figure out how this was done, but he corrected me. "No, you don't figure it right. The killing itself took the least time. You could dispose of 2,000 in a half hour, but it was the burning that took all the time. The killing was easy; you didn't even need guards to drive them into the chambers; they just went in expecting to take showers and, instead of water, we turned on poison gas. The whole thing went very quickly." He related all of this in a quiet, apathetic, matter-of-fact tone of voice."

Asked by Gilbert to provide more detail, Höss wrote later that month a short memorandum which Gilbert did not publish at the time, but was to present during the Eichmann Trial to the District Court of Jerusalem. It gave a detailed description of the arrival, selection and killing of the deportees. "The freight trains with the Jews destined for extermination moved along a special railroad installation which had been laid down especially for this purpose right up to the extermination installations. Notification of these trains was given in advance by Obersturmbannführer Eichmann of the RSHA, and they were allocated consecutive numbers, together with letters of the alphabet, in order to prevent a mix-up with transports of other prisoners. Each cable relating to these transports bore the reference: "In accordance with the specified directives, and are to be subjected to special treatment." These trains consisted of closed freight cars and contained, on the average, about 2,000 persons. When the trains arrived at the aforementioned ramp, the accompanying railway personnel and the accompanying guard--members of the Security or Order Police--had to leave the area. Only the transport commander who had delivered it remained until it had been completely handed over, and the numbers checked, to the duty officer of the camp. After the trains were off-loaded and the numbers determined (lists by names were not drawn up), all the people had to file past two SS duty doctors, and in the course of this, those who were fit for work were separated from those who were unfit. On the average

about twenty-five per cent were found to be fit for work. These were marched off immediately into the camp, in order to change their clothes and be received there. All the luggage remained on the ramp and, after those unfit for work had also been sent off, it was brought to the store of personal effects, to be sorted out. Those unfit for work were classified according to sex--men, women, and children--and marched off to the nearest available extermination installation. Those unable to walk and women with small children were transported there on trucks. When they arrived, all of them had to strip naked in rooms which gave the impression of being delousing installations. The permanent labour unit of prisoners who worked in these installations--and who were also housed there and did not come into contact with other inmates of the camp--helped with the undressing and coaxed the hesitant to hurry up, so that the others would not have to wait so long. They were also told to take note where they put away their clothes, so that they would be able to find them again immediately after taking their bath. All this was done on purpose, in order to dispel any fears which might arise. After they had taken off their clothes, they were taken into a nearby room--the gas chamber itself. It had been prepared to look like a wash-room--that is to say, showers and pipes were installed throughout, water drainage channels, etc. The moment the entire transport had entered the chamber, the door was closed, and simultaneously the gas was forced in from above through a special aperture. It was Zyklon "B" gas, cyanide acid in the form of crystals, which vaporized immediately, that is to say, it took effect immediately upon coming into contact with oxygen. The people were dazed already on taking their first breath, and the process of killing took from thirteen to fifteen minutes., depending upon the weather conditions and the number of people locked up within. Thereafter, nothing moved any more. Thirty minutes after the gas had been released and had entered the chambers, they would be opened, and the transfer of the bodies to the crematoria would commence. Throughout all these years, I never came across a single case of a person coming out of the gas chambers while still alive. While the

bodies were taken out, the women's hair was still cut, and gold teeth and rings removed by prisoner dentists who were employed in this unit. In Birkenau there were five installations -two large crematoria, each of which had a capacity for receiving 2,000 persons in the course of 24 hours. That is to say, it was possible in one gas chamber to put to death up to 2,500 persons; in five double ovens heated with coke, it was possible to burn at most 2,000 bodies within 24 hours; two smaller installations could eliminate about 1,500 people, with four bigger double ovens to each of them. Furthermore, there was also an open-air installation--that is, an old farmhouse was sealed and turned into a gas chamber, which could also contain 1,500 persons at one and the same time. The incineration was carried out there in an open pit on wood, and this was practically limitless. In my estimation, it was possible to burn there, in 24 hours, up to 8,000 persons in this way. Hence it was possible to exterminate and eliminate up to 10,000 people within 24 hours in the installations described above. As far as I am aware, this number was attained only once in 1944, when delays occurred in the arrival of trains, and consequently five transports arrived together on one day. The ashes of the burnt bodies were ground into dust, which was poured into the Vistula in remote places and swept away with the current. On the basis of the figure of 2.5 million, which is the number of people who--according to Eichmann--were brought to Auschwitz for extermination, it may be said that on average, two transports arrived daily, with a combined total of 4,000 persons, of whom twenty-five per cent were fit for work, the balance of 3,000 were to be exterminated. The intervals in the various operations can be computed together at nine months. Thus there remain 27 months, with 90,000 people each month--a total of 2,430,000 people. This is a calculation of the technical potential. I have to keep to the figure mentioned by Eichmann, for he was the only SS officer who was allowed to keep records concerning these liquidation operations, according to the orders of the Reichsführer-SS. All other units which took part in any way had to destroy all records immediately. Eichmann mentioned this number in my presence

when he was called upon, in April 1945, to present a report to the Reichsführer-SS. I had no records whatsoever. But, to the best of my knowledge, this number appears to me much too high. If I calculate the total of the mass operations which I still remember, and still make allowance for a certain percentage of error, I arrive, in my calculation, at a total of 1.5 million at the most for the period from the beginning of 1941 to the end of 1944. But these are my computations which I cannot verify. Nuremberg, 24 April 1946 (Signed) Rudolf Höss (At the bottom of the document): Hungary – 400,000; Slovakia – 90,000; Greece – 65,000; Holland – 90,000; France – 110,000; Belgium – 20,000; the region of the Generalgouvernement and Upper Silesia – 250,000; Germany and Terezin – 100,000. Total – 1,125,000.”

Gilbert noted that Höss had little remorse. “One gets the general impression of a man who is intellectually normal but with schizoid apathy, insensitivity and lack of empathy that could hardly be more extreme in a frank psychotic.”

Höss’s Nuremberg testimony marked an important development in the historiography of Auschwitz. Until Höss took the stand, information had been based on the testimony of witnesses, of members of the camp’s lower personnel and middle-management, on a document collection that was only comprehensive where it concerned the construction of the camp, and on the inspection of the site itself. It had become clear by 1946 that the history of the camp had been complex, but there had been little insight why and how the camp had evolved. In Poland, Jan Sehn was not only ready to prosecute Höss for war crimes, but also very anxious to interview him as an eye-witness to history, as only the former commandant would be able to answer most of the various outstanding questions concerning the evolving purpose of Auschwitz. Sehn got his chance when, on request of the Polish government, Höss was extradited to Poland.

After Höss's arrival in Poland on May 25, 1946, Sehn and the psychologist Professor Stanislaw Batawia, who had been assigned the task to create a psychological profile of Höss, set out to establish a working relationship with him. Knowing quite well that he had no chance of acquittal, Höss decided to cooperate, and on their suggestion he wrote 34 shorter (the shortest is one paragraph long) and longer (the longest is 114 densely written pages long) documents. The first essay Höss drafted was a roughly 9,000 word-long statement on the role of Auschwitz in the Holocaust entitled "The Final Solution of the Jewish Question in Concentration Camp Auschwitz." In this essay, and in accordance with earlier statements made in Nuremberg, Höss claimed that Himmler had made the decision to transform Auschwitz into an extermination camp for Jews in the summer of 1941. There is no independent corroboration of Höss's account of his conversation with Himmler, and so one can only come to tentative conclusions as to the value of Höss's account of the decision to make Auschwitz into a final destination for European Jewry. What is, however, fully corroborated by many other witnesses --both Germans such as Broad and Aumeier as well as others--is the bulk of Höss's testimony. First experimentation with the use of Zyklon B as a killing agent occurred in the Fall of 1941. Initially rooms in the basement of Block 11 were used as primitive gas chambers. As it was difficult to ventilate these spaces, the morgue of crematorium 1 was adapted for the purpose. "The doors were made airtight, and we knocked some holes in the ceiling through which we could throw in the gas crystals." Finally Höss ordered the transformation of some peasant cottages into gas chambers. "I am unable to recall when the destruction of the Jews began--probably in September 1941, or perhaps not until January 1942. At first we dealt with the Jews from Upper Silesia. These Jews were arrested by the Gestapo from Katowice and transported via the Auschwitz-Dziediez railroad and unloaded there. As far as I can recall, *these* transports never numbered more than a thousand persons. A detachment of SS from the camp took charge of them at the railroad ramp, and the officer in charge marched

them to the bunker in two groups. This is what we called the extermination installation. Their luggage remained on the ramp and was later brought between the DAW [German Armaments Works] and the railroad station. The Jews had to undress at the bunker and were told that they would have to go into the delousing rooms. All of the rooms--there were five of them--were filled at the same time. The airtight doors were screwed tight, and the contents of the gas crystal canisters emptied into the rooms through special hatches. After half an hour the doors were opened and the bodies were pulled out. Each room had two doors. They were then moved using small carts on special tracks to the ditches. The clothing was brought by trucks to the sorting place. All of the work was done by a special contingent of Jews. They had to help those who were about to die with the undressing, the filling up of the bunkers, the clearing of the bunkers, removal of the bodies, as well as digging the mass graves and, finally, covering the graves with earth. These Jews were housed separately from the other prisoners and, according to Eichmann's orders, they themselves were to be killed after each large extermination action."

As Höss mentioned, initially the corpses of those murdered were buried. Then In the summer of 1942 a decision was taken to change the manner of corpse disposal. The occasion was the well-documented two-day visit by Himmler. "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 2 was being cleared of 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. Shortly after Himmler's visit, SS Colonel Blobel from Eichmann's office arrived and brought Himmler's order, which stated that all the mass graves were to be opened and all the bodies cremated. It further stated that all the ashes were to be disposed of in such a way that later on there would be no way to determ-

ine the number of those cremated. Blobel had already conducted various experiments in Kulmhof [Chelmno], which tried to burn the bodies in various ways. He was ordered by Eichmann to show me the installations. I drove with Hössler to Chelmno for an inspection.” As Höss was to explain elsewhere, the most important reason for the change in corpse disposal was the fact that the enormous mass graves putrified the water supply at the camp and the surrounding area. “As late as the summer of 1942 the corpses were still buried in mass graves. Not until the end of the summer did we start burning them. At first we put two thousand bodies on a large pile of wood. Then we opened up the mass graves and burned the new bodies on top of the old ones from the earlier burials. At first we poured waste oil over the bodies. Later on we used methanol. The burning went on continuously--all day and all night. By the end of November all the mass graves were cleared. The number of buried bodies in the mass graves was 107,000. This number contains not only the first Jewish transports which were gassed when we started the burnings, but also the bodies of the prisoners who died in the main Auschwitz camp during the winter of 1941-42 because the crematory was out of order. The prisoners who died at Birkenau are included in that number.”

The open-air cremations attracted attention to the killings, and therefore Höss did everything to get the four new crematoria completed. “The two large crematories were built in the winter of 1942-43 and brought into service in the spring of 1943. Each had five ovens with three doors per oven and could cremate about two thousand bodies in less than twenty-four hours. Technical difficulties made it impossible to increase the capacity. Attempts to do this caused severe damage to the installations and on several occasions they were unable to function. Crematories [2 and 3] both had underground undressing rooms and underground gas chambers in which the air could be completely ventilated. The bodies were taken to the ovens on the floor above by an elevator. The [two] gas chambers could hold three thousand people, but

this number was never achieved, since the individual transports were never that large. The two smaller crematories [4 and 5] were capable of burning about 1,500 bodies in twenty-four hours, according to the calculations made by the construction company called Topf of Erfurt. Because of the wartime shortage of materials, the builders were forced to economize during the construction of crematories [4 and 5]. They were built above ground and the ovens were not as solidly constructed.”

Höss gave a detailed description of the killing procedure in which he expanded considerably on the information that he had given in his Nuremberg affidavit. “The extermination process in Auschwitz took place as follows: Jews selected for gassing were taken as quietly as possible to the crematories. The men were already separated from the women. In the undressing chamber, prisoners of the Sonderkommandos, who were specially chosen for this purpose, would tell them in their own language that they were going to be bathed and deloused, and that they must leave their clothing neatly together, and, above all, remember where they put them, so that they would be able to find them quickly after the delousing. The Sonderkommando had the greatest interest in seeing that the operation proceeded smoothly and quickly. After undressing, the Jews went into the gas chamber, which was furnished with showers and water pipes and gave a realistic impression of a bath house. The women went in first with their children, followed by the men, who were always fewer in number. This part of the operation nearly always went smoothly since the Sonderkommando would always calm those who showed any anxiety or perhaps who had even some clue as to their fate. As an additional precaution, the Sonderkommando and an SS soldier always stayed in the chamber until the very last moment. The door would be screwed shut and the waiting disinfection squads would immediately pour the gas [crystals] into the vents in the ceiling of the gas chamber down an air shaft which went to the floor. This ensured the rapid distribution of the gas. The process could be observed through the peep hole in the door. Those who were stand-

ing next to the air shaft were killed immediately. I can state that about one-third died immediately. The remainder staggered about and began to scream and struggle for air. The screaming, however, soon changed to gasping and in a few moments everyone lay still. After twenty minutes at most no movement could be detected. The time required for the gas to take effect varied according to weather conditions and depended on whether it was damp or dry, cold or warm. It also depended on the quality of the gas, which was never exactly the same, and on the composition of the transports, which might contain a higher proportion of healthy Jews, or the old and the sick, or children. The victims became unconscious after a few minutes, according to the distance from the air shaft. Those who screamed and those who were old, sick or weak, or the small children died quicker than those who were healthy and young. The door was opened half an hour after the gas was thrown in and the ventilation system was turned on. Work was immediately started to remove the corpses. There was no noticeable change in the bodies and no sign of convulsions or discoloration. Only after the bodies had been left lying for some time--several hours--did the usual death stains appear where they were laid. Seldom did it occur that they were soiled with faeces. There were no signs of wounds of any kind. The faces were not contorted. The Sonderkommando now set about removing the gold teeth and cutting the hair from the women. After this, the bodies were taken up by an elevator and laid in front of the ovens, which had meanwhile been fired up. Depending on the size of the bodies, up to three corpses could be put in through one oven door at the same time. The time required for cremation also depended on the number of bodies in each retort, but on average it took twenty minutes. As previously stated, Crematories 2 and 3 could cremate two thousand bodies in twenty-four hours, but a higher number was not possible without causing damage to the installations. Crematories 4 and 5 should have been able to cremate 1,500 bodies in twenty-four hours, but as far as I know this figure was never reached."

As the crematoria ovens failed at times, Höss ordered that the possibility of open-air cremations should remain available. During the Hungarian Action, when the daily number of gassed Jews far exceeded the official incineration capacity of the crematoria, open-air pyres took care of the excess. “The highest total figure of people gassed and cremated in twenty-four hours was slightly more than nine thousand. This figure was reached in the summer of 1944, during the action in Hungary, using all installations except Crematory [4]. On that day five trains arrived because of delays on the rail lines, instead of three, as was expected, and in addition the railroad cars were more crowded than usual.”

The killing frenzy that characterized the Hungarian Action marked the nadir in the history of Auschwitz. At other times there were few killings. As a result, one could not calculate the total number of victims using the Soviet method of using the total incineration capacity of Auschwitz over its history as a point of departure--a method that had led the Soviet State Extraordinary Commission for the Investigation of Fascist and Nazi Crimes to speculate the more than 4 million people had been murdered in Auschwitz. Höss explicitly rejected the Soviet number, and also the figure of 2.5 million victims which he had initially mentioned during his Nuremberg interrogations. Questioned by Sehn, he confirmed that the number of victims had been most likely less than 1.2 million persons--a conclusion he had first reached in the consideration on the technology of the Final Solution, drawn up in April on request of Gilbert. “During my earlier interrogations I gave the number of 2.5 million Jews who arrived at Auschwitz to be exterminated. This figure was given to me by Eichmann, who had given this figure to my superior, SS General Glücks, when Eichmann was ordered to make a report to Himmler shortly before Berlin was surrounded. Eichmann and his deputy, Günther, were the only ones who had the necessary information to calculate the total number of Jews annihilated....I myself never knew the total number, and I have nothing to help me ar-

rive at an estimate. I can only remember the figures involved in the larger actions, which were repeated to me by Eichmann or his deputies. From Upper Silesia and the General Government 250,000 Germany and Theresienstadt 100,000 Holland 95,000 Belgium 20,000 France 110,000 Greece 65,000 Hungary 400,000 Slovakia 90,000 I can no longer remember the figures for the smaller actions, but they were insignificant by comparison with the numbers given above. I regard the number of 2.5 million as far too high. Even Auschwitz had limits to its destructive capabilities.”

Höss completed his essay on the use of Auschwitz as a killing installation for Jews in November 1946. In the month that followed, he wrote on invitation of Sehn 32 shorter essays on various aspects of the SS and its men. In some of the biographical essays he touched on various aspects of the killing operations at Auschwitz. For example, in his portrait of Dr. Gröning, the Surgeon-General of the SS, Höss discussed the role of the SS Hygiene Institute and its leader Dr. Mugrowski in obtaining the cyanide used in the gas chambers. “If I remember correctly, the Cyclon B gas was manufactured by the Tesch and Stabenow firm until 1942 in Hamburg. This was the gas used for disinfection and also for the extermination of the Jews. It was procured by the administration from Tesch and Stabenow. From 1942, all poison gas was purchased for the SS by a central authority. Mugrowski was in charge of the Hygienic Department and he alone was responsible for the shipments of the gas. So he was the one who continually had to get the gas for the extermination of the Jews. Tesch and Stabenow was able to deliver the needed amounts of gas by railroad on time until 1943. But after 1943 the increasing Allied air raids made this impossible. Consequently, Auschwitz was forced a few times to use trucks to get the gas from the manufacturing plant in Dessau.” A number of the permission slips to dispatch a truck from Auschwitz to Dessau, signed by Höss’s adjutant Mulka, survived the war, and were submitted as evidence in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial (1963-64). During Mulka’s cross-examination, the

presiding judge asked him about these slips. “[Chairman]: ‘Accused Mulka, have you signed permissions for trips to Dessau?’ [Mulka]: ‘I only remember one occasion. A permission was signed by Glücks and at the left bottom counter-signed by me. It concerned a disinfection means.’ Q.: ‘Here it reads ‘For the Resettlement of the Jews’ and ‘In confirmation of the copy Mulka.’ You knew what the resettlement of the Jews meant?’ A.: ‘Yes, that was known to me.’ Q.: ‘And what were those materials for the resettlement of the Jews?’ A.(silently): ‘Yes, raw materials.’ Q.: ‘All right then. That was thus Zyklon-B.’ A.(even more silently): ‘Yes, Zyklon-B.’”

Let us return to Höss’s essay on the SS Hygienic Institute. In this same account, Höss remarked on the use of the ambulances to transport the gas to the gas chambers. “The ambulances were for use by the garrison doctor, and he was authorized to issue orders for their use. Because there was a constant shortage of trucks in Auschwitz, the garrison doctor had no choice but to use the ambulances for shipments to other camps. It gradually became the custom that all necessary trips for the garrison doctor were carried out with the ambulances. So, not only the sick were driven from camp to camp, but the dead also. Medicines, bandages, and surgical equipment were all transported in the same ambulances. The doctors and the medics drove them to their duties on the ramp and to the gas chambers. The Jews who could not walk were driven from the ramp to the gas chambers in ambulances. If no trucks were available, the standby ambulances were used. Because the medics were the ones who threw the gas into the gas chambers, they would be driven with their cans of gas to the gas chambers using the ambulances when no other trucks were available. They just hitchhiked a ride with the doctors who were going there anyway. As time went by the ambulances were used for all kinds of purposes because no other trucks were available. No one ever gave a thought that they were profaning the symbol of the Red Cross when the ambulances drove to the gas chambers loaded with those who were to be gassed and the gas it-

self. No doctor ever objected to this. Even the ever-sensitive Dr. Wirths never brought the subject up with me, and I myself never gave it a thought either.”

In a separate report on the institutional structure of Auschwitz, Höss once again discussed the role of Dr. Wirths and his colleagues in the Holocaust. “Aside from the customary medical duties, the SS doctors of Auschwitz pursued the following activities: 1. According to Himmler’s guidelines, they had to select males and females from the incoming transports of Jews who were able to work. 2. The doctors had to be present during the extermination process in the gas chambers to supervise the prescribed application of the poison gas Cyclon B by using the disinfection fixtures. Furthermore they had to make certain after the gas chambers were opened that the extermination process had been completely carried out. 3. The dentists continuously had to conduct spot checks to make certain that the prisoner dentists of the Sonderkommando pulled all the gold teeth from the gassed and dropped them into a special security container. Furthermore they had to supervise the melting of the gold teeth and their safekeeping until delivery to the proper SS branch was made.”

In a long essay on Heinrich Himmler and his role in the development of Auschwitz, Höss provided much detail about Himmler’s crucial two-day visit to Auschwitz of July 17 and 18. Höss recorded that the *Reichsführer-SS* was briefed on the progress of the design of the settlement and the I.G. Farben complex, that he visited the *Stammlager*, Birkenau, and the various agricultural and industrial operations in the camp’s Zone of Interests. As a special treat he witnessed the first day the complete extermination process of a transport of Dutch 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 in total silence.” Höss noted that he desperately tried to focus Himmler’s attention on all the various unresolved issues, which

included the problem of the waste water treatment which continued to be an irritant between the camp and the province, but Himmler shrewdly managed the situation in such a way that Höss had no opportunity to complain. He decided not to stay the night in Höss's house, where he would have been subject to his subaltern's petitions, but in the official Kattowitz residence of the *Gauleiter* Bracht of Upper Silesia. Politesse demanded that he invited Höss for dinner, but to ensure that neither the *Kommandant* nor the *Gauleiter* would have any opportunity to raise difficult issues, Himmler insisted that the respective spouses would join them. According to Höss it was a pleasant gathering. "He was in a very good mood that evening; charming and very talkative, especially with the two ladies, the wife of the Gauleiter and my wife. He discussed every topic that came up in the 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 Gauleiter 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." The next morning Himmler had a private discussion with Bracht about some questions concerning the resettlement program in Upper Silesia, and after that was picked up by Höss for the second part of his visit to Auschwitz. A man with a great sense of chivalry, Himmler had a special interest in the treatment of women prisoners. Thus he watched the beating of a woman prisoner ("a professional criminal and prostitute") and pardoned some Polish women who had been imprisoned for minor offenses. Just before he stepped in the car Himmler instructed Höss to increase the capacity of Auschwitz-Birkenau from 100,000 to 200,000 inmates. Acknowledging Höss's difficulties he said that "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.” And he added to this another instruction. “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.” Despite his promotion, Höss was less than happy with the visit.

As he was completing his essays, Höss faced justice. On January 11, 1947, Höss testified in Cracow before Judge Jan Sehn and Edward Pechalski, Vice Prosecutor of the Court of Appeal in Cracow, about the structure and operation of concentration camps in general, and Auschwitz in particular. “The only German camps possessing the full rights of a concentration camp [*Konzentrationslager* or *KL*] were those with a political department [*Politische Abteilung*] headed by an officer of the Reich Security Main Office [RSHA]. Such camps were admission camps [*Einweisungslager*], that is camps that could admit prisoners directed by RSHA and its regional posts, release prisoners in accordance with RSHA decisions and transfer prisoners to other camps. Most of these proper camps had many branches satellite camps in the area. For these branches, usually called labour camps [*Arbeitslager* or *A.L.*], the concentration camp functioned as the main camp [*Stammlager*]. Administratively the prisoners of these labour camps were counted as part of the main camp. Each main camp served its surrounding region

as an admission camp. As such, the concentration camp in Auschwitz served the General Government and Silesia, until the camp in Gross-Rosen became independent. From that time Auschwitz only served Upper Silesia and the Sudeten.” After a lengthy description about the way the camps operated as an instrument of political terror within Germany, Höss stated that after the war began the role of the camps expanded to include political opponents from the conquered countries. “All of them were treated as enemies of the German State. Accordingly, the camps were organised so that most of these enemies were to die in them. Neither Himmler nor any of his helpers ever said it clearly. Yet they used to create such living conditions for prisoners in the camps that this order, unspoken officially, was practically fully executed in the camps. The proof that it was his and the Reich leadership intention is a fact that in the cases where some prisoner groups, whose life he cared for, were an issue, he was doing everything so that they were not destroyed in concentration camps. This applies, for example, to the Aryan prisoners from North-European countries, that is Norway and Denmark.”

Höss testified that, above and beyond the normal task to imprison political opponents, Auschwitz had been given an extra function: “it became the place of mass destruction of Jews of all nationalities and from all countries conquered by the Third Reich.” “This second role of the Auschwitz camp I have described in details in my essay where I call the camp a place of destruction [*Vernichtungsanstalt*] in connection with its function within the action to exterminate the Jews [*Judenvernichtungsaktion*]. During the war waged by the Third Reich this extermination action expanded according to the following stages. In the first period of the war *Einsatzkommandos* consisting of RSHA officers and police members followed German armies. These *Einsatzkommandos* were commanded by SS-Brigadeführer Ohlendorf and were to clean occupied area from hostile elements. Therefore their first victims were Jews, who were gathered into groups and exterminated on the spot.

The next stage were actions carried out by in Poznan by the Higher SS and Police Leader von Alvensleben and in Lublin and, after the war with Russia began, in the adjacent eastern districts by the SS and Police Commander Globocnik. Both Alvensleben and Globocnik set up extermination places for Jews that were subordinated to them: Alvensleben in Chelmno (Kulmhof) and in Grudzia, and Globocnik in Sobibor, Belzec, Treblinka, and Lublin.” According to Höss, an important advantage of these extermination camps over the shootings by the Einsatzgruppen was the possibility to recover and exploit the personal property of the victims. “He used to deliver valuables looted in the progress of the action to Himmler.” Yet the camps operated by von Alvensleben and Globocnik had no excess capacity to deal with the Jews from countries other than Poland, “Himmler summoned me in the summer of 1941 and ordered me to prepare in Oswiecim instruments of destruction that could be used in this action.” “I took up this task, details of my activities in this field I have described in my essay I have submitted and in the essay about Eichmann’s activity. I request to enclose this essay to the current report. The second function, conducting the action of extermination of Jews in the Auschwitz camp, I fulfilled in this camp on the basis of Himmler’s verbal order, at the same time fulfilling officially functions of the SS Garrison Commander and the Commandant of the camp in Auschwitz. I held these positions since May 1940 till the end of November 1943. On the 1st of December 1943 I was transferred from Auschwitz to the post of the chief of the DI office at the Main Economic-Administrative Office of the SS [SS-WVHA] in Berlin-Oranienburg. It was the political department of the SS-WVHA. As the chief of the department I took care of all matters concerning the concentration camps of interest to the RSHA. After I left the commandant’s post in Auschwitz, the extermination of the Jews continued to be carried out in that camp. It was directed by my successor on the post of the garrison chief and camp commandant, *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Arthur Liebehenschel, who held this position until the beginning of June 1944. Under his management the liquidation

of Jews coming in transports proceeded inefficiently. Therefore, in the beginning of June 1944, Pohl sent me to Auschwitz to improve the action and adjust it to the plan set by RSHA. In 1944 I directed this action in June, July and August. In this period of time, because of seniority I was officially the garrison chief in Auschwitz. Baer was already the commandant of Auschwitz I, Kramer of Auschwitz II, and Schwartz of Auschwitz III. I finally left Auschwitz at the end of August 1944.

Kramer, as the commandant of the camp Auschwitz II where instruments of destruction were concentrated, co-operated with me in the June to August period in the action of exterminating the Jews. After my final departure Kramer continued the action until November 1944, when Himmler forbade further extermination of Jews. He issued this ban as a result of negotiations with the Jewish representatives, among them were envoys of the Zionists leader Weissmann. Becher in Budapest, in Switzerland and Turkey carried out the negotiations. They were based on the idea the Jews were to deliver various goods in exchange for Jews Germans kept. Because foreign Jews representatives demanded immediate stop to the destruction actions, German side prolonged the negotiations as much as possible to win some time and annihilate as many Jews as possible. Only in November 1944, Himmler finally acceded to the condition given by the Jewish representatives, that is to immediate stop the action, only in November 1944.”

In his testimony, Höss addressed the question concerning the number of victims. “One man- Eichmann, had all notes concerning the number of Jews destroyed in the action I have described. I cannot give figures for Auschwitz because I did not use to record them. I was acting in accordance with Himmler’s order. Just before the breakdown of the Reich in April 1945, I was present when Eichmann gave a report to Glücks on the number of Jews destroyed and killed. I remember precisely that Eichmann gave a figure of 2 1 /2 million for Auschwitz. In the same report he said to Glücks that in the course of anti-Jewish action in Auschwitz, some 25 -- 30% of all newcomers were selected as fit for work,

and were not annihilated immediately. I stress that all arriving Jews selected as fit for work, and kept in the camp, were registered and included in camp evidential number series. However I cannot explain if they were numbered only in A and B series or in the general male and female series as well. As I recall, Jewish numbering series A and B were introduced only in 1943. I suppose Jews who came previously were numbered in the general series. Hungarian Jews, Polish Jews from Upper Silesia and the General Government, French Jews, German Jews and Jews from Theresienstadt, Dutch, Slovakian, and Greek Jews, and smaller groups of Jews of various other nationalities such as Yugoslavia and Russia were annihilated in mass actions in Auschwitz. I mentioned the nationalities in order of number of victims. The largest quota of registered prisoners who were imprisoned in the camp, and not brought to the camp for extermination, were Aryan Poles. Reich Germans and Czechs were the next largest categories. There were smaller numbers of Yugoslavs, French, Belgians, Germans, Italians, Latvians, Russians, Lithuanians and Spanish in the Auschwitz camp. Moreover there was a number of Jews with fake passports issued to them by representatives of various South American and other countries from all over the world. I can give neither the general number of prisoners numbered in all series nor the highest figures in each series. I cannot give the figure of victims from among numbered prisoners.” Höss testified that he has done all he had confessed out of a sense of duty towards his superiors. Yet he confessed that he often had felt doubts. “Many times in the course of action of mass destruction of Jews I wondered if some Providence exists and if yes, how it is possible such things may happen. Nevertheless I was present everywhere, both at the coming transports reception and at gassing in gas chambers and corpses cremation, trying to set an example to my subordinates and avoid accusation of requiring something I run away from myself.”

At the end of his testimony, Höss summarized his activities in life and his activities in point form. “I admit the following facts: 1. Since November 1922 until Germany’s downfall in 1945, I was a member of the National Socialist German Workers Party. 2. Since June 1933 until the downfall of the Third Reich in 1945, I was a member of the SS, reaching at the end the rank of *SS-Obersturmbannführer*. 3. From May 1940 until the end of November 1943, I fulfilled the functions of commandant of the concentration camp in Auschwitz, and SS-garrison commander. 4. From December, 1, 1943 until the downfall of the Reich, I fulfilled functions of chief of DI office in the Main Economic-Administrative Office of the SS. 5. Since the summer of 1941 I prepared, and since January 1942 I directed the action of mass killing of Jews in extermination installations of the concentration camp in Auschwitz. 6. During my activity in Auschwitz millions of people died there, and I am unable to establish their exact number. 7. In Auschwitz, these victims were robbed of their possessions, the value of which I am even now not able to estimate approximately. 8. According to the rules in force, as the commandant of the camp I was solely and fully responsible for everything that took place in the camp. All issues not mentioned in the deposition and discussed in essays I drew up, I consider essential supplement to the content of this deposition and I ask to enclose these essays to the depositions of this interrogation.” Höss had testified in German, which had been translated in Polish. The Polish text was retranslated into German, and approved by Höss. “The whole content of the protocol before me has been translated into German. The record presents my deposition both literally as well as to its meaning. In endorsement, I personally sign the protocol.”

Cross-examined during his trial, Höss went into greater detail about many of the issues he had discussed in his deposition on the Final Solution. “Höss: “On the basis of those reports, *Reichsführer-SS* Himmler ordered that I was to personally carry out this action in Auschwitz. In his program Eichmann had envisioned a schedule of four

trains every day. This was, however, not feasible despite the development of all existing installations. For that reason, I personally travelled to Eichmann in Budapest to annul this order. We solved the matter as follows: one day two trains, and the next day three trains were to leave for Auschwitz. I remember precisely that the schedule, negotiated with the railway authorities in Budapest, anticipated a total of 111 of such trains. Nevertheless, when the first transports arrived in Auschwitz, Eichmann came also in order to find out if it wouldn't be possible to send more trains: *the Reichsführer-SS* demanded that the Hungarian action was to be accelerated." Prosecutor Siewierski: "Let the defendant explain it more clearly: after your return to Auschwitz, did you give any orders of technical nature to speed up the gassing and incineration of Jews?" A.: "I remember that we accelerated the expansion of the railway station inside the camp with its siding consisting of three tracks. Furthermore we reactivated the open-air cremation site known as installation 5. We also reinforced the squads who were to sort the luggage of the deportees. It took between four and five hours to unload a train--people and all their luggage--and there was no way to do it faster. People could be dealt with within this time, but the luggage was accumulating in such quantities that this forced us to abandon the idea to increase the number of transports. Even as we added another 1,000 additional inmates to the squads sorting the luggage, there was no way to speed up the action. We had not enough space to store all these things, and this is why we failed in our effort to faster send out of the camp all the clothing and belongings these people had brought to Auschwitz. No improvements could be made to the crematoria. After eight to ten hours of operation the crematoria were unfit for further use. It was impossible to operate them continuously. As Eichmann had mentioned that we should expect by the end of the year 1944 and in 1945 more transports, we planned a larger crematorium. It was to be a huge, circular brick furnace, to be built underground. Due to lack of time, it was never designed." Q.: "When the defendant came to supervise the action, did you consider Moll--the chief of the crematoria--to

be the right man in the right place, or did the defendant have to give further orders?" A.: "When I came to Auschwitz, Moll worked in some satellite camp. I withdrew him from that camp, and assigned him to the cremating kommando--the one burning prisoners in the open air. The previous chief could not handle it." Q.: "And Moll could?" A.: "Yes. He proved capable."

Given Höss's full confession, it was no surprise that the court convicted him for mass murder. Remarkably, however, the court did not accept the number of four million victims mentioned in the Soviet Report, and assumed in the indictment. In its judgement, the court stated that Höss had participated in the murder of "an indeterminate number [of victims], but certainly no less than 2,500,000, mostly Jews, brought in transports from various European countries for the purpose of immediate extermination, and therefore not officially registered."

Waiting for his execution, Höss wrote a 224-page long and detailed autobiography that expanded on his earlier statements made. Höss described how systematic mass killing in the camp began in the summer of 1941, with the arrival in Auschwitz for execution of Soviet prisoners-of-war identified as political commissars. The first experiments with hydrogen cyanide as a killing agent were done on these people. Höss recalled that he instructed *Lagerführer* Karl Fritsch, who was responsible for the liquidation of the Soviets and was also in charge of the fumigation of the camp and the disinfection process in the extant gas chambers in Blocks 3 and 26, to carry out a pilot experiment. Fritsch obliged with a transport of Soviet prisoners-of-war whom he took to Block 11 and locked into a basement cell. Fritsch threw Zyklon-B crystals into the room and all the men died.

Encouraged by his success, Fritsch conducted the first mass execution with Zyklon-B on 3 September. "I viewed the killings wearing a gas mask for protection. Death occurred in the crammed full cells immediately after the gas was thrown in. Only a brief choking outcry and it

was all over. This first gassing of people [which Höss witnessed] did not really sink into my mind. Perhaps I was much too impressed by the whole procedure.” Höss recorded that, shortly thereafter, they transformed the morgue of crematorium 1 into a gas chamber. Fritsch’s men punched three square portholes through the morgue roof and covered them with tightly-fitting wooden lids. The murder of 900 Soviets inaugurated the new gas chamber. “The entire transport fit exactly in the room,” Höss recalled. “The doors were closed and the gas poured in through the opening in the roof. How long the process lasted, I don’t know, but for quite some time sounds could be heard. As the gas was thrown in some of them yelled ‘Gas!’ and a tremendous screaming and shoving started toward both doors, but the doors were able to withstand all the force.” A few hours later the fans were turned on and the doors opened. “I really didn’t waste any thoughts about the killing of the Russian prisoners of war,” Höss confessed. “It was ordered; I had to carry it out. But I must admit openly that the gassings had a calming effect on me, since in the near future the mass annihilation of the Jews was to begin.”

I could go on quoting from Höss’s autobiography, but as it substantially confirms everything he had said in his essay on the Final Solution, I will stop here.

This brings to an end Part Two of my report. It will be clear that, by early 1947, there was a massive amount of evidence of the use of the camp as a site for mass extermination. This evidence had become slowly available during the war as the result of reports by escaped inmates, had become more substantial through the eye-witness accounts by former Auschwitz inmates immediately after their liberation in Auschwitz and other concentration camps, and was confirmed in the Polish forensic investigations undertaken in 1945 and 1946. Finally, this evidence was corroborated by confessions of leading German personnel employed at Auschwitz during its years of operation.

It is, in other words, highly implausible that knowledge about Auschwitz was a war-time fabrication by British propagandists. Instead, the material brought together in Part Two shows that knowledge about Auschwitz emerged cumulatively from a convergence of independent accounts, acquiring an epistemological status located somewhere in the realm framed on the one hand by a judgement that knows a fact “beyond reasonable doubt,” and on the other hand by the always receding horizon that promises unqualified certainty. In short, it has become possible, on the basis of the material presented and discussed so far, to assert as “moral certainty” the statement that Auschwitz was an extermination camp where the Germans killed around one million people with the help of gas chambers.

PART THREE *CONCERNING DOCUMENTS*

VI Blueprints of Genocide

“Things of several kinds may admit and require several sorts of proofs, all which may be good in their kind. The Philosopher has long ago told us [Aristotle, *Eth. Lib. 1, cap. 3; Metaph. lib. 1, cap ult.*], that according to the divers nature of things, so must the Evidences for them be; and that ‘tis an argument of an undisciplined wit not to acknowledg this. He that is rational and judicious will expect no other kind of Arguments in any case than the subject-matter will bear....All things are not capable of the same kind of Evidence....And as for matters of fact, concerning Times, Places, Persons, Actions, which depend upon story and the relation of others, these things are not capable of being proved by such scientificall Principles as the others are....From whence I infer this, That it is not, ought not to be, any prejudice to the Truth or Certainty of any thing, that its is not to be made out of such kind of proof, of which the nature of that thing is not capable, provided it be capable of satisfactory proofs of another kind.”

When in late 1944 the Germans closed and dismantled the Auschwitz gas chambers and, shortly thereafter, dynamited the crematoria and burned the camp archives, they did so in order to destroy all immediate material evidence of what the camp had been between 1942 and

1944. And at the same time allied bombers completed the destruction of primary evidence in successfully bombing SS offices in Berlin. As a result, any historian who seeks to reconstruct the development and operation of Auschwitz as an extermination camp had to rely in perhaps a greater measure than he or she would feel comfortable with on what Marc Bloch identified as “intentional evidence”--narrative sources such as testimonies, confessions, memoirs and so on. Following Bloch’s definition, all these accounts are “consciously intended to inform their readers.” While very important as a historical source, the problem with intentional evidence is that the historian always should assume the possibility that it might have been created to mislead us. As we have seen in Part Two, there is sufficient corroboration between the testimonies of survivors taken during and immediately after the war, the confessions of SS men in 1945-46, and Höss’s memoirs of 1946-47 to get a rather good idea of what happened in Auschwitz when. But the general absence of “non-intentional evidence,” the “evidence of witnesses despite themselves,” is troubling. One would like to have possession of the documents produced by the Kommandantur or the Reich Security Main Office in Berlin that are contemporary to the use of Auschwitz as a killing center and that were produced as part of that operation. Of course, it was a limited problem, because trained historians generally do not fall in the fallacy of negative proof, in which they sustain a factual proposition (for example “Auschwitz was not purposefully operated as an extermination camp ...”) merely by negative evidence (“... because there are no official German wartime documents that prove that Auschwitz was purposefully conceived and operated as an extermination camp.”). But still, even if every historian knows that most evidence does not survive, and that any reconstruction of any historical event is based on accidentally preserved relics, it would have helped if the archive of the Auschwitz Political Department, which coordinated the arrival of the deportation trains with the Kommandantur, had survived. “It would have helped,” but it is not crucial. As Bloch observed, “the variety of historical evidence is infinite.”

Not only testimony, but everything that people produce can be used as evidence, if it can be made to correspond to allied evidences. Therefore Bloch rightly observed that one should not expect that a particular historical question--for example if Hitler ordered the Holocaust or that there were homicidal gas chambers in Auschwitz--can only be proved by turning up an actual Führer Decree to that effect signed by Hitler or a blueprint showing a building or room designated as "gas chamber." "It would be sheer fantasy to imagine that for each historical problem there is a unique type of document with a specific sort of use. On the contrary, the deeper the research, the more the light of the evidence must converge from sources of many different kinds." Indeed: the single-most important Auschwitz archive that did survive the war--that of the Central Construction Office--offers important if not always straightforward evidence that has at least the virtue of freeing us from a complete reliance on the words of witnesses, evidence that can be forced to speak.

The survival of a significant part of the documents the Auschwitz Central Construction Office produced during the war is accidental. When the Germans burned the archives of the camp Kommandantur prior to their evacuation from Auschwitz in January 1945, the archive of the construction office, some three hundred yards away from the Kommandantur, was overlooked and remained intact. The reason that the SS forgot it was simple: the construction office had been closed for some time, and no-one was left in the building, and so no-one warned the men charged with the destruction of the evidence that there was a lot of architectural material that could be incriminating. And so the building archive survived. There is no similarly complete archive from any other concentration camp, and none of the administratively less complex Operation Reinhard death camps under the control of Odilo Globocnik (Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka) generated such documents.

Building at Auschwitz both in the concentration camp and in the town was subject to normal civilian procedures as well as to the wartime superstructure of special permissions. Multiple copies of many documents survive with the comments and signatures of the individual bureaucrats or businessmen to whom they were sent. The Building Office generated a wide paper trail: plans, budgets, letters, telegrams, contractors' bids, financial negotiations, work site labour reports, requests for material allocations, and the minutes of meetings held in the Building Office among the architects themselves, with camp officials, and with high-ranking dignitaries from Berlin. These papers tell us a great deal. They elucidate the thinking in the Auschwitz Kommandantur and, to some extent, at SS headquarters. Every decision Himmler took with regard to Auschwitz, or Kommandant Höss took about the camp over which he reigned, had implications for the physical site. If prisoners were to be shipped in, barracks were needed; if the deportees' goods were to be claimed for the Reich, storehouses were required. If masses of people were expected to die, incinerators to burn their bodies were essential.

As a source of historical material, the archives of the Central Construction Office are very important. But it is also important to remember that during the war the architects who produced the documents that are part of that of that archive were told to apply self-censorship when writing things down that related to the genocide in the camp. On January 21, 1972, the architect Fritz Ertl, who had been employed at the Auschwitz Construction Office until early 1943, testified in court in Vienna about the genocidal use of the crematoria. The first time that he was informed about the use of Auschwitz in the Final Solution was in the summer of 1942. "Then I talked with an employee of the Political Department who was in private life a judge. He then told me something. Normally one would not have dared to talk while on duty, because one had to fear to be punished for that. I remember that Mrs. Bischoff complained about an officer who had jokingly called Goebbels

as “Jupp.” This judge has enlightened me. That must have been in the summer of 1942. He came from Hamburg and later fell on the front. Auschwitz, so he told me, is an extermination camp. Many people were to be executed, that means condemned by court martials. Then he indicated through reference to the Jewish Problem that larger exterminations were to come. He counselled me to find ways to quickly get out. He himself left somewhat later, and fell in Russia. This statement was for me a warning, I was shocked and enraged. This conversation took place at the time that construction began of the crematoria. This I used as an occasion to ask for a transfer. Bischoff yelled at me and told me that he was not prepared to consider this.” A little later Ertl commented that the new crematoria were necessary “because of the special actions.” When asked if he knew what the word “special measures” meant, Ertl told the court that he knew the significance. Then Ertl commented on the notorious letter that contained the word “*Vergasungskeller*.” “At this time I was not anymore in Auschwitz. In my personnel dossier it is recorded that I left Auschwitz on January 25, 1943. I did not get a copy of this letter. The only names it is copied to are “Janisch” and “Kirschneck.” In this letter one talked quite openly, which is clear from the use “gassing basement.” The reference sign is “Bischoff.” I can imagine that he has written this himself. I had received the order of Bischoff that I could never write the word “gassing.” I always had to circumscribe it. *Concerning the question of the chairman of the court if Bischoff had directly told Ertl that he could not write that, or if this order had come from higher up, the accused Ertl gave the following statement:* I believe that Bischoff pointed out to me, that the word “gassing” should not appear. It is also possible that once such an order has come from higher up. I can’t remember that now. However, because this word “gassing” was always circumscribed, with “special action” or “special measure,” I am convinced that this was ordered. I am surprised that Bischoff used this word “gassing basement” himself. Because higher up always used the word “special action,” I also used it so. I adopted that term.” An important document in the archive confirms Ertl’s statement. On

August 19, 1942 Ertl chaired a meeting in which members of the Central Construction Office discussed with Engineer Kurt Prüfer of Topf and Sons the creation of four crematoria in Birkenau. Item 2 mentioned the construction of two triple-oven incinerators near the “Bath-houses for Special Actions”--“*Badeanstalten für Sonderaktionen*.” These were the gas chambers also known as bunkers 1 and 2. On January 21, 1972 Ertl testified in court that, when he wrote down the words “bath-houses for special actions”--“*Badeanstalten für Sonderaktionen*,” he knew exactly what this euphemism meant. “I knew at the time, that this concerned gassing spaces.”

So what can we learn from the archive. First of all, the archive contains some copies of paper-work that was in general circulation among the various departments in the camp, and which more than hint at the possibility that Auschwitz was not a normal concentration camp. One such document is a copy of a pep-talk given by Oswald Pohl, the business administrator of the SS, to senior SS personnel during his visit to Auschwitz on September 23, 1942. “During today’s observations I have silently noticed that you have an ideal inner relation to the issue at stake and an ideal attitude towards the tasks at hand. This conclusion is especially necessary in relation with the issues and the special tasks, about which we do not have to speak words--issues that belong however to your responsibilities. I observe that you do your duty from an inner obligation and this is the precondition for results. There remains a very large field of action ahead, on which we may create furthermore great values. In this respect you have ahead of you a wide and vast terrain. In the last months I have made many of these inspections, and I am pleased to state here that Auschwitz significantly transcends everything else. I have noted a very good relationship between men, NCO’s and officers, and I call upon you to remain conscious of your responsibility in this matter. I would like to remind you about the importance about the tasks set by the Reichsführer-SS, tasks that will be very important for the time when we will have achieved the final victory.

Even when you are not with the fighting troops, your tasks do not demand less from you, tasks the importance of which will only be recognized in the time after the victory. It are those tasks that on the other hand put great pressure on each individual, pressures that are equal to those faced by the fighting troops on the front.” In what way was Auschwitz vastly different from other concentration camps? In what way could the job of a concentration guard be compared to that of a soldier in the field? It is obvious that Pohl referred to the so-called “Final Solution of the Jewish Question” that, shortly before, had become an official part of the operation of Auschwitz.

The archive contains very few documents like the report of Pohl’s speech. Most of the documents concern construction. One approach to them would be to look for what one could call “linguistic slips” like Bischoff’s use of the noun “*Vergasungskeller*” in the letter of January 29, 1943. The basic assumption that guides such an investigation is that the men of the Central Construction Office had been instructed, as Ertl declared in court, not to make any specific references to gas chambers as gas chambers, and so on. One researcher, Jean-Claude Pressac, spent considerable effort in the 1980s trying to find such “slips” or “criminal traces,” and he came up with 39 of them --one of each step. For a full discussion of these “slips” I refer to Pressac’s work. Here I will review only those few of which I have good illustrative material.

Before I present some of these “slips,” it is good to note that the documents in which they occur are bound together and numbered consecutively in the original German files. It is obvious from the condition of these files that the archive was not tampered with.

The first “slip” is the occurrence of the word “*Vergasungskeller*” in Bischoff’s letter of January 29, 1943. “The planks from the concrete ceiling of the cellar used as a mortuary could not yet be removed on account of the frost. This is, however, not very important, as the gassing cellar [*Vergasungskeller*] can be used for that purpose.” From the context

it is clear that the word “*Vergasungskeller*” refers to a space that is indicated in the blueprints as morgue 1--*Leichenkeller 1*. It is important to note that in the copy of the letter preserved in the Auschwitz archive the word “*Vergasungskeller*” is heavily underlined with red pencil. That same pencil was used to write, in the upper margin of the letter, the following: “*SS-Ustuf (F) Kirschneck!*” It is clear from the shape of the handwriting and from the very precise designation “*SS-Ustuf (F)*” that this note was written by a member of the Central Building Office, and from this we may conclude that same person underlined the word “*Vergasungskeller*,” marking it for special attention. Obviously, there is an issue that concerns Kirschneck, as behind his name appears an exclamation mark. The issue at stake is, of course, the appearance of the “slip.” Kirschneck was what we call today the project architect of the crematoria, and hence he was responsible for all documentation. The mistake had been noticed, and marked to be brought to his attention.

The “slip” in Bischoff’s letter is the only one that was picked up at the time, and one can guess why: first of all, as Ertl observed in 1972, it was created by an important man (the chief of the Central Construction Office), writing to an even more important man (the chief of all SS building operations), and was very blunt in mentioning the forbidden reference to gassing. Most other slips were less obvious. They occurred in notes made by civilian builders in timesheets. For example, in the daily timesheets kept by the contractor Riedel and Son from Bielitz (Bielsko-Biala), we find a few slips. On 28 February the foreman fitted gastight windows--“*gasdichter Fenster*”--in an unspecified space of crematorium 4. Two days later he noted that he had “covered the ground with hard fill, tamped [it] down, and concreted the floor in the gas chamber”--“*Fußboden Aufschüttungsauffüllen, stampfen und Fußboden betonieren im Gaskammer*.” Then, at various occasions, the fitter Messing of the crematoria-oven manufacturer Topf and Sons mentioned in the timesheets for his work on crematoria 2 and 3 that he had been working in the ventilation system of the “undressing basement”--“*Aus-*

kleidekeller--, a space obviously located next to the basement used according to Bischoff's letter of January 29, 1943 as a gassing basement--"*Vergasungskeller*."

All of these "slips" were errors. Certain "slips" could, however, not be avoided. Sometimes the Central Construction Office had to be specific in order to get exactly what they wanted. For example, on February 26, 1943, at 6.20 pm, SS-Untersturmführer Pollok sent a cable, cosigned by SS-Untersturmführer Kirschneck and Jährling, to Topf with the following message: "Send immediately 10 gas detectors as discussed. Send your invoice later"--"*Absendet sofort 10 Gasprüfer wie besprochen. Kostenangebot später nachreichen.*" And then there is a letter sent by Bischoff on March 31, 1943 to the German Armament Works. "In the letter mentioned above informs you that you must make **three gas-tight doors** according to the order of January 1, 1943 for BW 30b and 30c, following exactly the size and construction of those already delivered. At this occasion we remind you of another order of March 6, 1943 for the delivery of a gasdoor 100/192 for morgue 1 of crematorium 3, Bw 30a, which must be equipped exactly in the form and size of the basement door of crematorium 2, located opposite, to be made with a spyhole of double 8 mm glass with a rubber seal and metal fitting. This order must be considered as very urgent." It is obvious that the contents of this letter square with those of Bischoff's letter of January 29, 1943. Morgue 1 of both crematorium 2 and 3 are both equipped with a gasdoor with spyhole. This morgue is labelled "gassing basement" in the letter from January 29.

Most of these "slips" were already picked up by Dawidowski in 1946, and were referred to in the 1972 Dejaco/Ertl trial in Vienna. Pressac brought them all together. When I began work on the history of Auschwitz, using among other sources the archive of the Central Construction Office, I did not set out to discover more "slips." As far as I was concerned, the point had been made. Yet working my way through the material, I did encounter one that had not been noticed before. Before

presenting this “slip,” it is perhaps useful to present the reaction it generated in negationist circles. In 1997 the negationist *Journal of Historical Review* published an article entitled “How a Major Holocaust Historian Manipulates Facts: Gerald Fleming’s Distortions.” It described the British historian Gerald Fleming as an “internationally prominent Holocaust historian” who, in his *Hitler and the Final Solution* (1984) “attempted to refute British historian David Irving’s provocative contention that no documentary evidence exists to show that Hitler ordered the extermination of Europe’s Jews, or even that he knew about any such policy or program.” After having observed that “the German-born English-Jewish historian failed conclusively to refute Irving’s thesis,” the article went on to describe Fleming’s involvement with a 1994 BBC movie. “In 1994 Fleming collaborated with architect Robert Jan van Pelt on a documentary film, “Blueprints of Genocide,” which was broadcast in Britain on the BBC “Horizon” program, May 9, 1994, and in the United States on the NPR “Nova” program, February 7, 1995. During a dramatic high point of the broadcast, van Pelt is shown holding a document while stating: “It says very clearly, ‘You will be able to kill and you will be able to burn simultaneously in this building [Crematory 2].’” This document, which is not shown to viewers, is actually a simple memorandum of January 29, 1943, not even marked “Secret,” about ... electricity supply. It mentions “burning [cremation] with simultaneous special treatment” (“Verbrennung mit gleichzeitiger Sonderbehandlung”). Fleming deceitfully reversed the word order, and rendered “Sonderbehandlung” as “kill.” Commenting on this misrepresentation, Robert Faurisson has written that “the word ‘Sonderbehandlung’ could mean, by its place in the phrase, anything except to kill because this ‘special treatment’ was simultaneous with burning.” Moreover, as Faurisson further noted, it is obvious that if Fleming, or anyone, had actually discovered a wartime German document that clearly says what Holocaust historians have been seeking for decades, it would be publicized everywhere as a discovery of the

greatest historical importance.(See: R. Faurisson, “A KGB Novelist: Gerald Fleming,” Adelaide Institute on-line newsletter [Australia], Dec. 1996, pp.23-25.)”

As the article mentioned, I indeed discussed a letter which I had found after working through many reels of microfilmed documents from the Moscow archives. To understand the historical context of the letter, I will quote here the way Debrah Dwork and I used it in Chapter Ten of our book *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present*. The extract covers the months January to April 1943, a time that the Germans did everything in their power to complete the crematoria. The section referring to the document will be printed in italics. “As construction in the Reich came to a halt, Kammler, Bischoff, Dejaco, and Prüfer did everything in their power to complete the crematoria. Throughout the month of January regular transports arrived from the Bialystock District, the Netherlands, Berlin, and Theresienstadt; the bunkers were hardly able to keep up, and in February Eichmann was forced to divert trains destined for Auschwitz to Sobibor and Treblinka. Eichmann then designated the proud, 2,000-year-old Sephardic community of 55,000 Jews in Salonika for immediate liquidation. Salonika and the rest of northern Greece was occupied by German forces, but southern Greece was in Italian hands, and by the end of 1942 the Saloniki Jews had discovered that the Italians were not interested in applying the anti-Semitic policies of their Nordic allies. Increasingly large numbers of Saloniki Jews sought refuge in the south, and the Italians refused to extradite them to the Germans. Eichmann realized he had to act quickly. He knew that the killing station in Auschwitz was working at top capacity, but he also saw that the Operation Reinhard camps, which were neither equipped with crematoria nor with a holding pen for those deportees who could not be killed immediately upon arrival, could not handle the long-distance 3,000-person transports he envisioned. Eichmann telephoned Kammler to ask him when the crematoria would be ready. Informed only by Bischoff, who was loathe to admit that con-

struction had fallen two months behind schedule, Kammler reported the current official prognosis: crematorium 2 would be operational on 31 January, crematorium 4 on 28 February, and crematorium 3 on 31 March. *Unexpected problems in the electricity supply to the buildings caused additional delays. When Bischoff and Dejaco had modified the basement plan of crematoria 2 and 3 to include a gas chamber, they had increased the anticipated electricity consumption of the building. The ventilation system was now simultaneously to extract the Zyklon-B from the gas chamber and fan the flames of the incinerators. They had contacted AEG, the contractor for the electrical systems, but due to rationing AEG had been unable to get the heavy-duty wiring and circuit breakers the system required. As a result, crematorium II was to be supplied with a temporary electrical system; nothing at all was available for use in crematorium 3. Furthermore, the AEG representative in Katowitz, Engineer Tomitschek, warned the Auschwitz Building Office, the capacity of the temporary system would not allow for simultaneous 'special treatment' and incineration.* The five triple-muffle furnaces in crematorium 2 were test-run on 4 March with the incineration of fifty corpses of men killed in bunker II. At 45 minutes, the incineration took longer than planned: Prüfer thought the furnaces were not dry enough. They were to be heated for a week without being used. In the meantime, his colleagues completed the gas chamber ventilation system. On Saturday 13 March the machinery was ready for a trial run, and 1,492 women, children, and old people, selected from a transport of 2,000 Jews from the Cracow ghetto, were killed in the new gas chamber and burned in the new incinerators. The murder itself took five minutes, but burning the bodies took two days--the managers operated the incinerators at 50 percent capacity to forestall technical failures. Erroneously believing all the crematoria to be fully operational, Eichmann dispatched the first transport of 3,000 Saloniki Jews in mid-March. Traversing southeastern Europe via Skopje, Belgrade, Zagreb, Graz, Vienna, and Teschen, the train arrived in Auschwitz on the 20th of that month. Crematoria 3, 4, and 5 were still being built, and crematorium 2 was in the trial stage; it had not yet been handed over by the architects and engin-

eers to the camp authorities. The physicians who conducted the selection that day admitted 417 men and 192 women to the camp, the other 2,191 deportees were designated for immediate liquidation. They would 'pass through' crematorium 2, the camp officials decided. It quickly became clear that the building could not handle such numbers at once. *Killing was easy, but as the Germans began to work the ovens at full capacity (officially 1,440 bodies per day, that is 96 per muffle or an average of 4 bodies per muffle per hour), they ignored the advice of the AEG Engineer, Tomitschek, and the electrical system caught fire.* Both the forced draft system that fanned the incinerator flames and the ventilation system to extract the Zyklon-B from the gas chamber were damaged. The Germans carried on. They would not close down the installation for repair. Trains with 2,000 to 3,000 deportees were leaving Salonika according to schedule, and could not be stopped. In anticipation of these transports, the architects signed off on crematorium 4 on 22 March, without having tested the incinerators. They also tried to repair crematorium 2 and, partly successful, they transferred the crippled system to the camp on 31 March. After two weeks of intensive use in the Salonika Action the double four-muffle furnace of crematorium 4 cracked and, after various attempts at repair, the incinerator was de-commissioned in May. Prüfer realized that the overly-centralized structure of the furnace was to blame for the breakdown, and he modified the incinerator of crematorium 5, which was still under construction. It was officially completed on 4 April. Crematorium 2 initially functioned reasonably well, but after a month the internal lining of the smokestack and the connecting flues to the incinerator began to collapse. It was taken out of commission on 22 May for a month of repair work. One would have hoped that, with all these technical failures, the system would have proved less fatal, but such was not the case. Despite the breakdowns, in just two months the camp personnel liquidated over 30,000 members of the Salonika community, and some 7,000 Yugoslavian, German, and Polish Jews."

I quoted the context of the AEG document at some length because the document has a specific historical context. When I found the document, I realized as all historians do that as a piece of evidence it is, taken by itself without any context, mute. I had to make it “speak,” determine what it could mean because only then could it be considered to be evidence for something. Like any other piece of evidence it had to be placed where it belongs, and this required knowledge of what was going on at the time, at the building site in Birkenau, in the architect’s office and, in this case, in Greece. Considering the context, it was obvious that the AEG document came into existence when it became clear there would be a delay in the completion of the crematoria, partly caused by the slow arrival of rationed electrical equipment, and when it also became clear that this delay would be in conflict with Eichmann’s schedule of deportations. Our understanding of this context is based on other evidence--in the case of the problems the Germans had in completing the crematoria this evidence consists of the correspondence between the Auschwitz Central Construction Office and Berlin--an exchange of letters that generated among other things the notorious letter dated January 29, 1943 in which Bischoff reported to the Chief Amtsgruppe C, SS-Brigadeführer and General-Major of the Waffen-SS, Dr. Ing. Kammler, on the progress of construction of crematorium 2. In an earlier letter, Bischoff had promised that the crematorium would be completed on January 31. Now he had to break the news gently to his boss that he had not been able to do so. “The crematorium has been completed--save for minor constructional work --by the use of all the forces available, in spite of unspeakable difficulties, the severe cold, and in 24 hour shifts. The fires were started in the ovens in the presence of Senior Engineer Prüfer, representative of the contractors of the firm of Topf and Sons, Erfurt, and they are working most satisfactorily. The planks from the concrete ceiling of the cellar used as a mortuary could not yet be removed on account of the frost. This is, however, not very important, as the gassing cellar (*Vergasungskeller*) can be used for that purpose. The firm of Topf and Sons was not able to start deliveries

of the installation in time for aeration and ventilation as had been requested by the Central Building Management because of restrictions in the use of railroad cars. As soon as the installation for aeration and ventilation arrive, the installing will start so that the complete installation may be expected to be ready for use 20 February 1943.” As Bischoff bought himself three more weeks, his aides desperately tried to resolve all the outstanding difficulties. The same day that Bischoff wrote his letter, SS-Unterscharführer Swoboda met with Engineer Tomitschek, and both drafted and signed the following minute of their meeting, which was countersigned by Bischoff.

“ Auschwitz, 29.1.1943 Memorandum re: Electricity Supply and Installation of the KL [*Konzentrationslager*, or Auschwitz] and KGL [*Kriegsgefangenenlager*, or Birkenau] Conference held on 29.1.43 between the Central Construction Office Auschwitz and AEG-Kattowitz, present:

- Engineer Tomitschek--AEG and
- SS-Unterscharführer Swoboda--Central Construction Office AEG informs that it has not yet received valid iron and metal certificates in response to its iron and metal request, which were partly already filed in November 1942. Therefore it was not possible for this firm to begin construction on the ordered parts of the installation. There is a great likelihood that, due to the continued delay in the allotment of these requests, delivery will take much longer. As a result of this, it is not possible to complete the installation and electricity supply of crematorium 2 in the Prisoner of War Camp [Birkenau] by January 31, 1943. It is only possible to complete the crematorium for operation earliest by February 15, 1943 using materials that are in stock for other building projects. This operation can only involve a limited use of the available machines (whereby is made possible burning with simultaneous Special Treatment), because the main electricity supply to the crematorium is not capable to carry its power consumption. Yet similarly the iron and metal certificates for the overhead line necessary for this have not been issued yet. Because of this, it is absolutely impossible to supply crematorium 3 with electricity. Tomitschek. Swoboda Representative of AEGSS-Unterscharführer Taken note of Bischoff.”

Considered within the historical context in which it was created, the meaning of the memorandum is unequivocal. Let us now consider the negationist attempt to destroy its evidential value. First of all, I am accused of “deceitfully” reversing the word order of the document when, during the filming of the BBC documentary, I stated that “it says very clearly, ‘You will be able to kill and you will be able to burn simultaneously in this building [Crematory 2].’” I do admit that in paraphrasing the text in front of the camera, I did reverse the word order, yet reject the allegation that I did so “deceitfully” as the change in word order does not make any difference in the interpretation. The adjective “simultaneous” makes clear that the “burning” takes place at the same time as the “Special Treatment,” and that the “Special Treatment” takes place at the same time as the “burning.”

More important, however, is the observation that the document is “not even marked ‘Secret,’” a common negationist argument to attack the validity of most pieces of evidence. Their argument is that because the so-called Final Solution of the Jewish Problem occurred “in secret,” all documents that relate to it should be marked as “Secret.” It suffers from the fallacy of division, which arises when one argues from the properties of a whole (the general secrecy of the “Final Solution”) to the properties of the constituent parts of that whole (a discussion about the electricity supply to a crematorium equipped with gas chambers). There is of course no reason to assume that what is true of the whole is true of all the parts, and that evidence for the existence of a largely secret operation may not be derived from parts of that operation that were not secret. In fact, experience shows that the best ways not to attract attention to a secret operation is to not to attract attention to the secrecy, and consequently assign the qualification of “secret” to as few documents as possible--also in the bureaucracy one hides best in a crowd.

The negationist attack on the document continued with the observation that Robert Faurisson has written that “the word ‘Sonderbehandlung’ could mean, by its place in the phrase, anything except to kill because this ‘special treatment’ was simultaneous with burning.” In other words, Faurisson argues with his usual literal-mindedness that because the adjective “simultaneous” means “at the same time,” it is impossible that the noun “*Sonderbehandlung*” refers to killing as one first kills and then burns the body. The problem with Faurisson’s observation is that it ignores the context of the clause “whereby is made possible burning with simultaneous Special Treatment.” If it were an instruction for the Sonderkommando how to kill and incinerate the victims, Faurisson would have a point, but it is not. The context is a discussion about the electricity supply to the crematorium. The problem which Tomitschek and Swoboda discussed was rooted in the circumstance that one needed electricity to operate the ventilation system of the gas chambers. Yet, at the same time that this ventilation system was to extract the hydrogen cyanide from the gas chamber, the crematorium needed electricity to operate the forced-air system to heat the incinerators as they are readied to cremate the remains of the people killed in the gas chambers. In other words, there is an overlap in the electricity consumption of the gas chamber and the ovens, the former still using electricity *after the killing has occurred*, the latter using electricity *before the incineration can commence*.

Then there is Faurisson’s implicit argument: that the context of the letter does not count. I will review the reasons for Faurisson’s refusal to consider context below. Here it is important to note that a basic rule in the interpretation of historical evidence is that any piece of evidence depends upon the context from which it is taken. David Hackett Fisher observed in his *Historians’ Fallacies*, that “no historical statement-in-evidence floats freely outside of time and space. None applies ab-

stractly and universally.” Faurisson did not choose to consider the context, and hence did not apply historical criticism to the text of the memorandum.

Finally there is Faurisson’s last argument: that if “Fleming, or anyone, had actually discovered a wartime German document that clearly says what Holocaust historians have been seeking for decades, it would be publicized everywhere as a discovery of the greatest historical importance.” In other words, the fact that I did not choose to publicize my discovery “everywhere,” trumpeting it as “a discovery of the greatest historical importance,” suggests that this document probably does not exist, because if it did, it would have been “what Holocaust historians have been seeking for decades.” When, in 1993 I came upon the Tomitschek/Swoboda memorandum, I was pleased to find another small piece of a large puzzle, but in no way thought it to be “of the greatest historical importance.” The reasons for this is that I did not find any reason in the past, nor today, to set my research agenda according to Faurisson’s wishes. In 1979 he proposed in a letter to *Le Monde* that he wished for a public debate on “the problem of the gas chambers.” Faurisson rejected that there was a “superabundance of proofs that attest to the existence of ‘gas chambers’” and therefore proposed that someone would supply him “with a proof, one single precise proof of the actual existence of one ‘gas chamber,’ one single ‘gas chamber.’” And he concluded his challenge with the exhortation: “Let us examine this proof together, in public.”

As a historian I am prepared to state that no single piece of evidence can “prove” the existence of any historical event. Faurisson’s challenge is, from a historian’s point of view, absurd. No piece of evidence is conclusive by itself. Historians reconstruct the past by cross-referencing different pieces of evidence, each of different evidential value. This, however, seems to be unassimilable to negationists like Faurisson and Irving, who continue to throw challenges to academic historians to produce “one single proof.” To understand where they come from, it is

necessary to consider, for a moment, the context of Faurisson's turn to Holocaust denial: his training as a linguist and his adherence as a linguist to the school of literary interpretation known as "New Criticism," a school that resists a common practice in literary analysis that regard a poem in terms of its author's biography, and proposes instead that critics ought to read the poems as verbal icons, as autonomous verbal structures, and foreclose any appeal to history, biography, or cultural context. Only by concentrating on "the words on the page," which meant erecting a *cordon sanitaire* around the text, could the criticism acquire precision. Faurisson adopted this ontologically grounded aesthetic isolationism, but abandoned its pragmatic aims to encase it in a particularly dogmatic set of rules. The historical, autobiographical and cultural contexts became totally irrelevant for one's understanding of the text. As Faurisson explained to a Canadian court in the mid 1980s, he refused to establish authorship, or the time it came into being, but instead began with one word, and then proceed to its immediate contexts: the words before and after it, and so on. Faurisson justified this approach because "all of us, we have little brains. We cannot embrace a vast context." Of course, his modesty was only a ruse, because the true implication of his refusal to consider any external evidence was that the only access to truth was now to be Faurisson's own technique of textual exegesis. This he called the "Ajax Method" because "it scours as it cleans as it shines," and it centered on the for the analysis of literary texts absurd proposition that while words may have more than one meaning if taken in isolation, they only acquire one specific meaning within a text: "Texts have only one meaning, or no meaning at all."

Faurisson's work would have remained a footnote in the history of postmodern literary theory if not for his desire to apply the "Ajax Method" to the study of history. Having no professional training in the field, he could only look with contempt at historians who, as he stated in his expert-testimony during the first Zündel trial, habitually fail to "attack" the documents they are using, and instead try to fit those texts

into its various contexts. In other words, historians sinned against the ground rule of Faurisson's theory of criticism that nothing should distract from the exegesis of the sacrosanct "word on the page."

Faurisson's attempt to apply his rule of textual exegesis to history is obviously absurd. While the "Ajax Method" may apply to poems--which may be defined as texts in which all that is said or implied is relevant, and everything that is irrelevant has been excluded--it obviously fails when it is applied to practical messages, which are successful *if and only if* we correctly infer the intention. Hastily written, the Tomitschek/Svoboda memorandum is completely unintelligible as a historical source if one does not know the historical context, which includes the hurry in which the SS tried to complete the crematoria, the difficulty they had in obtaining allocations for building materials, the meaning of the word *Sonderbehandlung*, the need to fire-up the ovens before they are used, and so on. Faurisson had, however, no qualms to launch his theory of literary criticism into a colonizing drive beyond the boundary of the poetic, and treat historical texts as merely rhetorical, purely discursive operations that have no link to external evidence.

Probably it is difficult for Faurisson, or for negationists in general, to imagine that there are other and more valid ways of interpreting historical evidence. It is difficult for Faurisson to imagine that not all scholars studying the Holocaust are day and night searching for the "one single proof" that testifies to the existence of the gas chambers without any corroborating evidence. But none is, because history does not need a "single proof" to establish a fact as fact.

Enough about "single proofs" that in the case of Auschwitz seem destined to appear in "slips." The real historical importance of the archives of the Central Construction office is *not* that they prove independent of other evidence that Auschwitz was an extermination camp. In so far as the issue of "proof" is relevant, the archives are important because they provide additional evidence of a "non-intentional" nature

that allows us to interpret and cross-examine the “intentional” evidence given by important and informative witnesses such as Tauber and Höss. While the negationists have tried to abuse these architectural documents to narrow down the amount of admissible evidence-- nothing is relevant except the wartime document--, we consider them as a means to increase the amount of evidence. For example, when we consider the blueprints of crematorium 2 and use them to reconstruct this building, it becomes possible to follow Tauber’s narrative sentence by sentence. Or when one considers the blueprints of crematorium 4, one can not only study the logical arrangement of the building--with the sequence of three gas chambers (with stoves to pre-heat the rooms during the winter), vestibule and fuel supply for the stoves in the gas chambers, the large morgue, and the cremation part with the sluice, the incineration room with the eight-muffle oven, the coke room and a small office--but also square this with the remaining fragments of the building and eye-witness statements. For example, in the former coke store room of crematorium 1 the Auschwitz museum preserves some of the gas-tight shutters from crematorium 4. The shutters measure 30 cm by 40 cm. In the plan they are indicated as having a size of 30 cm by 40 cm. In an order dated February 13, 1943 they are mentioned “as pieces gas-tight doors of 30/40 cm”--*12 St. Gasdichte Türen cca 30/40 cm.* Obviously, the plan, the bill and the relics coincide. As we have seen, David Olère did depict these gas-tight shutters in his drawings of crematorium 5 and bunker 2. And then there are eye-witness statements of the way these gas-tight doors functioned. Let us quote, once more, part of Tauber’s recollections of crematorium 4. We begin in a room labelled in the plan as “*Vorraum*”--vestibule. “Opposite the entrance door in the corridor, there was a door that opened on a room with a window which was the kitchen for the SS working in the crematorium, a kitchen where the dishes were prepared by members of the Sonderkommando. This room was next to that of the Sonderkommando prisoners....The third door in the corridor led to a corridor with a barred window and a door leading to the crematorium yard. From

this corridor, the door on the right gave access to the first of the gas chambers and that opposite to the smallest of the chambers, communicating by another door with the biggest. This corridor, and the three following rooms were used as chambers for gassing people. All had gas-tight doors, and also windows that had bars on the inside and were closed by gas-tight shutters on the outside. These small windows, which could be reached by the hand of a man standing outside, were used for throwing the contents of cans of Zyklon-B into the gas chambers full of people. The gas chambers were about two meters high and had an electric lighting installation on the walls but they had no ventilation system, which obliged the Sonderkommando who were removing the bodies to wear gasmasks. The corpses were dragged along the floor into the access corridor, where the barbers cut off the hair and then into the undressing room, which also served, in this kind of crematorium, as a store room for the corpses. It was a big hall where the bodies were put while the gas chambers were being cleaned up. Then they were taken through the narrow corridor between the undressing room and the furnace room, where at each end a dentist tore out the gold teeth. In the furnace room, there was the room of the head of the *Kommando* and beside it another one for the rest of the SS.” Thus the blueprints help to corroborate eye-witness evidence. They do not, and should not, take the place of it.

The same applies to, for example, photos of the crematoria. During the construction of the camp, the Central Construction office documented the progress of construction photographically. All these photos were assembled in the so-called Bauleitung Album, which survived the war. One of the photos shows the back of crematorium 2 shortly before its completion. Projecting outwards from the long side of the building one can see the basement space known in the plans as morgue 1. It is not yet covered with earth, and as a result one can easily see (just right of the smokestack of the locomotive in the foreground, the more or less cubical tops of three of the four wire-mesh Zyklon-B insertion columns

made by Kula, drawn by Olère, and described by Tauber. Again, by itself the photograph would not be conclusive evidence, but in combination with eye-witness evidence it proves the existence of these columns beyond reasonable doubt.

Yet sometimes study of the plans and photos help us to reconstruct important elements in the development of Auschwitz as an extermination camp for which there is no eye-witness evidence. For example: all the evidence points to the fact that the Germans changed the purpose of crematorium 2 between its first inception in the fall of 1941 and its final completion in the spring of 1943. At the time of the original design this crematorium was meant to incinerate the corpses of inmates who had died as the result of the “ordinary” violence of concentration camp existence, and the “ordinary” mortality that results from seasonal infectious diseases such as Typhus and Typhoid Fever. By the time it was completed, crematorium 2, and its double crematorium 3, and two other crematoria (4 and 5) were meant to serve the original function and also incinerate the corpses of deportees who had arrived in Auschwitz shortly before to be immediately selected for the gas chambers, and killed. On the basis of ample evidence, we know that by the time of their completion crematoria 2–5 were equipped with homicidal gas chambers, and that these were used to kill the vast majority of deportees. Yet how and when did the intended purpose of the buildings change?

The blueprints and the correspondence that goes with them offer evidence that allows us to understand some aspect of the changing purpose of the crematoria. I will concentrate on two variables: the information the blueprints give us about the evolution of the projected incineration and morgue capacity in Auschwitz between the Fall of 1941 and the Spring of 1943. Independently of other evidence, both numbers are important to assess the intended use of Auschwitz. If Auschwitz, as the Holocaust deniers maintain, was a “normal” concentration camp comparable to Dachau and Sachsenhausen--that is a camp

not dedicated to systematic extermination of large transports--then one should expect an incineration and morgue capacity comparable to those “normal” concentration camps. If Auschwitz was more lethal than other concentration camps because of the greater prevalence of infectious diseases, then one should expect perhaps a higher incineration capacity, but certainly a very much higher morgue capacity to provide a buffer between the seasonally fluctuating discrepancy between incineration capacity and mortality. And if it was an extermination camp in which most people were murdered “on command,” then one could expect an arrangement that had a high incineration capacity and a low morgue capacity, as the administrators of the killing process ought to have been able to send only as many people to the gas chambers as the crematoria could handle--assuming that the corpses of those killed would be incinerated within the next 24 hours.

In the second week of October 1941, shortly after he had begun work on the design and construction of Birkenau, the chief architect of Auschwitz, Karl Bischoff, realized that the existing crematorium of the concentration camp (later to be known as crematorium 1), would not be able to service the prisoner-of-war camp. It had been designed a year earlier to service an inmate population of 10,000. Bischoff summoned Kurt Prüfer, chief crematorium engineer at the firm Topf and Sons in Erfurt, which had supplied the incinerators of the crematorium in the main camp. Prüfer arrived in Auschwitz on October 21 and joined Bischoff in a two-day design charette. The engineer suggested to combine three incinerating crucibles in a single furnace. As to the location of the crematorium the men determined that it made sense to build it in the main camp across from the administration building and next to the existing crematorium. As a labour pool for the construction of the city, Birkenau promised to be only a temporary camp, and it would be a waste of money to build a relatively expensive structure such as a crematorium (the whole building Bischoff budgeted for RM [*Reichsmark*] 650,000) on a site that was going to revert

to farming a few years later. It is likely that Bischoff sketched during this meeting the basic arrangement of the plan. The centre was to be a large incineration hall in which five triplecrucible ovens were to be placed side by side. On one end was to be the supply of cokes, and on the other end the storage of corpses. As the incineration hall was to be hot, and the morgue needed to be cold, Bischoff located two vast morgues underground, outside the so-called “footprint” of the building. An elevator was to connect these underground morgues to the furnace hall and the autopsy rooms which were to occupy the space gained by the transfer of the corpse cellars from above-to below ground.

Bischoff's new Chief Designer, Walther Dejaco, elaborated the sketches into a preliminary design. Back in Berlin also an architect under contract with the SS, Georg Werkmann, had a go at it, and he showed a greater skill in uniting practical requirements with certain architectural ambition. Kammler obviously preferred Werkmann's design over Dejaco's, approved it in late November, and had it sent to Auschwitz. When it arrived Bischoff, who had arrived on October 1 to head the building of Birkenau, had also become responsible for the construction in the main camp; the *Neubauleitung* and the *Sonderbauleitung KGL* had merged into a new organization, officially designated as the *Zentralbauleitung der Waffen SS und Polizei, Auschwitz O/S* (Central Building Authority of the Waffen-SS and the Police, Auschwitz in Upper Silesia). This office produced from mid-January to the beginning of February 1942 a complete set of blueprints for the new crematorium based on Werkmann's design of November.

As the architects were developing the design Prüfer was busy calculating the implications of his suggestion to unite three large crucibles in one incinerator. It proved to be a difficult problem from a thermodynamic perspective. Not only did Prüfer have no experience with triplemuffle furnaces, but he had changed two variables by also increasing the size of each crucible. Relatively straightforward, however,

were the implications for the forced-draft system, which was determined at a total extractive power of 40,000 cubic meters per hour. Bischoff had also charged Prüfer to design a ventilation system for the incineration room and the two morgues. The furnace room, the dissection rooms and the larger of the two corpse cellars were to receive a system that only extracted the hot, foul air, while the smaller of the mortuaries was also to receive a system to bring in fresh air from the outside.

It is important to note here that there is no indication that either Bischoff or Prüfer envisioned a homicidal use for the smaller morgue in the new crematorium. But the presence of the powerful ventilation system charged the design from its inception with a genocidal potentiality which would only require small modifications in the design to be actualized. Indeed: it was the presence of such a ventilation system in the crematorium of the main camp which, seven weeks earlier, had inspired *Lagerführer* Fritsch to use the mortuary of the crematorium as an experimental gas chamber.

Numbers seem to confirm that the new crematorium was not designed to serve the genocidal practices that were to become commonplace in Birkenau a year later. If the purpose of the crematorium had been to serve both as a place for incineration of the inmates and as a execution site and cremation facility for large transports of people brought from outside, then one would expect a cremation capacity that far exceeded the normal oven/inmate ratio prevalent in the other concentration camps which did not serve the Final Solution of the Jewish Question. In 1937 the leaders of the concentration camp at Dachau thought that a single-muffle furnace would do for a camp of 6,240 inmates. At a price of RM 9,250, it required an initial investment of RM 1.48 per person. Within a year the envisioned investment per inmate dropped by 50 percent. In the spring of 1939 the total inmate population in Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen had risen from 24,000 to 60,000 as a result of the arrests that followed the Austrian Anschluss in

the spring of 1938, the so-called *Reichskristallnacht* of November 9, 1938, and the December annexation of the Czech Sudetenland. Dr. Grawitz, the chief SS doctor, feared that the overcrowding in the camps would lead to an epidemic and, as a result, increased mortality. Also, the regime in the camps had become harsher. Both the overcrowding and the increased violence within the camps focused attention on the problem of corpse disposal. Topf now offered to supply Dachau with a stripped-down mobile furnace with two oil-fired forced-draft muffles with a capacity of two corpses per hour and a price tag of RM 8,750. As by now the assumed capacity of the camp had been doubled (by assigning twice as many inmates to the relatively spacious barracks), the capacity remained one muffle per 6,240 inmates. Yet the investment had dropped from RM 1.48 to RM 0.70 per inmate. For Buchenwald Topf calculated a need of one muffle per 5,000 prisoner and an investment of RM 0.90 per inmate. The same figures applied to the double-muffle incinerator that Topf built in Auschwitz in the summer of 1940. But in fact Auschwitz had a larger capacity as its furnace was 50 per cent more powerful than the Dachau model of 1939. Taking this into account, we can say that it counts as a three- muffle oven of the old model. Hence I will designate its capacity as that of three “units,” that is one unit per 3,333 inmates. When later that year a second double-muffle (three-unit) furnace was added alongside the first the total was now four crucibles (six units) for a camp of 10,000, that is one unit per 1,666 inmates. Total investment for incinerators was now RM 1.67 per inmate. The remarkably high ratio must be understood in relation to the fact that the crematorium not only served the camp, but also the Gestapo Summary Court from Kattowitz.

If we compare these numbers with the figures for the Birkenau crematorium it becomes apparent that, assuming that the camp was indeed going to be completed and filled to capacity, one crematorium equipped with five three-muffle furnaces was *not* an excessive proposition. Topf offered the five furnaces for RM 31,890. That is an invest-

ment of RM 0.25 per inmate. Also of interest is that Prüfer assumed that one muffle per 8,300 inmates--or 1 unit per 5,555 inmates--would suffice. In other words, neither Bischoff nor Prüfer anticipated in October 1941 the very high mortality rate of the prisoners of war that actually occurred. With a capacity of 15 muffles or 22.5 units for 125,000 inmates, we come to 1 unit per 5,555 inmates, that is less than a third of the capacity of Auschwitz I, and very much in line with Dachau and Buchenwald. At an investment of RM 0.25 per inmate it cost one-sixth of that of the main camp. These figures suggest that the mortality rate for the Soviet prisoners of war was expected to be the same as that for concentration camp inmates in the Reich, and less than that for the Polish inmates in the concentration camp on the other side of the tracks. The conclusion must be that the expected mortality rate of the Soviet *Untermenschen* was not going to be higher than that of the 'typical' concentration camp inmates. And there was certainly no extra capacity that could be used for genocidal use.

A last point that seems to support this conclusion is that as the mortality rate of the prisoners of war began to rise, the plans of the camp were changed. In December 1941 Bischoff ordered the creation of a new master plan, which was completed in the first week of January 1942. Two of the most striking elements of this plan relate directly to the catastrophic conditions. First, it changed the barracks in Building Section II and Building Section III from the original brick to the prefabricated wooden huts that had been designed as horse stables for the Army. As these could be erected with a minimum of labour it implied a significant reduction in the mortality that had occurred with the construction of the brick barracks. Furthermore, at the western edge of Building Section II and Building Section III a new zone was designated which was to include two auxiliary crematoria and ten corpse cellars. The plan was approved on January 6, 1942, and a few weeks later Prüfer returned to Auschwitz to discuss the incinerators to be used. The engineer proposed to equip each with a simplified version of his

triple-muffle furnace. Without a compressed air blower, and using only a small amount of iron, they were to cost RM 7,326 each. As these were to be built in addition to the large crematorium to be constructed in the main camp, the investment in incinerating capacity had risen to a total of RM 46,542 or RM 0.37 per inmate. With a capacity of 31.5 units the unit-per-inmate ratio had risen from 1: 5,555 to 1: 4,000, or 28 %.

These numbers seem more evolutionary than revolutionary, yet there is another difference from the original plans that gives the whole picture, at least at first inspection, a more sinister aspect: the 10 enormous corpse cellars. In the crematorium already under design, the total volume of the two major morgues (a small third one, included in the January version of the design, was used only “for administrative purposes”) was a little over 50,000 cu. ft. Its capacity was 420 corpses, or roughly 1 corpse per 300 inmates. In comparison Sachsenhausen had a morgue capacity of 1 corpse per 50 inmates. The plan of January 6 added another 250,000 cu. ft., to arrive at Sachsenhausen’s capacity of 1 corpse per 50 inmates. In short, this sixfold amplification was meant only to bring the morgue capacity of the camp in line with that found in other concentration camps.

If we now fast forward to February 1943--a time that Birkenau was fully committed to play its central role in the Holocaust--we see that the numbers have changed considerably. In February 1943 the projected inmate population of Auschwitz was 30,000, and of Birkenau 140,000, but the total incineration capacity which was by that time supposed to be available was 75 units. This brings the unit-per-inmate ratio to 1: 2267. This means that, in comparison with Dachau or Buchenwald, Auschwitz has double the incineration capacity. The official incineration capacity of Auschwitz after the completion of all the crematoria was 4,756 corpses per day. Assuming the camps to be completed and fully occupied, this would mean that, on average, Auschwitz

had an excess incineration capacity of more than 2,350 corpses per day--or, in other words, the ovens could accommodate two daily transports of 1,000 people easily.

At the same time morgue capacity had dropped significantly. The ten morgues with a total capacity of 250,000 cu. ft., included in the plan of January 6, 1942, had disappeared from the plan of February 17, 1943, and instead the theoretical morgue capacity in crematoria 1–5 was 136,000 cu ft., or 1,150 corpses--that is 1 corpse per 147 inmates, or Auschwitz was to have one third of the normal morgue capacity of a “normal” concentration camp. In fact, the situation was much worse, because in February 1943 all the morgues in crematoria 2 and 3 had been redesigned and were being equipped to function as undressing rooms and gas chambers, while the morgues in crematoria 4 and 5 were to be destined as undressing rooms. *By the time the crematoria were finished, Auschwitz had virtually no permanently dedicated morgue capacity.* This is very important: putting it very crudely, a design for a camp with a low incineration capacity and low morgue capacity indicates the expectation of low mortality; a design for a camp with low incineration capacity and high morgue capacity indicates the expectation of high mortality, most likely due to contingent circumstances (epidemics); a design for a camp with high incineration capacity with low morgue capacity indicates the expectation of high mortality, most likely due to humanly controlled circumstances (murder).

Let me be clear: in the foregoing paragraphs I have not attempted to provide “proof,” on the basis of the changing incineration and morgue capacity alone, of the change from “normal” to genocidal purpose of the Auschwitz crematoria--even if these particular statistics support what we know about the evolution of Auschwitz from a “normal” concentration camp into an extermination camp over the period 1941 to 1943. I hope, however, to have shown that the evidence in the archive of the Central Construction Office can be used to answer many historical questions that transcend the forensic question if the camp was, or

was not, an extermination camp. These questions of history are important however. One of the reasons that Holocaust deniers were able to get as far as they did was because, for a long time, no comprehensive history of Auschwitz existed that placed the genocidal function of the camp within the context of all its other purposes. In our *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present* Debórah Dwork and I wrote a history, using the archives of the Central Construction Office, which shows that an understanding of the complex historical development of the camp resolves apparent contradictions thrown up by the fact that a seemingly “top-secret” extermination facility existed side-by-side a major industrial project. In short, good history and not “slips” answer the deniers.

One genre “non-intentional” evidence that has been the object of some discussion in the last twenty years are the aerial photos taken by British Mosquito reconnaissance airplanes and American bombers of Auschwitz on five dates in 1944. These planes flew over the camps on a bombing run to the IG Farben site east of the town of Auschwitz, and shortly before reaching the target area the cameras which were to provide intelligence and record the damage inflicted were turned on. Because of the relative short distance between Birkenau and the IG Farben site, these cameras unintentionally captured the death camp. One photo, taken on June 26, 1944, shows Birkenau (1), Auschwitz 1 located along the Sola river (2), the Vistula river (3), and the IG Farben building site (6) with at its south-eastern corner the concentration camp Auschwitz-Monowitz (no number indicated--but the site is easily identifiable as it is surrounded on most of its southern and all of its eastern side by a very light coloured patch of land).

Magnified, these photos allow for easy identification of the various parts of the camp, inclusive the crematoria. Yet what kind of evidence do they provide of the use of Birkenau as an extermination camp? In 1979, in response to the new interest generated by the TV series *Holocaust* the Central Intelligence Agency released a 19-page report entitled *The Holocaust Revisited: A Retrospective Analysis of the Auschwitz-*

Birkenau Extermination Complex. Written by Dino A. Brugioni and Robert G. Poirier, the report claimed that these aerial photos provide evidence of extermination activities. On the photo taken on August 25, 1944, one could for example see trains in the station of Birkenau with prisoners being marched to crematorium 2 and, in the roof of the gas chamber of that building, “four vents used to insert Zyklon B crystals into the subsurface gas chamber.” Yet the group of people alleged to be walking towards the crematorium were still at a large distance from the crematorium, and would not have necessarily ended up there. The photos do not produce conclusive evidence of exterminations nor do they provide evidence against this--despite some inflated claims by Holocaust deniers.

The original CIA analysis was based on study of analog enlargements. With new digital technologies it has become possible, however, to revisit the issue of the evidentiary value of the photos. In April 1996 I visited Los Angeles to meet with Michael Shermer, the editor of *Skeptical* magazine, and Alex Grobman, the director of the Martyrs Memorial and Holocaust Museum. Together we went to NASA's Jet propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena to meet with Dr. Nevin Bryant, Supervisor of Cartographic Applications and Image Processing Applications. One of the world leaders in the analysis of aerial and satellite images, Dr. Bryant agreed to analyze with his computers the photos, enhancing the data using software programs used by NASA. The most important results were that the four shaded markings on the roofs of morgue 1 of both crematorium 2 and 3 did belong to the original negative, and were not added later on. Furthermore, Dr. Bryant discovered through comparison of various consecutive exposures taken on May 31, 1944 a long line of people moving into the compound of crematorium 5. Danuta Czech's *Kalendarium* records that, on May 31, 1944, two transports arrived from Hungary, and that from the first one 100 Jews were selected for work. “The remaining people are killed in the gas chambers.” And of the second transport 2,000 Jews are admitted to the camp. “The re-

maintaining people are killed in the gas chambers.” Why would the Germans have moved a large group of people into the compound of crematorium 5, which was off-limits to inmates, if not to kill them? Yet even here one must remember that, like all the other “non-intentional” evidence, the information derived from the aerial photos should not be considered in isolation. A last point must be made, before we leave this short review of what Bloch called the “non-intentional” evidence preserved in the archive of the Auschwitz Central Construction Office. Part of this archive is in Moscow, part is in Oswiecim, in Block 24, right next to the entrance that proclaims “Work Makes Free” -- “*Arbeit Macht Frei*.” About a hundred yards away is another collection of “non-intentional” evidence, relics from the camp that the Germans did not manage to destroy when they evacuated the camp. In Birkenau the Central Construction Office oversaw the erection of 30 storage barracks, right between crematoria 2 and 3 on the south and crematoria 4 and 5 to the north, and visible on all the aerial photos. This part of the camp, called by the inmates “Canada” because of its wealth in goods, stored the belongings of the deportees brought from all over Europe--personal possessions left at the tracks or in the undressing rooms of the crematoria. There a special squad of inmates sorted the goods, and prepared them for shipment for deserving families in the Reich. Late in 1944, when the railroad infrastructure collapsed, these shipments ceased, and the barracks of Canada filled up. Just before their departure from Auschwitz, SS men wishing to destroy evidence, set fire to the barracks. Twenty-nine barracks went up in flames. One only partly burned. Some of the things the Russians found upon the liberation of the camp are now stored in Block 5--as I said about a hundred yards from the building archive.

Alain Resnais presented these items of “non-intentional” evidence in his justly celebrated *Night and Fog*. Here, for the record, some lines from the script. “(Black and White): A mountain of spectacles, combs, dishes and pans, clothing and shoes, scissors, and shaving brushes.

“Everything was saved. Here are the stockpiles of the Nazis at war. Here are their warehouses.” An enormous mountain of gleaming hair rising toward the sky. “Nothing but women’s hair...” Reams of cloth, its hair surface glistening in the light. “At fifteen pfennig the kilo, they made cloth from it.” ”

PART FOUR *CONCERNING DENIAL*

VII Auschwitz and Holocaust Denial

Frankfurter: “Dr. Münch, what would you say to those who say today that all of this did not happen, that Auschwitz is a lie, that Auschwitz is a hoax?”

Münch: “When someone tells that Auschwitz is a lie, that it is a hoax, I feel hesitation to say much to him. I say, the facts are so firmly determined, that one cannot have any doubt at all, and I stop talking to that person because it has no use. One knows that anyone who clings to such things, which are published somewhere, is a malevolent person who has some personal interest to want to bury in silence things that cannot be buried in silence.”

Dr.Hans-Wilhelm Münch, former SS doctor in Auschwitz.

Given the way the memory and image of Auschwitz has become central in the discourse of the Holocaust, it is not surprising that holocaust deniers focus much of their attention on the camp. To understand the centrality of Auschwitz for the negationist cause, it is important to know that one of the very few full confessions given by any German official involved in a key role in the Holocaust concerns the statements Auschwitz Kommandant Rudolf Höss made in Nuremberg, during his own trial in Warsaw, and the autobiography, accompanied by an essay entitled “The Final Solution of the Jewish Question in Concentration

Camp Auschwitz.” Other key figures in the Holocaust either died before the end of the war (Heydrich), or committed suicide immediately after the German defeat (Himmler), or made less than full confessions (Eichmann). The first instalment of Höss’ confession was available within a year of the end of the war, and his writings were published in the 1950s. As he acknowledged the central role of Auschwitz in the Holocaust, and as he described the organization, development, procedures, and problems of the extermination program in great detail, any attempt to refute the Holocaust must engage and refute Höss.

A second reason that Auschwitz is the focus of Holocaust denial arises from the historical certainty of the central role of Auschwitz as an extermination centre that arises from the convergence between eyewitness’ accounts, Höss’s writings, the physical remains, the extensive building archive of the Auschwitz Central Building Office (which survived the war) and various other archival sources. The evidence for the role of Treblinka, Belzec and Sobibor--sufficient as it may be to come to a moral certainty as to the war-time history of those places--is much less abundant. There are very few eyewitnesses, no confession that can compare to that given by Höss, no significant remains, and few archival sources.

Given this situation, Holocaust deniers seem to have concluded that it makes strategic sense to concentrate their energies on debunking the Höss account and showing that Auschwitz could not have accommodated an extermination program. Their strategy is explained by the wellknown Holocaust denier Arthur R. Butz who, in 1982, claimed that impartial scientific, forensic and scholarly analysis of the evidence showed that Auschwitz had not been a centre of extermination. “It follows,” Butz argued, “that the basic tactic of the defenders of the [extermination] legend, in controversies to come, will be to attempt to make claims that cannot be tested by the normal method of placing them as hypotheses in appropriate historical context and seeing if they cohere.” According to Butz, those who want to maintain that the Holo-

caust existed despite the evidence to the contrary would prefer to discuss extermination camps like Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka--places of which little remain in terms of physical or archival relics, and knowledge of which is largely based on witness testimony of survivors like Jankiel Wiernik and post-war confessions of Treblinka commandant Stangl and others. "The consequence," Butz concluded, "is that it is much easier to disprove the legend as it applies to Auschwitz than as it applies to the others." For Auschwitz there were the remains of the crematoria, and there were ample archival sources, and these all pointed, as Butz confidently believed he had proved, to a non-genocidal intent and use. Therefore Butz declared that, confronted with Auschwitz, "the defenders of the [extermination] legend are in an impossible position." "They cannot concede Auschwitz without conceding the whole issue, for the reason that there is no sort of evidence they offer for the others that is not also offered for Auschwitz. If the "confession" of Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss is fanciful, then who will believe the "confession" of Treblinka commandant Franz Stangl? If the Auschwitz accounts of Rudolf Vrba and Miklos Nyiszli are not credible, and their books sick jokes, then who will believe the equally sick Treblinka accounts of Jankiel Wiernik and other obscure people? If the Nuremberg and postwar German trials have not established the truth about Auschwitz, then who will believe that they have established the truth about Treblinka? If the large numbers of Jews admittedly sent to Auschwitz were not killed there, then who will believe that the large number of Jews sent to Treblinka were killed at that camp? My advice, then, to those who would engage in controversy is not to permit the defenders of the legend to get away with ignoring Auschwitz. The fact is that it is very easy to bring down the legend as it applies to Auschwitz and Auschwitz in turn, on account of the nature of the evidence involved, brings down the rest of the legend with it."

Butz confidently claims that Auschwitz, seemingly the strongest proof of the Holocaust, is in fact the easiest to attack. Subsequent history has shown that he has a point. In the last fifteen years holocaust deniers have fired a barrage of arguments to show that Auschwitz could not have been an extermination camp, that the gas chambers could not have worked, or that the crematoria ovens could not have incinerated the great number of bodies claimed. Every time they adduce specific technical arguments, which for technological laymen--which is the great majority of us, and includes virtually all students of the Holocaust--are difficult if not impossible to refute. Their arguments are based on the premise that the Holocaust is a hoax created and maintained by sinister forces such as the British Secret Service or some Zionist outfit, or which arose as the result of some mass hysteria of eastern Jews. And they argue that Auschwitz, which was during the war an ordinary concentration and labour camp of extraordinary size, was selected by those same forces or identified by those same hysterics as a death camp equipped with installations for mass extermination. And they see their own task to rip the veil of falsehood and deception. They see themselves as successors of Sherlock Holmes, looking for clues that give access to the hidden truth. Their confidence that they can do so is based on their assumption that the "Hoax" that is the Holocaust centers on the premise that Auschwitz was an extermination camp, and the assumption that Auschwitz was an extermination camp centers on the premise that it was equipped with homicidal gas chambers, and that our knowledge of the gas chambers is based on only a very few and very unreliable sources: mainly hearsay and a few scraps of paper. Therefore, they assume that the whole "legend" will dissolve when one can show one error, one mistake, one inconsistency, or one contradiction.

The assumption that the discovery of one little crack will bring the whole building down is the fundamental fallacy of Holocaust Denial. It would be a legitimate argument if indeed our knowledge of the Holo-

caust depended on our knowledge of the extermination installations of Auschwitz, and if the existence and operation of the gas chambers was proved by very few bits of information. This is obviously nonsensical. First of all there is the fact that if we assume the Holocaust to have happened more or less as told, all the evidence becomes intelligible, while if we assume it was a hoax, most of the evidence does not make any sense. When this was the case, the father of “debunkment,” Lord Bolingbroke, counselled to desist and accept a fact as true. “Force your imagination as much as you please, you will find insurmountable difficulties in your way, if you suppose the fact to be invented: but all these difficulties vanish when you suppose it true.” Furthermore, our knowledge of the Holocaust depends on tens of thousands of individual pieces of information, many of which have nothing to do with Auschwitz, and if we do consider Auschwitz, then we may safely state that our knowledge of the gas chambers depend on thousands of individual pieces of evidence of different kinds and classes. All those data converge to a conclusion. Even if one can point at erroneous information, inconsistencies and contradictions--normal occurrences in everyday historical practice--this does not mean that these disprove the existence of the gas chambers, or the Holocaust.

Holocaust deniers have, however, found ways to address this question by trying to deny that there is a convergence of evidence. Michael Shermer described the way they respond to the evidence. “We have an eyewitness account by a survivor who says he heard about gassing Jews while he was at Auschwitz. The revisionist says that survivors exaggerate and that their memories are unsound. Another survivor tells another story different in details but with the core similarity that Jews were gassed at Auschwitz. The revisionist claims that rumors were floating throughout the camps and many survivors incorporated them into their memories. An SS guard confesses after the war that he actually *saw* people being gassed and cremated. The revisionist claims that these confessions were forced out of the Nazis by the Allies. But now a

Sonderkommando--a Jew who helped Nazis load dead bodies out of the gas chambers and into the crematoria--says he not only heard about it, and not only saw it happening, he actually *participated* in the process. The revisionist explains this away by saying that the Sonderkommando accounts make no sense--their figures of bodies are exaggerated and their dates are incorrect. What about the camp commandant, who confessed after the war that he not only heard, saw, and participated in the process, but that he *orchestrated* it!? He was tortured, says the revisionist. But what about his autobiography written after his trial, conviction and sentencing to death, when he had nothing to gain by lying? No one knows why people confess to ridiculous crimes, explains the revisionist, but they do. No single testimony says "Holocaust" on it. But taking many together the story begins to unfold. And now the revisionist's defense is beginning to unravel. Instead of the historian having to present "just one proof," the revisionist must now disprove five pieces of historical data, with five different methods of disproof. But there is more. We have the blueprints for both the gas chambers and the crematoria--huge structures built for processing large numbers of bodies. Those were used strictly for delousing, claims the revisionist, and thanks to the Allies' war against Germany, the Germans were never given the opportunity to deport the Jews to their own homeland, and instead had to put them into overcrowded camps where disease and lice were rampant. What about the huge orders of Zyklon-B gas? It was strictly used for delousing all those diseased inmates. What about those speeches by Hitler, Himmler, Frank, and Goebbels talking about the "extermination" of the Jews? Oh, they really meant "rooting out," as in deporting them out of the Reich. What about Eichmann's confession at his trial? He was coerced. Hasn't the German government confessed that the Nazis attempted to exterminate European Jewry? Yes, but they lied so they could rejoin the family of nations. Now the revisionist must rationalize no less than 14 different bits of evidence that "jump together" to a specific conclusion. But our convergence continues. If six million Jews did not die, where did

they go? They are in Russia, and America, and Israel, and scattered throughout the world. But why can't they find each other? They do-- haven't you heard the occasional stories of long lost siblings making contact with each other after many decades? What about those photos and newsreels of the liberation of the camps with all those dead bodies and starving/dying inmates? Those people were well taken care of until the end of the war when the Allies were mercilessly bombing German cities, factories, and supply lines that were feeding those camps-- the Nazis tried valiantly to save their prisoners but the combined strength of the Allies was too much. But what about all those accounts by prisoners of the brutality of the Nazis--the random shootings and beatings, the deplorable conditions, the freezing temperatures, the overwork, etc.? This is war. The Americans put Japanese in camps. The Japanese imprisoned Chinese. The Russians tortured Poles and Germans. War is hell. The Nazis are no different from anyone else. **Post Hoc Rationalization.** We are now up to 18 proofs all converging toward one conclusion. The revisionist is desperately swinging away at them all, steadfastly determined not to give up his belief system. He is relying on what might be called *post hoc rationalization*--an after-the-fact reasoning to justify contrary evidence. In addition, the revisionist then shifts the burden of disproving all this evidence to the historian by mistakenly demanding that each one of these pieces of evidence independently prove the Holocaust."

Indeed, in the case of Auschwitz, it is important when dealing with the arguments of deniers that, despite the claims to the contrary, the onus is on them to make their case. This means, above all else, that they must transcend their nihilist agenda. Despite their claim to be "revisionists," holocaust deniers have not yet begun to undertake the task of "revising history." True revisionist history not only destroys an inherited view of the past, but also provides an alternative. For example, Michel Foucault argued in his famous *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) that the Enlightenment ascent from the world of ex-

plicit judicial violence enacted on the body had been, in fact, a descent into a closed universe of total surveillance and unrelenting discipline, a world ruled by some cunning, shadowy and ultimately sinister power. Foucault's argument was shown to be a blatant misconstruction, and as a result we read *Discipline and Punish* today more for its historical value as a representative of the intellectual climate of the 1970s than for its value as history of the Enlightenment. Yet the fact remains that in its time it offered a revisionist interpretation of the history of punishment that was plausible and therefore was taken seriously. And it could be taken seriously because Foucault had taken the trouble to write a history, that is to offer what seemed at least at first reading to be a narrative in which he put forward his thesis. He created something one could engage with. And he created something one wanted to engage with.

Up to today holocaust deniers have been unable to produce, in forty years of effort, a counter-narrative to the inherited history of Auschwitz. The deniers claim to be revisionist historians, but they have yet to produce a history that offers a plausible, "revised" explanation of the events in question. Until now, they have had a nihilist agenda. They have attacked the inherited account on the unproven assumption of some general conspiracy, but they have not been able, or willing, to produce serious revisionist historiography that gives us the origin and development of this conspiracy, the reason why and how it seized on, of all places, those very "ordinary" Auschwitz concentration camps as the fulcrum of its effort to hoodwink both gentiles and Jews, to leverage the international community in general, and defraud the Germans and the Arabs in particular. At the moment the best the negationist have done in this respect is either Arthur Butz's rambling and highly implausible suggestion that the origin of the conspiracy was somehow tied to the American need to accelerate in 1942 its synthetic rubber program, or a certain "Samuel Crowell's" more recent attempt to describe, in good post-modern fashion, Auschwitz as the result of "inter-

textuality.” And if the actual war-time history of Auschwitz and Birkenau was indeed one of relative normality, comparable to the histories of Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, with only typhus epidemics as an extra permanent fixture to explain the increased mortality, then one should expect holocaust deniers to produce, accepting the criteria and constraints of accepted historical scholarship, a transparent and coherent account to that effect. At the moment nothing exists even resembling this. Certainly, the negationists have shown great creativity in inventing many alternative explanations for each aspect of the camp’s history that seems to point to a deliberate program of genocide, but none of them are reconciled in one plausible narrative-- a history that would force the negationists to choose between the many options they have imagined, to seriously engage with issues of relevancy and causation, and to apply judgement.

In the following pages I will show that the work of these so-called revisionist historians constitutes a travesty of historical scholarship. I will consider the most important statements made by these negationist scholars, beginning with the Frenchman Paul Rassinier. At this point I will not consider why and how he became to be convinced that the Holocaust was a Hoax, but simply review his most important statements on the subject, giving particular attention to the way he interprets the evidence from Auschwitz. I will demonstrate that, as a scholar, Rassinier is grossly inaccurate at best, intellectually dishonest as a rule, and mad at worst.

According to Rassinier, the genealogy of the gas chamber hoax began in 1943. In the case of the German camps, the *agent provocateur* was not Victor Kravchenko, but Rapheal Lemkin. “After some fifteen years of historical research, I have come to the following conclusion: it was in 1943 that National Socialist Germany was accused for the first time of the systematic extermination of the Jews in the gas chambers. The author of this first, horrible and infamous accusation was a Polish Jew, a refugee in England and a jurist by profession, by the name of Rafael

Lemkin. And, he made that accusation in a book published in London, and in English, in that year, entitled *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*....And, the view maintained in the book was supported by the *Kasztner* Report on the tragedy of the Hungarian Jews, a report which was also talked about in the corridors during the [Nuremberg] trial..But, we must be precise and say that it was only after January 30, 1946, the date when French Prosecutor DuBost made public his discovery of the Gerstein document, that these two pieces of writing took on importance. In fact, it was on that day that, in the world press, the gas chambers mythology began its dance to every tune and diabolical rhythm; that unrestrained saraband full of missteps has not stopped since. Let us try to reconstruct the facts. Until January 30, 1946, aside from the *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* and the *Kasztner* Report which were only secondhand testimonies, the prosecution and judges at Nuremberg had only direct testimonies which, juridically, were not much authentic, given the way in which they were adduced by their authors. All of these witnesses had been interned at Auschwitz, and, as for gas chambers, either they knew nothing about them, or they knew about them through their prison comrades who were “trustworthy” and who they generally did not name, or who were already dead, if they did name them. Second hand testimony again. An example of this kind of testimony is provided by Dr. Benedikt Kautski, who did not appear in court, but, as we have seen, who wrote a book and had his short hour of fame. Another is that of Madame Vaillant-Couturier who arrived at the Auschwitz camp in January 1943, who was a communist, who, for that reason, was hidden away in the hospital where she was an important personage in the *Häftlingsführung* and who, in answer to the question as to whether the hospital had been open to Jews when they were sick, coldly replied to French Prosecutor DuBost, “No, when we got there the Jews did not have the right to go there; they were taken directly to the gas chamber if they were sick.” (T. VI, p. 219) Now, never was a false witness brought before the bar of a Tribunal with such calm assurance, since in January 1943 there existed--if indeed there ever existed--no gas chamber

at Auschwitz, the official word being that they were not installed until the end of February 1943. There is no end to the number of false witnesses of this kind that could be cited. But, for the first time, with the Gerstein document, the prosecution had a first-hand witness. But wasn't Gerstein dead? Yes, but he had written, or, at least, he had signed, a statement--at least that is what was claimed. Was not this statement about Auschwitz? No, not in so far as it concerned what he had seen; but invoices for Zyklon B that was delivered to that camp were appended. His description of extermination by gas in other camps portrayed the operation in such a degree of horror that the journalists assigned to the trial decided that their emphasis of that theme would be sure to sell newspapers at home. The judges themselves accorded much less importance to the Gerstein allegations, but they allowed the journalists a free hand; even though they did not actually encourage them, they never gave them their true impressions of the Gerstein document, which was presented to public opinion as though it had been admitted into evidence when actually it had been rejected (as was discussed in the preceding chapter). Dr. Benedikt Kautksi's book did not come out until the end of 1946. Therefore, it did not play a part in the trial of the Major War Criminals. As a secondhand testimony on gas chambers it would not have been any great help. To have a description of the gas exterminations at Auschwitz as precise as that of the Gerstein document on Belzec, the prosecution had to wait until 1951 and *Médecin à Auschwitz* by Miklos Nyiszli, about whom we learned what to think in the preceding chapters. Since then, nothing. No other *de visu* witnesses. The literature of the concentration camps--the historians like Hans Rothfels, Golo Mann, or Raul Hilberg, the *War Crimes Commission* of Warsaw, and the *Centres of Contemporary Jewish Documentation*, their propagandists like Leon Poliakov or Hannah Arendt, the *Institut für Zeitgeschichte* at Munich, or showmen and film directors like Piscator (producer of *Der Stellvertreter* by Hochhuth)--has never

been able to bring forth, as far as I know, any more than those two testimonies, both of which I believe I have proved were obviously apocryphal. I shall not belabor the point.”

Before we consider the historiographical importance of these paragraphs, let us just look at their accuracy. It will be clear that accuracy is the first virtue of any historian, and there is a general consensus that a constant lack of accuracy in the description of small things generates a quite legitimate concern about one’s honesty in one’s judgement of the big issues. Rassinier disappoints. First of all Raphael Lemkin’s *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* did not accuse the Germans of conducting a “systematic mass extermination of Jews in the gas chambers.” What did Lemkin write? In a chapter entitled “Genocide” Lemkin introduced the neologism “genocide” with the justification that “new conceptions require new terms.” “By “genocide” we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group. This new word, coined by the author to denote an old practice in its modern development, is made from the ancient Greek word *genos* (race, tribe) and the Latin *cide* (killing), thus corresponding in its formation to such words as tyrannicide, homicide, infanticide, etc. Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accompanied by mass killing of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.” Given this definition, Lemkin saw that genocide involved first of all the destruction of the national pattern of a given group, and second of all the forced imposition of a new pattern. It was therefore mainly a political, cultural, and economic process. This, so he believed, occurred with varying intensity all over German-ruled Europe, but especially in German annexed Alsace, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Bohemia, and western Poland. Lemkin did discuss German policies of biological genocide in the annexed parts of Poland, where the German authorities tried to decrease the birthrates of Poles,

and physical genocide through racial discrimination in feeding, the endangering of health, and mass killings. In all three categories he included most of the non-German nations that had come under Nazi rule. The section dealing with mass killings reads as follows: “*Mass Killings*. The technique of mass killings is employed mainly against Poles, Russians, and Jews, as well as against leading personalities from among the non-collaborationist groups in all the occupied countries. In Poland, Bohemia-Moravia, and Slovenia, the intellectuals are being “liquidated” because they have always been considered as the main bearers of national ideals and at the time of occupation they were especially suspected of being the organizers of resistance. The Jews for the most part are liquidated within the ghettos, or in special trains in which they are transported to a so-called “unknown” destination. The number of Jews who have been killed by organized murder in all the occupied countries, according to the Institute of Jewish Affairs of the American Jewish Congress in New York, amounts to 1,702,500.” The next paragraph deals with the religious persecution of Luxembourgish and Polish Catholics. There is no mention of gas chambers either in Lemkin’s text, nor in the reference he quotes from the December 17, 1942 “Joint Declaration by members of the United Nations,” in which the Germans are accused of working the able-bodied to death in labour camps and in which they leave the infirm to die of exposure or starvation, or massacre them in mass executions. Lemkin does not mention anywhere the systematic mass extermination of Jews in gas chambers.

Similarly the records do not support Rassinier’s account of the events on January 30, 1946--the day that the “gas chambers mythology began its dance to every tune and diabolical rhythm.” First of all, Deputy Chief Prosecutor Charles Dubost did not announce his discovery of the famous Gerstein Report--the very detailed eyewitness account of the extermination process in Belzec written by *SS-Obersturmführer* Kurt Gerstein. What did happen is that Dubost mentioned that he had possession of ten invoices addressed to Gerstein for the delivery of Zyklon

B to the Oranienburg and Auschwitz concentration camps, and that he wanted to submit them as evidence under Exhibit Number RF-350. There is no evidence anywhere in the official transcript of that day's proceedings that justifies Rassinier's claim that on that day the "unrestrained saraband" of the gas--chamber legend began. There is no evidence anywhere that justifies Rassinier's observation that, "for the first time, with the Gerstein document, the prosecution had a first-hand witness," and that "the judges themselves accorded much less importance to the Gerstein allegations." No allegations were read, no "description of extermination by gas" provided. The only thing that happened was that DuBost mentioned the ten invoices, and that he encountered some difficulties in having it and many other documents accepted as evidence that day because of the inability of DuBost's small staff in completing all the required administrative procedures in arranging and numbering them.

Rassinier elsewhere suggested that the refusal of the judges to initially admit Exhibit Number RF-350 as evidence was due to its mistrust of the authenticity of the document. "For reasons which the reader will not fail to understand, the Tribunal, in fact, did not want to hear anything about either Kurt Gerstein or his testament," Rassinier observed. "[O]ut of the bundle of documents that were produced by Mr. DuBost, it accepted only two invoices of April 30, 1944, each for 555 kilos of Zyklon B, one for Auschwitz and the other for Oranienburg." Elsewhere Rassinier gives a slightly different version of the same event. "It was this fantastically gruesome account that Mr. DuBost--not just anyone, but a prosecutor, and, doubtless, a well known one too, since he was chosen from among his peers to represent France at Nuremberg--wanted to have accepted by the International Tribunal on January 30, 1946. The Tribunal did not go along. But, one must say that for the Tribunal not to go along it had to be really a little thick, because in other circumstances it swallowed, apparently without a flick of an eyelash, lots of other tricky things of this kind." Again, the record of the pro-

ceedings do not support Rassinier's suggestion. The Gerstein Report was never at issue, and the (temporary) problem, resolved that same afternoon, was of a procedural nature.

Georges Wellers, former inmate of Auschwitz and editor of "Le Monde Juife," could not resist showing his rage at Rassinier's suggestion, which later transformed into a conclusion, that the refusal of the Tribunal to initially accept Exhibit Number RF-350 into evidence proved "that the Gerstein document was an historical forgery." "This "argument" is a model of hypocrisy and outrageous deceit typical of all the procedures currently employed by Rassinier. It is a model of hypocrisy, for God knows how much spleen Rassinier vented on the Tribunal of Nuremberg and its decisions, how many documents admitted by the Tribunal were declared by him to be "forged," "apocryphal," "falsified," "worthless," "not conclusive," etc. to not take seriously his sudden and virtuous indignation that the Gerstein document is still considered authentic and essential. Outrageous deceit, for in reality the Tribunal, during its morning session on January 30 did in fact "refuse to hear the reading" of the Gerstein report, but not at all because it considered it "inconclusive," but rather for a purely technical reason: a certificate establishing its origin, obligatory required by the Tribunal for every paper produced, was lacking." And after describing how, later in the afternoon the Tribunal apologized to Mr. DuBost for causing some difficulties earlier that day, Wellers asked "[i]s that sufficiently clear? The incident is closed for anyone...Except for Rassinier, naturally."

Let us return to the passage under discussion. Finally, of course, is Rassinier's blunt dismissal of Claude Vaillant-Couturier's testimony. Labelling her a "communist" and conveniently ignoring that she was a member of the Constituent Assembly and a *Chevalier* in the *Legion d'Honneur*, Rassinier passed in silence over her amazingly detailed and responsible account of life and death in Auschwitz, dismissing her whole testimony because he wrongly assumed that in January 1943,

when she arrived in Auschwitz, there were no gas chambers. Whenever Madame Vaillant-Couturier mentioned something she had not witnessed herself, she mentioned this specifically in her declaration, and provided the name of her informant.

Thus Rassinier's genealogy of the gas chamber story is inaccurate, to say the least. Equally non-sensical is his account of how the legend of the concentration camps and the hoax of the Holocaust were the result of the cold-war. "[I]t is no secret that there are certain features of the foreign policy of the United States which are expressly designed to prevent any serious breakdown of relations with the Soviet Union; the contrived danger of a re-birth of Naziism and Fascism in Europe is one of them. Both Stalin and Truman fully exploited this myth [of the camps], the former to keep Europe from achieving economic and political unity and from integrating Germany into such a European community, and the latter to justify in part the huge cost of maintaining an army of occupation in Germany." When in the early 1950s the prospect of a united Europe appeared, the Soviets and the Israelis had new reasons to whip up the myth of the gas chambers, the former to prevent the isolation of Russia, the latter to prevent an end to the German reparation payments to Israel. The main centers of propaganda were two organizations that were a figment of Rassinier's imagination: the *Warsaw Committee for the investigation of crimes and war criminals* and the *World Center of Contemporary Jewish Documentation*. "The target was Germany. The theme was that the horrors and atrocities that had been committed during the Second World War by the Nazis were a natural vocation of Germany. Therefore, in order to prevent a re-emergence of this horrible propensity, the Germans had to be kept under severe control and very carefully segregated." Thus appeared, on orders of propaganda organizations centred in Warsaw and Tel Aviv, Miklos Nyszli's memoir *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account* and Leon Poliakov's *Harvest of Hate* and finally Rudolf Höss's memoirs.

In his historiography of our knowledge of the gas chambers, Rassinier introduced a technique which other negationists were to copy: he summarily dismissed all eye-witness testimonies that affirmed the existence of, for example, gas chambers as lies of Ulysses, and ignored (or perhaps proved ignorant of) the vast array of other evidence. Of course, he did profess at occasions his good will: "For fifteen years, everytime that I heard of a witness anywhere, no matter where in the portion of Europe that was not occupied by the Soviets, who claimed to have himself been present at gas exterminations, I immediately went to him to get his testimony. And, each time the experience ended in the same way. With documentation in hand, I would ask him so many precise and detailed questions that soon it became apparent that he could not answer except by lying. Often his lies became so transparent, even to himself, that he ended his testimony by declaring that he had not seen it himself, but that one of his good friends, who had died in the camps and whose good faith he could not doubt, had told him about it. I covered thousands and thousands of kilometres throughout Europe in this way." It is a pity, for posterity's sake, that Rassinier did not keep a log of his travels, or his interviews, as it would have helped later generations of historians in their work!

It will be clear that the publication of Höss's autobiography and his essay on the Final Solution of the Jewish Problem troubled Rassinier. Unlike the memoirs of the deportees, he could not simply dismiss the book as another "Lie of Ulysses." Therefore he had to engage the text closely, and discredit Höss as a witness by revealing alleged contradictions, miscalculations and other reasons for doubt as to the accuracy of his memory or the veracity of his statements. "In reply to the question put by Dr. Kaufmann, Kaltenbrunner's legal counsel at Nuremberg, "Did Eichmann tell you in fact that more than 2,000,000 Jews were destroyed at Auschwitz camp?" Hoess answered, "Yes, that is right." (T. XI, p. 409.) Behind the scenes he is supposed to have told the American psychologist, Gustave Gilbert, that "Every day two trains

brought in 3,000 persons, for 27 months” (therefore, for the whole length of the period of deportation, from March 1942 to July 1944). “So that makes a total of about 2,500,000 people.” (Statement of Professor Gilbert before the Jerusalem Tribunal in judgement on Eichmann, May 30, 1961). But, when it came to giving details about these 2,500,000 people he wrote in the *Le Commandant d’Auschwitz parle* (p. 239, French ed.): As for me, I never knew the total number, and had no way of determining it. I can only remember the number in the most important cases, often pointed out to me by Eichmann or one of his deputies. From Upper Silesia, or Poland in general:250,000 From Germany, or Theresienstadt:100,000 Holland:95,000 Belgium:20,000 France: 110,000 Greece:65,000 Hungary:400,000 Slovakia:90,000 TOTAL: 1,130,000 The figures concerning cases of less importance are not graven in my memory, but they were insignificant compared with the above. I think the figure of 2,500,000 much too high “”

Rassinier’s text is full of mistakes, misinterpretation, and falsification. “Behind the scenes [Höss] is supposed to have told...” is refuted by reading either Gilbert’s book *The Psychology of Dictatorship* (1950) or the transcripts of the Eichmann trial. In the book Gilbert wrote and during the trial he stated under oath that Höss wrote these things down in a short autobiography created on Gilbert’s behest. On May 29, 1961, the day of Gilbert’s testimony, the original document was produced in court as evidence, and marked as T/1170. In his autobiography Höss provided a detailed description of the arrival, selection and killing of the deportees. I will provide a rather lengthy quotation, to provide the full context for the two sentences Rassinier chose to quote. “In Birkenau there were five installations--two large crematoria, each of which had a capacity for receiving 2,000 persons in the course of 24 hours. That is to say, it was possible in one gas chamber to put to death up to 2,500 persons; in five double ovens heated with coke, it was possible to burn at most 2,000 bodies within 24 hours; two smaller installations could eliminate about 1,500 people, with four bigger double

ovens to each of them. Furthermore, there was also an open-air installation--that is, an old farmhouse was sealed and turned into a gas chamber, which could also contain 1,500 persons at one and the same time. The incineration was carried out there in an open pit on wood, and this was practically limitless. In my estimation, it was possible to burn there, in 24 hours, up to 8,000 persons in this way. Hence it was possible to exterminate and eliminate up to 10,000 people within 24 hours in the installations described above. As far as I am aware, this number was attained only once in 1944, when delays occurred in the arrival of trains, and consequently five transports arrived together on one day. The ashes of the burnt bodies were ground into dust, which was poured into the Vistula in remote places and swept away with the current. On the basis of the figure of 2.5 million, which is the number of people who--according to Eichmann--were brought to Auschwitz for extermination, it may be said that on average, two transports arrived daily, with a combined total of 4,000 persons, of whom twenty-five per cent were fit for work, the balance of 3,000 were to be exterminated. The intervals in the various operations can be computed together at nine months. Thus there remain 27 months, with 90,000 people each month--a total of 2,430,000 people. *This is a calculation of the technical potential.* I have to keep to the figure mentioned by Eichmann, for he was the only SS officer who was allowed to keep records concerning these liquidation operations, according to the orders of the Reichsführer-SS. All other units which took part in any way had to destroy all records immediately. Eichmann mentioned this number in my presence when he was called upon, in April 1945, to present a report to the Reichsführer-SS. I had no records whatsoever. *But, to the best of my knowledge, this number appears to me much too high. If I calculate the total of the mass operations which I still remember, and still make allowance for a certain percentage of error, I arrive, in my calculation, at a total of 1.5 million at the most, for the period from the beginning of 1941 to the end of 1944.* But these are my computations which I cannot verify.[Emphasis added]

Nuremberg, 24 April 1946 (Signed) Rudolf Höss (At the bottom of the

document): Hungary – 400,000; Slovakia – 90,000; Greece – 65,000; Holland – 90,000; France – 110,000; Belgium – 20,000; the region of the Generalgouvernement and Upper Silesia – 250,000; Germany and Terezin – 100,000. Total – 1,125,000.”

Considering Höss’s statement given to Gilbert and read in court during the Eichmann trial, it is clear that first of all the contradiction that Rassinier noted between the figures of 2.5 million and 1.1 million does not exist. Höss clearly states that he took Eichmann’s figure of 2.5 million deportees as a point of departure, and that, at least in theory, this number of victims could have been achieved with an average of 90,000 victims arriving over 27 of the 36 months that mass killing took place in Auschwitz. However, Höss warned that the number of $(27 \times 90,000 =) 2,430,000$ should only be seen as “a calculation of the technical potential.” Having no records of his own, he felt obliged “to keep to the figure mentioned by Eichmann, for he was the only SS officer who was allowed to keep records concerning these liquidation operations, according to the orders of the Reichsführer-SS.” But, having said so, Höss immediately proceeded to make his own calculation, which was “1.5 million at the most, for the period from the beginning of 1941 to the end of 1944. But these are my computations which I cannot verify.” As to the second quotation Rassinier provided, which came from the French version of Höss’s autobiography, again we can see that he failed to provide the context. The paragraph that preceded the one with the calculation of 1,130,000 million deportees that Rassinier quoted reads as follows: “During my earlier interrogations I gave the number of 2.5 million Jews who arrived at Auschwitz to be exterminated. This figure was given to me by Eichmann, who had given this figure to my superior, SS General Glücks, when Eichmann was ordered to make a report to Himmler shortly before Berlin was surrounded....I myself never knew the total number, and I have nothing to help me arrive at an estimate. I can only remember the figures involved in the larger actions....” Again,

the context is the same. Höss mentions Eichmann's calculation of 2.5 million deportees in order to reject it in favour for a lower figure of his own.

Quoting partially and out of context, Rassinier gave the false impression that Höss came to one conclusion in one place, and another elsewhere--in short that Höss was an unreliable witness. It seems, after some closer scrutiny of the evidence, that Höss showed, after all, a remarkable consistency in his computations--especially so if one remembers that he did the two calculations Rassinier quoted at different periods and without the opportunity to compare them. *The contradiction does not exist, except in Rassinier's mind.*

Having established the less than stellar practice of Rassinier as a scholar and having reestablished the credibility of Höss as a witness, we return to Rassinier's text.

"[W]e are concerned here with the witness Hoess, not the general statistics. And about those two trains that for 27 months brought 3,000 people to Auschwitz everyday, witness Hoess does not seem very certain. On this subject I invite the reader to think about these three propositions:

1. "As far as I can remember the convoys arriving at Auschwitz never carried more than 1,000 prisoners." (p.220).
2. "Following some delays in communication, five convoys a day, instead of the expected three, arrived." (p.236).
3. "In the extermination of Hungarian Jews, convoys were arriving at the rate of 15,000 persons a day." (p.239). From which it appears that under certain circumstances five trains per day of 1,000 persons each delivered a total of 15,000 persons."

So let us follow Rassinier's proposal, and consider these three propositions. First of all, let us establish their context. The first quote appears in a discussion about the early transports of Upper Silesian Jews to Auschwitz. "I am unable to recall when the destruction of the Jews began--probably in September 1941, or perhaps not until January 1942. At first we dealt with the Jews from Upper Silesia. These Jews

were arrested by the Gestapo from Katowice and transported via the Auschwitz-Dziediez railroad and unloaded there. As far as I can recall, *these* transports never numbered more than a thousand persons (Emphasis added)."

Comparison between the German original and the English translation shows that the latter has some problems, but on a crucial point it is correct: when Höss discusses the size of the transports, he only refers to those early transports. "These transports never numbered more than a thousand persons." He does not refer to other transports. In fact, the use of the demonstrative adjective "these" and the double adverb "never...more" suggest that other, that is later, transports were larger. By changing "these transports" for "the transports," Rassinier distorted Höss's text.

A misrepresentation of a different kind occurs when he quotes that "following some delays in communication, five convoys a day, instead of the expected three, arrived." The context of this sentence, in the translation of Andrew Pollinger, is as follows: "The highest total figure of people gassed and cremated in twenty-four hours was slightly more than nine thousand. This figure was reached in the summer of 1944, during the action in Hungary, using all installations except Crematory [IV]. On that day five trains arrived because of delays on the rail lines, instead of three, as was expected, and in addition the railroad cars were more crowded than usual."

Rassinier is quite brazen with his third quotation: "In the extermination of Hungarian Jews, convoys were arriving at the rate of 15,000 persons a day." It does not appear in the original. He seems to have made it up. In conclusion, Rassinier suggests a discrepancy between three figures that does not exist. The two that could be traced back applied both to specific, and what proved to be atypical situations--one at the (hesitant) beginning of the history of Auschwitz as a site of the Shoah, and one extraordinary situation during its peak.

In the next paragraph Rassinier, who has shown poor exegetic skills, provides an example of his mathematical skills. “To the Tribunal on April 15, 1946, Hoess had stated that these trains carried 2,000 persons each (T. XI, p. 412). To Professor Gustave Gilbert he said that they contained 1,500 each, and in his book, he comes down to 1,000. What is certain that for the period given none of these estimates on the capacity of the trains corresponds to a total of 1,130,000. The last one is the closest to the truth with an exaggeration of only 300,000. Since Mr. Raul Hilberg takes under consideration six “killing centres,” an exaggeration of 300,000 for each one would yield a total exaggeration of nearly 2,000,000 persons and, out of six million a total exaggeration of that magnitude is quite important.” I will not comment on the easy way Rassinier was able to bring back to life, at the end of this paragraph, almost 2 million Jews with a stroke of the pen. Of greater interest is his statement about the capacity of the trains, and his conclusions. First of all the contradiction between the numbers. As we have seen, Höss mentioned the figure of 1,000 in relation to the transports of early 1942 from surrounding region of Upper Silesia. The figure of 2,000 that he mentioned on April 15, 1946, referred to “the whole period up until 1944.” “Dr. Kaufmann: “And then the railway transports arrived. During what period did these transports arrive and about how many people, roughly, were in such a transport?” Hoess: “During the whole period up until 1944 certain operations were carried out at irregular intervals in the different countries, so that one cannot speak of a continuous flow of incoming transports. It was always a matter of 4 to 6 weeks. During those 4 to 6 weeks two to three trains, containing about 2,000 persons each, arrived daily.” Again, where Höss is specific and where he makes historically important distinctions, Rassinier chooses to lump things together. He also seems incompetent as an accountant when he states that there is no way one could reach, on the basis of trains with between 1,000 and 2,000 Jews, a total number of 1,130,000 arriving deportees. Yet a simple calculation that does not exceed the abilities of a ten-year old shows otherwise. Let us take as our basis the

figure of that the deportations occurred over a period of 27 months (a figure which Rassinier endorsed a little earlier). This is a little over 800 days. This means that, *on average*, Auschwitz would have received 1,412 deportees per day. This is the average of the three figures Rassinier quoted--that is the total number of 1,130,000 deportees could have been easily reached if over a period of 27 months one train of 1,500 people per day arrived at the camp. But, as Höss wrote, during many actions the average rate was between two and three trains per day, and during the Hungarian action the normal rate was three trains per day. And I wonder how Rassinier could state with such conviction that, "for the period given none of these estimates on the capacity of the trains corresponds to a total of 1,130,000."

In the next paragraph Rassinier showed his general ignorance of the meaning of the documents of the *Zentralbauleitung* found in Auschwitz at the time of the liberation. "The same observation holds for the soundness of [Hoess's] testimony. "In the middle of spring, 1942, hundreds of human beings perished in the gas chambers." (p. 178.) But, as we have seen, Document No. 4401 establishes beyond any doubt that the so-called "gas chambers" were not ordered for Auschwitz until August 8, 1942 and Document No. 4463 establishes that they were not actually installed until February 20, 1943. At Nuremberg, Hoess had already stated in his deposition that "in 1942, Himmler came to visit the camp and was present at an execution from beginning to end," (T. XI, p. 413); no one called his attention to the fact that even if it were possible that Himmler had gone to Auschwitz in 1942, it was not possible for him to have been present at an execution, since the gas chambers had not been constructed yet. And, furthermore, we know that it would have been unlikely for Himmler to have been present at an execution because as we learned after the war from his physician, Dr. Kersten, he could not bear the sight of an execution."

Two documents that relate to the construction of the four new crematoria equipped with gas chambers in no way preclude the existence of other gas chambers in Auschwitz. In fact, Bunker 1 had been in operation since March of that year, and Bunker 2 since July. These were converted farmhouses and, in fact, Höss mentions them as the place of execution in the paragraph preceding the sentence Rassinier chose to quote as well, more obliquely, in the sentence itself, which Rassinier chose to quote only partly, suppressing amongst other things not only the location, but also Höss's sickeningly sentimental attempt at poetry. "In the spring of 1942 hundreds of people in the full bloom of life walked beneath the budding fruit trees of the farm into the gas chamber to their death, most often without a hint of what was going to happen to them." (*"Im Frühjahr 1942 gingen Hunderte von blühenden Menschen unter den blühenden Obstbäumen des Bauerngehöftes, meist nichtsahnend, in die Gaskammern, in den Tod."*) It is in this context significant that Rassinier uses the definite article "the" when he mentions the gas chambers: "it was not possible for him to have been present at an execution, since *the* gas chambers had not been constructed yet. [Emphasis added]" The definite article "the" suggests there were only one set of gas chambers at the site that came into operation in 1943. In fact, there were many different gas chambers, some which were used for longer periods, and some for a shorter time, some were spaces converted from other uses, others were designed as gas chambers.

Finally there is Rassinier's treatment of Himmler's visit. Höss provided a few short accounts of this visit in his autobiography, and in his essay on the Final Solution. In the latter text the account reads as follows. "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 2 was being cleared of 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. Shortly after Himmler's visit, SS Colonel Blobel from Eichmann's office arrived and brought Himmler's order, which stated that all the mass graves were to be opened and all the bodies cremated. It further stated that all the ashes were to be disposed of in such a way that later on there would be no way to determine the number of those cremated." It is obvious that Himmler did not like the sight, but was more of a "man" than both Kersten and Rassinier assumed.

Finally Höss provided a very long (four pages) and very detailed account of this visit in his biographical essay on Himmler, which was attached to and published with his autobiography. In this essay Höss described once more Himmler's response to the killings. "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 in total silence. I noticed that he very quietly watched the officers, the NCOs and me several times during the process." The next paragraph of Rassinier's text is even more problematic. "Hoess' comments concerning the capacity of the gas chambers and the crematories also are grossly contradictory. For example, he says on one page that: *The maximum figure for the number of people gassed or incinerated every 24 hours was a little more than 9,000 for all the installations* (p.236, emphasis added.) But, then, he says a few pages later: *As I have already said, Crematories I and II could incinerate about 2,000 bodies in 24 hours; it was not possible to exceed this if one wanted to avoid damage. Installations III and IV were supposed to incinerate 1,500 corpses in 24 hours. But, as far as I know, these figures were never reached.* (p. 245, emphasis added.) How can one fail to deduce from these flagrant contradictions that here is a document which was fabricated hastily after the event by illiterates?"

So let's look again at what Höss really says. For the record: with *Anlage II* (Installation II) Hoess points at Bunker 2., As we have already seen, Bunker 2 was a peasant cottage west of Birkenau that had been transformed into a gas chamber in the summer of 1942. It had been taken out of commission after the completion of the crematoria in 1943, but brought back into operation during the Hungarian Action in 1944 and renamed as Bunker 5. Outside Bunker 2/5 were large burning pits, where bodies were cremated in the open. The remains of these pits, together with the ashes, are still visible today. "Installation II, later designated as Open Air Installation or Bunker V, was in operation until the very end, especially as a standby in case of breakdowns in crematoria I to IV. In the case of actions with train transports arriving shortly after each other daytime gassings were conducted at V, and nightly arriving transports at I to IV. *The cremation possibility at V was practically unlimited as long it was still possible to burn both by day and night.* Because of enemy air activity it was not possible anymore from 1944 onwards to burn at night. The highest total figure of gassings and cremations within 24 hours was a little over 9,000 at all locations except at III in the summer of 1944 during the Hungarian Action, as due to train delays five instead of the expected three trains arrived within 24 hours, and these were also more heavily loaded (Emphasis added)." In other words, there is no contradiction. The open air cremation pits at V allow for the much higher figure. By partially quoting the paragraph, Rassinier either incompetently or malevolently tried to change the record.

Elsewhere Rassinier is just sloppy. "Finally, a careful analysis of the following language reveals a pearl: *Toward the end of 1942, all the mass graves were cleaned [crematory ovens had not been built yet, and incineration was done in mass graves]. The number of cadavers buried there exceeded 107,000. This figure [as Rudolph Hoess explains farther on] includes not only convoys of Jews gassed from the beginning, until the moment when they went on to incineration, but also the cadavers of all the prisoners who died in Auschwitz-Birkenau camp (p. 231).* From this statement one infers that in

nearly three years 107,000 persons died. I say “in nearly three years” because the two phrases “toward the end of 1942” and “until the moment when they went on to incineration,” are paradoxical, since the cremations could not have begun, according to the official thesis, before February 20, 1943. Therefore, for the two to be concomitant, which is called for here, it is absolutely necessary that both should have occurred on this last date. Since the camp was opened on June 14, 1940, one has to speak of almost three years. Hence the cremation of 107,000 cadavers before February 1943 must mean that all of the rest were cremated at a later date. Taking into account that between February 1943 and October 1944 (the official end of the exterminations) there are 17 months and that, as the Kasztner Report tells us, for 8 or 9 months (the autumn of 1943 to May 1944) the gas chambers at Auschwitz were out of order and not working, it remains to be established how many persons more than 107,000 could have been “incinerated,” from February 1943 to October 1944, when the camp was equipped with four crematoria ovens of 15 burners each. I would be very astonished if a cremation expert, given these facts, should reply that it was possible to cremate the million bodies that are claimed by Mr. Raul Hilberg, or even the 900,000 of the Institute of Jewish Affairs.”

Rassinier begins his argument with a quote from Höss’s report. Let us carefully examine this quote in its proper context. In the preceding paragraphs Höss records the beginning of the extermination of Jews in Bunker I, describing the procedure in some detail. “During the spring of 1942 we were still dealing with small police actions. But during the summer the transports became more numerous and we were forced to build another extermination site. The farm west of crematoria 4 and 5, which were built later, was chosen and prepared. Five barracks were built, two near Bunker 1, and three near Bunker 2. Bunker 2 was the larger one. It held about 1,200 people. As late as the summer of 1942 the corpses were still buried in mass graves. Not until the end of the summer did we start burning them. At first we put two thousand bodies on a large pile of wood. Then we opened up the mass graves and

burned the new bodies on top of the old ones from the earlier burials. At first we poured waste oil over the bodies. Later on we used methanol. The burning went on continuously--all day and all night. By the end of November all the mass graves were cleared. The number of buried bodies in the mass graves was 107,000. This number contains not only the first Jewish transports which were gassed when we started the burnings, but also the bodies of the prisoners who died in the main Auschwitz camp during the winter of 1941- 42 because the crematory was out of order. The prisoners who died at Birkenau [Auschwitz 2] are included in that number.”

Examination of the text shows how non-sensical Rassinier’s comments are. Let’s look at them sentence by sentence. “From this statement one infers that in nearly three years 107,000 persons died.” In fact, this inference is wrong. All the statement says is that 107,700 people were buried in mass graves until the beginning of the incinerations on the pyres, that is until the end of the summer of 1942. *It does not even include those people who arrived after the end of the summer to be killed and cremated immediately upon death without having been buried first in a mass grave.* It only includes those who were killed and initially buried without the intention of later cremation.

The largest group of these people were Jews who had arrived mostly after the spring of 1942--the transports in the spring were still classified as “small police actions.” So these were people who were killed in the camp between let’s say June and September, that is three months and not three years. Added to that were two smaller groups--inmates who had died in Auschwitz I in the winter of 1941/42 when the crematorium there was in repair, and the prisoners who had died in Birkenau since its opening in the beginning of March 1942. Ignorant of the context, Rassinier’s following sentence is non-sensical. “I say ‘in nearly three years’ because the two phrases ‘toward the end of 1942’ and ‘until the moment when they went on to incineration,’ are paradoxical, since the cremations could not have begun, according to the official

thesis, before February 20, 1943. “The paradox does not exist, because it is absolutely clear that Höss refers in his *”bis zu Beginn der Verbrennungen* [until the beginning of the incineration]” to the open--air incinerations discussed earlier in the same paragraph, and not to the in-house incinerations in the crematoria mentioned 10 paragraphs later. As these open-air incinerations began at the end of the summer, they could very well have ended by the end of November 1942.

As a result Rassinier’s conclusion that between June 1940 and February 1943 only (!) 107,700 people were cremated is nonsense: it only applies to three distinct groups of murdered people which represent according to current data about half of the total mortality of Auschwitz in 1942. Furthermore these cremations took place in very primitive circumstances, and hence any attempt to extrapolate from the number of 107,000 the number of total cremations in Auschwitz is inappropriate given the fact that in early 1943 four new crematoria with 46 ovens became available. Official figures of the *Zentralbauleitung* mentioned a total cremation capacity of 4,756 corpses per day. Yet Rassinier has no qualms about trying to make some suggestion that there should be some balance between the (false) figure of 107,000 corpses cremated before February 1943, and the total amount of cremations between February 1943 and October 1944. “Since the camp was opened on June 14, 1940, one has to speak of almost three years. Hence the cremation of 107,000 cadavers before February 1943 must mean that *all of the rest* were cremated at a later date. Taking into account that between February 1943 and October 1944 (the official end of the exterminations) there are 17 months and that, as the Kasztner Report tells us, for 8 or 9 months (the autumn of 1943 to May 1944) the gas chambers at Auschwitz were out of order and not working, it remains to be established how many persons more than 107,000 could have been “incinerated,” from February 1943 to October 1944, when the camp was equipped with four crematoria ovens of 15 burners each. I would be very astonished if a cremation expert, given these facts,

should reply that it was possible to cremate the million bodies that are claimed by Mr. Raul Hilberg, or even the 900,000 of the Institute of Jewish Affairs (Emphasis added).” With “all of the rest” I assume that Rassinier means the other 900,000 (Hilberg) or 800,000 corpses (Institute of Jewish Affairs).

This is what Rassinier had to say about Auschwitz. It will have become clear that it cannot pass even the most superficial examination. Rassinier did not have either the accuracy, nor the logic, nor the honesty required of a researcher.

One could go on, but I assume that the foregoing discussions will have amply demonstrated the worthless nature of Rassinier’s scholarship. I will leave his other arguments, such as for example his demographic argument that the total number of Jewish victims was either 1,589,492 or 987,592 (!), and that the “lie” involves the “murder” of 4,419,908 Jews who never existed, for others to tackle. On the basis of our analysis of what he has to say about Auschwitz, it is clear that one need not expect much of his contribution to the demographics of the Final Solution. Negationism was born in France, and it there it became the focus of public debate. Yet, in the wake of Rassinier’s pioneering work, considerable negationist activity arose outside of France. As I have already mentioned in the section on “Auschwitz and Holocaust Denial,” the most important American practitioner of negationist historiography is Arthur R. Butz. A full refutation of Butz’s *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* requires a dissertation. Therefore I will concentrate my analysis of Butz’s scholarship on his central argument: his assertion that no extermination of people took place in Auschwitz.

Butz assumed that a hoax, in order to be successful, will *not* be based on a story that is false in all or most of its details. “[N]inety nine per cent valid fact can be present in a story whose major claim has no truth whatever to it,” Butz argued, “and recognition of this leads the author of the hoax to the maximally safe approach to his deed: distort

the meaning of valid facts.” And he continued: “This is the basic structure of the Auschwitz extermination legend. It is shown here that every real fact contained in the story had (not could have had, but had) a relatively routine significance, having nothing to do with the exterminations of a people. Thus those who claim extermination must advance a thesis involving a dual interpretation of the facts, but by then the impartial reader, in consideration of what has just been noted, should be on my side; the need for a dual interpretation of fact, the trademark of the hoax, has emerged.”

Butz assumed, in other words, that procedures or structures have only one meaning or purpose, and that if we find that they have more than one--that is one “routine” meaning or purpose and one “extra-ordinary” meaning or purpose, the latter will be a fictional significance grafted on the factual one. For example: Butz rightly noted that people had to undress when subjected to delousing, that Zyklon was used for delousing purposes, that morgues were used to store corpses, that crematoria incinerated the corpses of people who had died as the result of starvation, exhaustion, mistreatment, or because of natural causes, and that chemical factories create stench. He therefore jumped to the conclusion that the author of the hoax intelligently created a fiction in which people had to undress when subjected to gassing, that Zyklon was used for killing purposes, that morgues were used as gas chambers, that crematoria incinerated the corpses of people who had been murdered in the gas chambers, and that the cremations create stench. In other words, the hoax criminalized “routine” activities. What Butz did not consider was that people had to undress both when subjected to delousing *and* when subjected to gassing, that Zyklon was used for delousing purposes *and* for killing purposes, that some morgues were used to store corpses *and* others as gas chambers, that crematoria incinerated the corpses of people who had died as the result of starvation, exhaustion, mistreatment, or because of natural causes, *and* that they incinerated the corpses of people who had been murdered in the

gas chambers, and that both chemical factories *and* crematoria create stench. And what Butz did not consider either is the rather simple explanation, proven to be true, that the various procedures or structures had historically two meanings or purposes because the second one evolved from, or was grafted onto, the first. For example, Zyklon was used in the camp for delousing purposes, but when searching for a simple, effective and cheap killing agent for humans, the SS discovered that hydrogen cyanide did not only kill lice, but people *also*, and at much lower doses. And when the Auschwitz crematoria were under construction, they were assigned to function as killing stations *also*, and the well-ventilated morgues proved easily adaptable into gas chambers. In other words contingency marked the development of the camp, and as in all cases where contingency rules, things designed to do one thing ended up doing something else *also*.

So let's look in some detail at the substance of Butz's argument. He began with an analysis of the Höss affidavit of April 5, 1946. "I commanded Auschwitz until 1 December, 1943, and estimate that at least 2,500,000 victims were executed and exterminated there by gassing and burning, and at least another half million succumbed to starvation and disease, making a total dead of about 3,000,000. This figure represents about 70% or 80% of all persons sent to Auschwitz as prisoners, the remainder having been selected and used for slave labor in the concentration camp industries."

Butz commented rather tamely that "[i]t would have been helpful in putting things into slightly better focus and perspective if Hoess had briefly indicated what the nature of the 'concentration camp industries' at Auschwitz was, and the enormous importance this industry had for the Germans." He did not go into detail why this would have been helpful, but assumed that the reader would remember an earlier discussion in which he claimed that because Auschwitz was the site of many industries using the slave labour of the camp, it could not have been a center of extermination *also*. As to the number of two and half

million people Höss claimed to have gassed in Auschwitz, Butz noted that a year later Höss mentioned a figure of 1,135,000 people murdered. And he continued as follows: “The lowest figure to be claimed by those who claim that gassings took place is 750,000. The Russians claimed 4,000,000, including some killed by “injections, ill treatment, etc”, but the highest figure claimed seems to be 7,000,000.” The reader is left to draw his own conclusions, but the suggestion is clear: when the lowest and highest estimate differ a whole order of magnitude, there is no reason to trust any of them. “Mass executions by gassing commenced during the summer 1941 and continued until fall 1944. I personally supervised executions at Auschwitz until the first of December 1943 and know by reason of my continued duties in the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps WVHA that these mass executions continued as stated above.”

Butz suggested that there was a contradiction with another statement Höss made in which he said that when, in 1941, Himmler ordered him to transform Auschwitz into an extermination camp, the Inspector of the Concentration Camps Glücks was not to know about this. Thus how could Höss have known about the exterminations after he had left the camp to take up a post at Glücks’s Inspectorate? Butz did not consider the probability that Himmler’s order of secrecy visa-vis Glücks in 1941 made sense in a context of the initial preparation of the Final Solution, and had become obsolete by 1943, when the genocide of the Jews had been underway for more than a year. “The “final solution” of the Jewish question meant the complete extermination of all Jews in Europe. I was ordered to establish extermination facilities at Auschwitz in June 1941. At that time there were already in the general government three other extermination camps; BELZEK, TREBLINKA and WOLZEK. These camps were under the Einsatzkommando of the Security Police and SD. I visited Treblinka to find out how they carried out their exterminations. The Camp Commandant at Treblinka told me that he had liquidated 80,000 in the course of one-half year. He was princip-

ally concerned with liquidating all the Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. He used monoxide gas and I did not think his methods were very efficient. So when I set up the extermination building at Auschwitz I, I used Cyclon B, which was crystallized Prussic Acid we dropped into the death chamber from a small opening. It took from 3 to 15 minutes to kill the people in the death chamber depending upon climatic conditions. We knew when the people were dead because their screaming stopped. We usually waited about one-half hour before we opened the doors and removed the bodies. After the bodies were removed our special commandos took off the rings and extracted the gold from the teeth of the corpses.”

Butz commented on this paragraph with a lengthy discussion that took more than three densely-printed pages. The first issue was the contradiction that existed between Höss’s account of the date of the Himmler order, June 1941, and his assertion that, at that time, Treblinka was already in operation. As Treblinka came only in operation in the summer of 1942, Butz dismissed the first part of the paragraph as “the sorts of contradictions that one should expect to emerge from a pack of lies.” Then he continued with a discussion on Zyklon as a delousing agent. “The constant menace of typhus as carried by lice has been noted, and the calamitous results of a complete breakdown of disinfection measures at Belsen has been seen. In view of the particular hospitability of the Auschwitz-Kattowitz operations to the typhus-bearing louse, in view of the fact of epidemics at Auschwitz which actually forced work-stoppages, and in view of the tremendous importance of the Auschwitz industry to the German war effort, it is not surprising that the Zyklon was used in liberal quantities at Auschwitz, and in the surrounding region, for its intended purpose.... It is not correct to say that the insecticide role of the Zyklon has been concealed; the WRB report mentions the anti-parasite role of the Zyklon and a dual role for the Zyklon at Auschwitz is explicitly claimed in the IMT transcript. We must be careful at this point to note the significance of the legend’s

Zyklon B allegation. Here we have, on a major point, the main attribute of a hoax as we begin to examine the details of the Auschwitz extermination claims: the fact requiring a dual interpretation.” Having noted the “dual interpretation,” Butz did not find it necessary anymore to engage and refute Höss’s graphic description of the gassing procedure itself. By implication, this was now a phantasm because Zyklon was also used to kill lice. And as Butz felt confident enough to pass over the rest of the paragraph in silence, it will be no surprise that he never mentioned or engaged any of the other testimonies that corroborate Höss’s account. “Another improvement we made over Treblinka was that we built our gas chambers to accommodate 2,000 people at one time, whereas at Treblinka their 10 gas chambers only accommodated 200 people each. The way we selected our victims was as follows: we had two SS doctors on duty at Auschwitz to examine the incoming transport of prisoners. The prisoners would be marched by one of the doctors who would make spot decisions as they walked by. Those who were fit for work were sent into the Camp. Others were sent immediately to the extermination plants. Children of tender years were invariably exterminated since by reason of their youth they were unable to work. Still another improvement we made over Treblinka was that at Treblinka the victims almost always knew that they were to be exterminated and at Auschwitz we endeavoured to fool the victims into thinking that they were to go through a delousing process. Of course, frequently they realized our true intentions and we sometimes had riots and difficulties due to that fact. Very frequently women would hide their children under the clothes but of course when we found them we would send the children in to be exterminated. We were required to carry out these exterminations in secrecy but of course the foul and nauseating stench from the continuous burning of bodies permeated the entire area and all of the people living in the surrounding communities knew that exterminations were going on at Auschwitz.”

Butz's comment on this paragraph from Höss's affidavit is all over the place. First of all he complained that it was highly irregular that Himmler would have chosen to bypass the normal chain of command and personally give instructions to Höss. Then he was puzzled at the way the German Government "left the means of killing, and the materials required, a matter for the judgement and ingenuity of the local camp commandant." In the case of Auschwitz this meant that Höss decided on his own that two cottages would do as gas chambers, and that Zyklon, which he found "kicking around the camp," would work as a killing agent. "All of this is idiotic," Butz concluded.

Then he turned to Höss's account of the selections. According to him, those unfit for work were immediately killed. Butz challenged Höss's statement by referring to the fact that in 1943 a large group of Jews from Theresienstadt were initially not subjected to selection, but were lodged as families in Birkenau. "Since these people were put into 'quarantine' it is certain that their quarters had been disinfected with the Zyklon just prior to their moving in," Butz speculated. And then he 235 noted with indignation: "Now we are asked to believe that the Germans planned to kill them with the same chemical product later on!" And one wonders, why not? But for Butz it did not make any sense at all. "The part of the Auschwitz legend touching on the Theresienstadt Jews is obvious nonsense even without contrary evidence, however. It is not believable that the Germans would quarter for six months at Birkenau each of three distinct groups of people of a category for which there exists an extermination program at Birkenau. The dual role of the Zyklon in this story merely effects passage from the nonsensical to the incomparably absurd." Then Butz turned to the selections. "With the 'selections' we are offered another fact for dual interpretation. There is no doubt that the extensive industrial and other activities required 'selections' of people for various conventional purposes. We are then asked to add an 'extermination' purpose to these activities." Having no doubts as to the real meaning of the word selec-

tion, Butz failed to provide evidence for the selections “for various conventional purposes,” and neither did he feel obliged to engage Höss’s testimony on this issue, or the many other testimonies that corroborate it. The only thing that mattered was that the word selection can be interpreted in two different ways, which “proves” that the idea of selection as a part of the process of extermination is a fabrication.

The last sentence of the paragraph under consideration forced Butz to employ his wits as never before. “We were required to carry out these exterminations in secrecy but of course the foul and nauseating stench from the continuous burning of bodies permeated the entire area and all of the people living in the surrounding communities knew that exterminations were going on at Auschwitz.” Butz admitted that this subject “is a big one,” and then proceeded to argue that the crematoria in Auschwitz only served the “routine” purpose of incinerating corpses, and did not serve as extermination installations. His first argument was that the crematoria were already planned before Himmler ordered any extermination program in the summer of 1942. “It is claimed that the new crematoria were intended for extermination of Jews but we have suggested a more routine purpose in the preceding chapter. Let us review their history. The construction was well into the preliminary stages of planning and ordering early in 1942 and this fact, in itself, makes it difficult, to say the least, to believe that they were related to any extermination program ordered by Himmler in the summer of 1942. The construction plans for four structures containing crematory furnaces are dated 28 January 1942.” It is a nice try, but this reasoning is first of all wrong, in that only the designs of two of the crematoria were dated January 1942, while the others dated from the summer of 1942. Second of all Butz did not take into account the possibility, proven in the late 1980s to be historical fact, that the designs of the two earlier crematoria were modified later in order to accommodate gas chambers. Again, he was not prepared to admit the possibility of the SS changing its mind.

Then Butz developed the argument that the capacity of the crematoria came nowhere close to that required to support the claim that between 800,000 (Reitlinger) and 2.5 million (Höss) people had been killed in Auschwitz. I will consider the evidence for the incineration capacity of Auschwitz in some detail in our discussion of the Leuchter report. Here I will limit myself to noting discrepancies between Butz's argument and the evidence that will be presented in the discussion of Leuchter's numbers. Butz wrongly assumed that "[e]ach oven was designed to take one body at a time, as are all standard cremation ovens." He provided no evidence for that, and ignores statements by Höss and the testimony by surviving Sonderkommandos that the average load per oven was three corpses at a time. Then he continued with his rough-and-ready calculation. "The limit on the rate at which people could have been exterminated in a program of the type alleged is not determined by the rate at which people could have been gassed and the gas chambers ventilated, but by the rate at which bodies could have been cremated. In estimating the capacity of the crematoria, it is possible for arithmetic to produce some impressive figures. At that time an hour was a very optimistic time to allow for the reduction of one body, and the body's being wasted would not have made much difference. If we allow for one hour of cleaning and miscellaneous operations per day, one oven could reduce perhaps 23 bodies per day so 30 ovens could reduce 690 and 46 ovens could reduce 1058 per day. This could accommodate exterminations at the respectable rate of about 240,000 to 360,000 per year, but of course one must bear in mind that, since the exterminations are supposed to have been halted in the autumn of 1944, Auschwitz could not have had 46 ovens for more than about one year of exterminations. However the logic leading to such figures as the preceding is rubbish; things do not work that way. People, especially concentration camp inmates, who manned the crematoria, do not work with such efficiency, such equipment cannot be used in such a continuous manner, and equipment needs do not occur with such mathematical regularity in any case. If we allow opera-

tions to relax toward something more realistic, take into account downtime for regular and irregular maintenance and allow for usual engineering margins of excess capacity we have figures that are generally in line with anticipated epidemic conditions. It is also possible that, as the WRB report asserts, there was a backlog of buried bodies to dispose of.” In his calculation Butz ignored however war-time German documentation, Höss’s testimony and that of the Sonderkommando which mentioned that the ovens had a capacity of at least 4,500 corpses per day. Butz’s *coup-de-grâce* was, however, the fact of “dual interpretation.” “It is obvious that, given a policy of cremating dead inmates, a vast operation such as Auschwitz would naturally provide relatively elaborate crematoria facilities for this purpose. Thus again we have a fact for dual interpretation if we are to believe the extermination legend; to the commonplace interpretation of these ovens, unquestionably valid, it is proposed that we also accept as valid a second interpretation of exterminations.” This, of course, cannot be.

Butz generally, but not always, ignored inconvenient evidence. He does try to tackle one particularly important piece of evidence for the existence of gas chambers in the Auschwitz crematoria: the letter written on January 29, 1943 by the Chief Architect of the camp, Karl Bischoff, to his superior, the Chief of the SS Building Department in Berlin, Hans Kammler. As we have seen in the discussion of Dawidowski’s forensic investigation, and in the discussion of the documents, the letter has been well-known since its discovery in 1945, and was admitted, with the number NO-4473, as evidence in the Nuremberg Trials. Hence Butz could not easily ignore it. It reads as follows: “29 January 1943 To the Chief Amtsgruppe C, SS-Brigadeführer and General-Major of the Waffen-SS, Dr. Ing. Kammler. Subject: Crematorium II, condition of the building. The crematorium has been completed--save for minor constructional work--by the use of all the forces available, in spite of unspeakable difficulties, the severe cold, and in 24 hour shifts. The fires were started in the ovens in the presence of Senior Engineer Prüfer,

representative of the contractors of the firm of Topf and Sons, Erfurt, and they are working most satisfactorily. The planks from the concrete ceiling of the cellar used as a mortuary could not yet be removed on account of the frost. This is, however, not very important, as the gas chamber [literally *Vergasungskeller* or “gassing Basement”] can be used for that purpose. The firm of Topf and Sons was not able to start deliveries of the installation in time for aeration and ventilation as had been requested by the Central Building Management because of restrictions in the use of railroad cars. As soon as the installation for aeration and ventilation arrive, the installing will start so that the complete installation may be expected to be ready for use 20 February 1943. We enclose a report of the testing engineer of the firm Topf and Sons, Erfurt. The Chief of the Central Construction Management, Waffen-SS and Police Auschwitz, SS-Hauptsturmführer [Bischoff] Distribution: 1 – SS Ustuf Janisch and Kirschneck 1- Filing office (file crematorium) Certified true copy:[signature] SS--Ustuf (F) ”

The meaning of the letter is quite clear, especially if one compares the text with a plan of the basement of crematorium 2. The basement plan shows two large spaces indicated as “*Leichenkeller*,” or morgues. Originally designed as spaces to store corpses, the smaller of the two morgues, *Leichenkeller 1*, was transformed during its construction into a gas chamber. The second morgue, *Leichenkeller 2*, initially was meant to function both as a morgue and an undressing room, but quickly was fully committed to the latter purpose. The letter, thus, mentions that there are problems with completing *Leichenkeller 2*, and that therefore the gas chamber--formerly *Leichenkeller 1*--will have to serve (temporarily)its original purpose, and store corpses.

The letter is important because there was a general policy in the architectural office in the camp, as was attested by the SS architects Fritz Ertl and Walther Dejaco during their trial in 1970, never to use the terms “gas chamber” in documents or blueprints. Drawn up hastily in response to an urgent request from Berlin for information on the pro-

gress of construction, Bischoff did not notice the “slip.” When the letter was archived in the crematorium dossier of the Auschwitz *Zentralbauleitung*, however, someone did, and marked the forbidden word “*Vergasungskeller*” with a red pencil, writing on the top of the letter the words “SS-Ustuf (F)Kirschneck!” It was clear that Kirschneck was responsible for the slip, and should be told of it.

Butz argued that the noun *Vergasungskeller* should not be translated as gas chamber or, more precisely, gassing cellar. I will give his reasoning in full. “The final subject in paragraph 7 [of Höss’s affidavit] is the gas chambers which, except for Hoess’ early sealed--up huts, are supposed to have been integrated into the crematoria buildings. Reitlinger and Hilberg take different approaches to making this claim. Reitlinger interprets NO-4473, whose translation as it appears in the NMT volume is presented above (p.116), as evidence for a gas chamber in crematorium II. This is a result of a mistranslation. The crematoria at Auschwitz are frequently referred to as “gas ovens” but this is hardly informative since, with the exception of electric cremators which enjoyed a brief existence during the Thirties, all modern crematoria consist of “gas ovens”; a fuel-air mixture, which may be considered a “gas”, is introduced into the oven to start, control, and finish the burning. The fuel used may be “gas”; town gas or some sort of liquefied gas is popular. Such a cremator is termed “gas-fired” on account of the use of gas as a fuel. Other types are “oil- fired” and “coke (or coal)-fired”, but all are ‘gas ovens’ since in all three cases it is a fuel--air mixture which is injected, under pressure, into the oven. The customary German word for the concept in question here is “*Gaskammer*”, but the word in NO-4473 which was translated “gas chamber” is “*Vergasungskeller*”, which Reitlinger also mistranslates as “gassing cellar”. Now the word *Vergasung* has two meanings. The primary meaning (and the only one in a technical context) is gasification, carburation or vaporization, i.e. turning something into a gas, not applying gas to something. A *Vergaser* is a carburetor and, while *Vergasung* always means gasifica-

tion in a technical context, it usually means, specifically, carburation in such a context.... The translation “gassing cellar” is thus not absolutely incorrect; it is just over-hasty and presumptuous. A “gas oven” requires some sort of gasification or carburation. In the case of the gas fired-ovens of Utting and Rogers in 1932: *“Burners set in the crown and sole of the furnace are fed by a mixture of air and gas under pressure; the mixture is regulated by fans, housed in a separate building. Separate control of both air and gas provides better regulation of the furnace temperature.”* That building is just a big carburetor. Oil-fired crematoria are so similar in design that most gas-fired ovens can be easily adapted for use with oil. The ovens at Birkenau seem to have been coke or coal-fired, and with this type there is an extra stage of fuel processing due to the initially solid state of the fuel. The two most common methods of producing fuel gasses from coal to coke are, first, by passing air through a bed of burning coke to produce “coke oven gas” and second, by passing steam through the coke to produce “water gas”. The first coke cremators employed what amounted to coke oven gas. Processes for generating such gases are termed “*Vergasung*” in German, as well as processes of mixing them with air.... In any case it is obvious that the crematoria at Auschwitz required equipment for doing *Vergasung* in order to inject a fuel-air mixture into the ovens and the translation of NO-4473 should be revised, possibly to “gas generation cellar”. I have confirmed this interpretation of the “*Vergasungskeller*” with technically competent sources in Germany. The reasons for installing such equipment in special separate rooms or even buildings are most probably the considerable noise that must be made by the fans and, in coal-fired ovens, the heat of burning coal. The primary meaning of the word *Vergasung* is of necessity applicable to document NO-4473. It is written in a technical context; it is a letter from the chief of the Auschwitz construction management to the head of the SS engineering group. It makes reference to a process, *Vergasung* which is standard with all crematoria, and the wording of the letter is such that it is implied that it would normally be peculiar to find bodies in the *Vergasungskeller* since bodies are normally

stored in what is correctly translated as the “cellar used as a mortuary”. Document NO-4473 tends, in fact, like so many prosecution documents, to rejection of the prosecution’s claim when it is properly understood. We see that in crematorium II there were at least two cellars, a *Leichenkeller* and a *Vergasungskeller* and that neither was a “gas chamber”.”

Nowhere in the whole correspondence between the makers of the ovens Topf and the SS, and nowhere in the technical specifications of the ovens is there any mention of a carburation room. Nothing in the blueprints support Butz’s contention--that none of the two large underground spaces is in any way connected to the ovens in such a way that they could function as carburation rooms? It is sufficient to note that Butz himself, in 1992, was forced to publically distance himself from the truly insane interpretation of the *Vergasungskeller*. The occasion was the publication of Pressac’s tome *Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers* (1989)--a book that made available in published form a massive amount of archival material concerning the construction of the gas chambers and the crematoria which had been used in the 1945/6 forensic investigation at Auschwitz, and which had been presented again during the trial of the Auschwitz architects Walther Dejaco and Fritz Ertl, but which had since been forgotten. In Part Four, Chapter One, “Auschwitz explained by the revisionists,” Pressac refuted Butz’s argument that the *Vergasungskeller* had been a carburation room. Remarkably enough, Butz did reconsider the issue in light of Pressac’s refutation, and acknowledged that he had been wrong. “I interpreted the *Vergasungskeller* mentioned in the 1943 document as a place where coke or coal was converted into a combustible gas, mixed with air, and then introduced under pressure into the cremation ovens. While this interpretation is not “technically worthless,” Pressac shows that it is not correct in this instance. His proof consists of (1) many engineering drawings of Crematorium 2, in various stages of design, which show no such facility, and (2) engineering drawings of, and other

data on, typical Topf company crematory ovens, which show that they were not of the design I assumed, and which used as fuel coke supplied directly behind the ovens.” Having admitted that his original interpretation did not hold, Butz had to come up with another challenge to the common sense interpretation of Bischoff’s letter that the two underground rooms were a mortuary and a gas chamber, and that due to the delay in completion of the mortuary, the gas chamber was going to be temporarily used as a mortuary. “As noted by others, Pressac is in the strange position of claiming that a room consistently designated *Leichenkeller* 1 on all engineering drawings was to be used only temporarily as a *Leichenkeller*, either instead of normally as a gas chamber, or simultaneously as a gas chamber and a morgue. In the latter case the unsuspecting victims must presumably stand on the corpses. In the former case (the only interpretation worth considering), the implied delay in the use of the building for extermination was “unimportant,” a major contradiction if one claims, as Pressac does, that the primary role of the building was for mass gassing.” The adverb “unimportant” now acquired great importance. In the letter it clearly referred to the delay in the removal of the formwork for the reinforced concrete ceiling of morgue 2, which prevented the room to be used at short notice as a storage place for corpses. In other words, it applied to a temporary situation. We must remember that the ovens were not yet to be operational for another month and half! During that time, no gassing should start, and so for that month-and-a-half the gas chamber could easily be used as a morgue.

But Butz was undeterred. “Because the document confirms that in January 1943 the Germans were working, under great pressure, to make this installation operational as an ordinary crematorium, I regard it as further evidence against the claim that it had been decided in the summer of 1942 that the primary purpose of these crematoria was extermination by lethal gassing. The use of the *Vergasungskeller* as a morgue not only did not interfere with bringing Crematorium II into

operational status, it advanced it. Here I am arguing, in passing, for a focus on what the document says rather than on the term *Vergasungskeller* mentioned in it.”

Of course, the primary purpose of the crematoria always was incineration and not gassing because, as Höss observed in his conversation with Dr. Gilbert, and experience in Auschwitz and the other camps taught, incineration capacity and not gassing capacity was the bottleneck. Gassing could be done in simple sealed rooms, as the experience with the Bunkers amply demonstrated. In fact, Butz admitted this already in 1976, when he wrote that “[t]he limit on the rate at which people could have been exterminated in a program of the type alleged is not determined by the rate at which people could have been gassed and the gas chambers ventilated, but by the rate at which bodies could have been cremated.” Yet in 1992 he chose to forget his earlier assessment.

Butz continued as follows:

“In any case, Pressac’s logic in interpreting the *Vergasungskeller* as a gas chamber depends entirely on the assumption that there was a gas chamber in Crematorium 2. Without that assumption we have the following situation:

- (1) One (and apparently only one) document concerned exclusively with the operational status of Crematorium II makes reference to a *Vergasungskeller* to be temporarily used, in support of the Crematorium, as a morgue and not for its intended or normal function,
- (2) In the many engineering drawings of the crematoria that Pressac has examined, there is no mention of a *Vergasungskeller*, Gaskammer, or anything similar, and
- (3) Nothing in those engineering drawings implies or calls for something describable as a *Vergasungskeller*. For example the cremation ovens have been shown to be of a design not calling for such a facility. The appropriate conclusion, I believe, is that the *Vergasungskeller* was not in Crematorium 2 at all. I assume that it was somewhere in the vicinity, but in the light of the current knowledge the only basis for inferring that it was in the Crematorium building is an assumption that there was a gas chamber there. In the absence of the massive documentation presented by Pressac, it seemed logical to assume that the *Vergasungskeller* was located in Crematorium II. I made just that assumption in writing my book, and the assumption seemed confirmed for me by the observation that crematorium technology could call for such a facility. However Pressac has shown, without realizing it, that the *Vergasungskeller* was not in Crematorium II because it did not appear on the many engineering plans, and is not implied or called for by anything that appears on those plans. Only an unfounded or arbitrary prior assumption can place it there. If the *Vergasungskeller* was not in Crematorium II, then the questions of what and where it was are only of limited importance. It suffices, I believe, to show that the term could have applied to operations that transpired, or may have transpired, elsewhere in the camp.”

Butz’s argument began with the observation that “Pressac’s logic in interpreting the *Vergasungskeller* as a gas chamber depends entirely on the assumption that there was a gas chamber in Crematorium 2.” Is this an unwarranted assumption? According to Butz it was, but given the fact that there are many eye-witness testimonies that place a gas chamber in the basement of crematorium 2, it is a valid point of departure. If one posits as a hypothesis, based on the eye-witness testimonies, that morgue 1 was a gas chamber, then all kind of different pieces

of evidence fall into place, such as the fact that this morgue was designed to be heated, and that construction documents refer to a “gas-door” with a “spy-hole of double 8 mm glass with a rubber seal and metal fitting” for that space, or that the other large underground space (morgue 2) is referred to as an undressing basement. The hypothesis that “*Vergasungskeller*” referred to morgue 1 of crematorium 2, and that this space was used as a gas chamber, can therefore be tested, and confirmed. This is what Pressac did, and this is what Dawidowski had done forty years earlier. Consequently, the burden of proof was on Butz to show that the assumption was wrong. And indeed: in his original argument he did accept this principle, and tried to show how the general assumption was invalid, and that the “alleged” gas chamber in crematorium 2 had been, in all probability, a carburation chamber.

The three points of Butz’s argument do not support the conclusion that “the *Vergasungskeller* was not in Crematorium 2”. It is obvious why he desired to relocate it elsewhere: as long as it remained likely that the *Vergasungskeller* was in crematorium 2, and more specifically the basement of this building, the only possible conclusion remains that Bischoff designated morgue 1 as such, and the question remained if it was not a homicidal gas chamber, what was it then? The logic of Bischoff’s letter suggests that if the *Vergasungskeller* was not in the crematorium, it must have been very close, or at least at a reasonable distance. However there is no trace of any basement space close to the crematorium, or for that matter anywhere in Birkenau!

Butz went to search for the *Vergasungskeller* in the wider environment of Auschwitz. It is worthwhile to quote his journey, in which he allowed to let his imagination run wild, in full. “If the *Vergasungskeller* was not in Crematorium 2, then the questions of what and where it was are only of limited importance. It suffices, I believe, to show that the term could have applied to operations that transpired, or may have transpired, elsewhere in the camp. To give my favored interpretation first, it is unlikely that the town of Auschwitz had preexisting means for production

and/or distribution of fuel or town gas sufficient for the needs of the huge complex of camps we call “Auschwitz.” Such needs could have been for cooking, heating, or incineration of waste, and so forth. On account of the paucity of natural gas, but abundance of coal in Europe, the Germans had extensively developed the gasification of coal. In the Auschwitz region coal was particularly abundant, so processes of coal or coke gasification were suited for the conditions there. In offering my earlier interpretation of the Vergasungskeller as a fuel gas generator for the crematorium ovens I wrote: “The two most common methods of producing fuel gases from coal or coke are, first, by passing air through a bed of burning coke to produce ‘coke oven gas’ and second, by passing steam through the coke to produce ‘water gas’.” I now offer almost the same interpretation, but modified so that the specific location of the *Vergasungskeller* is no longer known, and the gas generated is for general application and not specifically for cremation. This seems entirely justified by the engineering plans that indicate no Vergasungskeller in the crematoria, by the great likelihood that the camp required fuel gas, and in view of the easy availability of coal there.” Butz proved unable to point at any structure in or adjacent to the camp designed as a plant for coal or coke gasification. In fact, there was none. In order for his assumption to warrant any discussion, he should have at least suggested where this building could have been! There is, however, more. Butz assumed “the likelihood” of the camp having been supplied by gas. It would not have been too difficult to establish a certain level of certainty in this matter. Both inspection of the site, the buildings, and the engineering plans would have shown him that the infrastructure to pipe gas to the camp and its buildings was neither designed nor constructed.

Yet Butz did not limit himself to the chimera of his “favored” or “preferred” suggestion. He also dreamed up some others. “It has already been remarked that fuel gas generated in the camp could have been used, among other things, in waste incineration. That is, the fuel has

could have served as the auxiliary fuel. There is also a second sense in which “Vergasung” can apply to waste incineration, because the technology views the waste as a combustible fuel being turned into gases. Incineration (or *Verbrennung*) is actually a special case of gasification (or *Vergasung*) in which all combustibles are oxidized to the highest degree possible, for example, producing carbon dioxide (CO₂) instead of carbon monoxide (CO, a combustible gas, in which case it would be said that *Vergasung* had taken place). Since perfect incineration does not exist in this sense, the line between *Verbrennung* and *Vergasung* can be blurred. What is termed waste gasification, or *Müllvergasung* in ordinary technical German, was developed as a practical process only after the war. It appears that during the war *Vergasung* could have been used in the waste incineration context only in the sense of one of many specific processes taking place inside a plant viewed as performing *Müllverbrennung*. Thus this second sense of application of “*Vergasung*” to waste incineration does not seem to apply, and it is very unlikely that at Auschwitz any waste incinerator would have been spoken of as performing *Vergasung*. This possibility is nevertheless worth mentioning. There was a waste incinerator in what I would call the chimney housing behind the cremation ovens in Crematorium II. The effluent gases from the incinerator combined with the effluent of the ovens in sharing the chimney and the suction type forced draft system. I do not believe that the “*Vergasungskeller*” was this chimney housing because, apart from the reasons already given, it was not referred to as such on the drawings, and seems to have had insufficient free space to serve as a plausible temporary substitute for the huge *Leichenkeller* 2. All the same, it is at least worth noting that “*Vergasung*” could apply as an inclusive description of the two processes (cremation and waste incineration) involved there. However I do not consider a waste incineration interpretation of the *Vergasungskeller* a likely possibility.”

It is unnecessary to comment on these two paragraphs of a book that is claimed on its jacket to be “unsurpassed as the standard scholarly refutation of the Holocaust extermination story,” and which in a German negationist review of the literature is still celebrated as the “revisionist standard work.” Perhaps all we need to do to comment on Butz’s vaporous yes/no/yes/no argument is to add the observation that the word “*Vergasungskeller*” indicates a basement space, and the incineration room in the chimney housing was above ground.

Butz finally arrived at a third possibility, as preposterous as the preceding: “In the vicinity of the crematoria at Birkenau there were three sewage treatment plants (*Kläranlagen*) in various stages of completion. Sewage treatment amounts basically to the acceleration of the natural processes in which bacteria metabolize solid waste into gases and inoffensive solids (sludge), and to the disposal or use of these products. There are several senses in which *Vergasung* could arise.” Butz proceeded to discuss the possible use of the term “*Vergasung*” in the processes of aeration and chlorination of sewage, in spontaneous methane production from sewage, sewer gasification, and sludge incineration. Yet all his speculations were to no avail, as he had to admit himself. “I have not located the *Vergasungskeller* in the sewage plants. Rather, I have listed five senses in which generation of, or treatment with, a gas comes up in sewage technology. I have not found the term “*Vergasungskeller*” or “*Vergasungskammer*” in the German literature on wastewater treatment, but that is not necessary. The document in question [i.e. Bischoff’s letter of 29 January 1943] was not written by a sewage engineer; it was written by a construction engineer for the information of another construction engineer, and the author never imagined that half a century later people would be poring over his hurried note. Nevertheless, I still favour the first interpretation offered, namely that the *Vergasungskeller* was a generator of fuel or town gas intended for general use. Only the study of complete engineering plans for the camp could settle this question.”

Mr. Butz may rest assured that in none of the plans for the sewage treatment plant, which have all been preserved, there are any spaces, and to be more specific basement spaces, for the aeration or chlorination of sewage, the removal of methane, sewer gas, or the incineration of sludge. Neither do the engineering plans of the camp indicate any space, certainly not below ground, that could have served any such function.

Butz obviously did not really believe the arguments he had proposed in 1992, because in 1997 he came back to the issue. He promised to offer an interpretation “more plausible than any earlier offered by me or anybody else.” The *Vergasungskeller* had been a gas shelter! “[W]e should view all three cellars in Crematorium 2 as emergency air raid shelters, with only one being provided with the additional measures to make it effective as a gas shelter.” As Butz derived this last interpretation from one proposed eighteen years earlier by a certain Wilhelm Stäglich, I will leave my refutation of this proposal for my discussion of Stäglich’s suggestion.

As more documents produced by the Central Building Office became available in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Butz faced the need to address other issues than the problem of the *Vergasungskeller*. One of these documents was the order, dated February 26, 1943, for 10 gas detectors. The French Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson, whom I will discuss at length in the following chapter, had responded to the discovery of the order for the gas detectors with the argument that this order should not surprise. According to him the gas detectors had been meant to detect carbonmonoxide and carbondioxide. “[T]he firm Topf & Sons, manufacturers for crematory ovens, routinely supplied detectors for CO and CO₂.” And Faurisson added, “why try to convince us that this type of company, on receipt of an order for “gas detectors,” would have understood by way of telepathy than in this case it was to supply detectors for HCN (and not CO and CO₂) and...that it would be in a position to furnish an item that it didn’t manufacture?” This con-

vinced the negationists for some time. Then Jean-Claude Pressac found Topf's response, dated March 2, 1943, to the order of the gas detectors. "Re: Crematorium, Gas detectors. We acknowledge receipt of your telegram specifying "Immediately send ten gas detectors as agreed, price quote to follow." We hereby inform you that two weeks ago we inquired, of five different companies, concerning the residual prussic acid detection devices sought by you. We have received negative responses from three companies and two have not yet answered. When we receive information on this matter, we shall immediately contact you, in order to put you in touch with a company that makes these devices."

Faurisson's initial "attack" had failed. Then he regrouped, and explained that it was to be expected that the Central Construction Office would have ordered HCN gas detectors because morgue 1, the gassing cellar, was used as a delousing room. Yet this explanation did not satisfy Butz. He rightly noticed that if the gas detectors had been indeed used for normal delousing operations, the SS Central Construction Office would not have ordered them from the furnace maker Topf, but from the Degesch company, the firm with normally supplied delousing equipment.

So how to explain the gas detectors without assuming the use of morgue 1 as a gas chamber. Butz, as may be expected, came up with a very ingenious solution. He noticed in the plans for crematoria 2 and 3 a waste incinerator, located close to the chimney. "[...] HCN release was possible in the waste incinerator, which shared the chimney with the crematory ovens. Many materials may release HCN when burned. Among these are many fabrics, a highly relevant observation because the waste incinerator was most likely used to incinerate used camp fabrics (such as inmate uniforms, bed linen, and mattresses). For example, Nylon and wool can release HCN when burned, a fact that has been known since the Thirties." Thus began Butz's speculation that because ersatz cloth that had become popular in wartime Germany had a

high rayon content, the camp uniforms were also made from rayon. He had to admit that rayon itself did not produce hydrocyanide when burned as it had no nitrogen in its chemical composition. Yet he was not going to be stopped by this. "The burning of rayon can generate HCN gas if the rayon is impregnated with, but not chemically bound to, compounds of ammonia, which supply the necessary nitrogen.[...] [A]mmonium compounds are added to many fabrics to make them flame retardant (this is sometimes called "fireproofing," but that cannot be done literally with ordinary fabrics). [...] While I do not have a document that says so, I consider it very plausible that many concentration camp fabrics were treated with flame retardants for security reasons, that is, to limit the effects of fires started by inmates. This would have been particularly the case with bed linens and mattress fillings. Thus I am proposing the possibility that fabrics used in the camps, destined to be disposed of by incineration, were known to present a danger of evolution of HCN in such incineration." It is obvious that Butz had not the ability to stretch anyone's imagination to the point of absurdity. Not only is there no evidence that the Germans fireproofed the inmate uniforms and their (non-existent) bed linens and (non-existent) mattresses, it is even more highly implausible that they would have cared to do so.

At the end of his highly original and also highly implausible interpretation of the purpose of the gas detectors Butz offered some general observations on the problems revisionists have in dealing with the kind of evidence Faurisson and he had tried to interpret. "[T]he revisionists may not be able to immediately offer correct replies to the defenders of the [extermination] legend. This appears to me to have been the case with the Topf letter. I don't believe Faurisson's immediate replies (which I would also have made) were correct. In fact nobody could be relied on to be correct under the circumstances and on the time schedule involved. A comparison: there is much building activity at Northwestern University now. Does anybody believe that, 50 years from now,

perhaps after some cataclysm, anybody could reliably interpret individual documents that were records of this construction? Of course not. Nobody could do that, and nobody could infallibly interpret every Auschwitz document from the period 1941-1945. Indeed, the hypothesis I have advanced here may be wrong, even though I have had a few years to consider the solitary document in question. Some years ago I warned of these dangers. It is not out of the question that, some day, an authentic Auschwitz document might utterly confound the revisionists--that is, raise some apparently relevant question of detail that they will be unable to answer. In the event of such a development, I can only urge that the context--that is, the massive documentation and historical context supporting the revisionist position--be kept firmly in mind." It is obvious that Butz, for all his bravado, is not comfortable with the position he is in.

And he has reason to be. Rassinier did not only inspire negationist activity in the United States. He also urged two German eyewitnesses of Auschwitz "to come out" in order to present their exculpatory testimonies to the world. The first person was a certain Thies Christophersen, who served in one of the satellite camps of Auschwitz in 1944, and who published in 1973 a booklet entitled *Die Auschwitz Lüge* (*The Auschwitz Lie*). Richard Harwood, author of *Did Six Million Really Die?*, considered Christophersen's account as "one of the most important documents for a re-appraisal of Auschwitz." "[It] adds to a mounting collection of evidence demonstrating that the giant industrial complex of Auschwitz (comprising thirty different installations and divided by the main Cracow-Vienna railway line) was nothing but a vast war production centre, which, while admittedly employing the compulsory labor of detainees, was certainly not a place of "mass extermination." So what does one read in a document so celebrated by the negationists? "I was in Auschwitz from January to December 1944. After the war I heard about the alleged mass murders of Jews and I was quite taken aback. Despite all the testimony submitted and all the reports in

the media, I know such atrocities were never committed.” How could he be so certain? Christophersen was willing to give a full account. “In May my wife, for the first time, came to visit me. She was a teacher in agricultural home economics and was curious about my work at the concentration camp. This fact alone, that we were able to have our relatives visit us at any time, should prove that the camp administration had nothing to hide. Had Auschwitz been the death factory it is reputed to have been, such visits would certainly not have been permitted.” Christophersen did not take into account that the killings took place in a separate zone some miles away from where he was stationed, and that this zone was a “*Sperrgebiet*” absolutely “*verboten*” for not only the wives of SS men, but even for any SS man who had no direct business there. This zone was at the eastern edge of Birkenau. Most parts of the camp at Birkenau were, however, open to SS men like Christophersen, and he indeed recalled visiting the camp once. “The death camp was not in Auschwitz, it was at Birkenau.” This is what I heard and read after the war. Well, I was also in Birkenau. This camp I did not like. It was overcrowded and the people there did not make a good impression on me. Everything looked neglected and grubby. I also saw families with children. It hurt to see them, but I was told that the authorities felt it kinder not to separate children from their parent when the latter were interned. Some children played ball merrily enough.... I had been commissioned to pick 100 workers for hoeing the Kok-Sagis plants. At roll call the inmates were asked if they were interested in this work and if they had done it before. Then followed the “selection” of the workers. This “selection” was later completely misinterpreted. The purpose was to give the inmates something to do and they themselves wanted to be occupied. Selecting them meant no more than to inquire about their inclinations, their capabilities, and their physical state of health with regard to the work they were to do.” Christophersen obviously suffered from Butz’s logic, or for that matter Faurisson’s hermeneutical principle, that a word can have only one meaning, or that it has no meaning at all.

In the same way that Rassinier claimed to have travelled the whole of Europe in search for authentic eyewitnesses of the gassings, Christophersen began an Odyssey in search of the crematoria, following the directions of his maid Olga. "One evening my mother asked about the crematorium where corpses were supposed to be burned. I knew nothing about this, so I asked Olga. She could not tell me anything either. She did intimate, however, that around Bielitz there always was what seemed to be a reflection against the sky, as if from a fire. So I went in the direction of Bielitz and there found a mining camp in which some inmates also worked. I travelled around the entire camp and examined all fire grates and all smoke stacks, but found nothing. I asked my colleagues; the answer...a shrug of the shoulder and "don't pay any attention to those rumors." Actually there was a crematorium in Auschwitz, I was told for there were 20,000 [in the German edition 200,000!] people there and any city of that size has a crematorium. Of course people died here as they did elsewhere, but not only inmates at the camp. The wife of one of our supervisors [in the German edition Obersturmbannführer A.] had also died there. As far as I was concerned, that was enough of an answer."

After the publication of *Die Auschwitz Lüge* Simon Wiesenthal urged in a letter to the President of the German Bar Association that Mr. Roeder, who had written a preface and published the book, warranted an investigation by the ethics committee. Wiesenthal's letter was handed to Roeder, who replied in a letter of 30 May 1973 that the gassing and burning of Jews had been technically impossible. "There would not have been enough fuel to be found during the war in the entire sphere of German influence to burn just a fraction of so many human bodies. And the huge installations necessary for such an undertaking have disappeared from the face of the earth without a trace. Nothing, absolutely nothing could be found after the war. It might interest you that I know enough eyewitnesses now who were in Auschwitz after the war who confirm all the observations made by Mr. Christophersen: there

have never been such extermination installations! But these witnesses fear reprisals by the Poles and certain Jewish organizations, should they come out in the open with the truth.”

One other witness, however, was prepared “to come out in the open with the truth.” In response to Christophersen’s account, a Hamburg Judge, Dr. Wilhelm Stäglich, testified in an article published in the ultra-right *Nation Europa* that in the summer of 1944 he had served with an anti-aircraft battery unit near Auschwitz. In order to obtain food, Stäglich had gone a few times to the camp, which had its own slaughterhouse and bakery. “If memory serves, I was inside the camp three or four times altogether. On none of these visits did I see gassing installations, crematoria, instruments of torture, or similar horrors. The camp gave on the impression of being well-kept and very well-organized.”

Flattered by the attention he had received, Stäglich went to work on his *magnum opus* his massive *Der Auschwitz Mythos (The Auschwitz Myth)*, which was published in 1979. Stäglich’s aim, as set out in the introduction, was “to survey, examine, and assess as objectively as possible the evidence that has thus far been presented for the claim that Auschwitz was a ‘death factory.’” Stäglich acknowledged that other camps were connected to the Holocaust. But he did not feel obliged to consider them. Like Butz had already declared in his book, he was convinced “that the extermination thesis stands or falls with the allegation that Auschwitz was a ‘death factory.’”

Stäglich began systematically. He divided the material into three groups: documentary evidence which was produced at the time of the camp’s operation, post-war personal accounts, and post-war legal proceedings. In his chapter on documentary evidence Stäglich first dealt with the basic documents, such as the Göring decree of July 31, 1941

that charged Heydrich to create a comprehensive proposal for the intended Final Solution of the Jewish Question, and the Protocol of the Wannsee Conference.

Then Stäglich turned to the documents regarding Auschwitz. First of all he found it suspicious that the Soviet prosecutors in the Nuremberg Trial, after announcing that they had recovered a voluminous correspondence concerning the construction of the crematoria, had chosen not to bring that material in evidence, with exception of a few documents. One of these documents was Bischoff's letter of January 29, 1943, which mentioned the noun *Vergasungskeller* Stäglich referred to Butz's interpretation, and then added a second "plausible" explanation: "this room was intended for the fumigation of clothing and other personal effects, a common practice in all concentration camps. The proprietary hydrocyanic fumigant Zyklon B used for this purpose is supposed to have been used for the 'extermination of Jews' as well." This was the first of many alternative suggestions Stäglich was to offer, and which like all of them is characterized by a total ignorance of the circumstances. The rooms designed for fumigation of clothing and other objects were always constructed in such a way that they had two doors: one entrance and one exit. The entrance door opened to the *un-reine* (unclean) side, the exit door opened to the *reine* (clean) side. This arrangement conformed not only to common sense, but also to specific SS regulations issued by the SS construction bureau in 1941, and determined the design of the special delousing facilities constructed in Auschwitz and Birkenau. Furthermore the SS built a very large delousing installation, the so-called Central Sauna, right between crematoria 3 and 4. It was constructed following the guidelines issued by the SS construction bureau. One wonders why the SS would have erected the Central Sauna if the crematoria already provided such ample delousing capacity. Even in Auschwitz there was a limit to the need for delousing installations. Yet not held down by any specific knowledge, Stäglich rushed to his conclusion: "Since Bischoff's letter of January 29,

1943 is the only known document from the Auschwitz camp files in which the word “Vergasung” is used in connection with the crematoria, one should now realize that there is no documentary evidence for the allegation that chambers for killing people by means of lethal gas were part of the crematoria.”

After doubting the evidence when the crematoria were completed, Stäglich went on to dispute even whether there had been four crematoria in Birkenau. Invoking the post-war sketch book of Alfred Kantor, Stäglich observed that none of his drawings showed more than one crematorium or more than one crematorium chimney. This argument is simply wrong because on p. 34 of his sketchbook Kantor shows in a general overview of the camp at the horizon three columns of black smoke, which through comparison with other depictions of those same columns of smoke (pages 53, 54, 60, 68, 72, 73) clearly refer to three crematoria bellowing smoke. Furthermore Stäglich argued that “a person who toured the grounds of the former Birkenau camp without a guide and who is unquestionably reliable, so far as I am concerned, told me he saw the ostensible remains of crematoria 2 and 3, but could find no trace of crematoria 4 and 5.” This statement only proves that it pays to hire a guide when visiting Birkenau: the remains are there to be seen, and indeed are seen by most visitors as they are adjacent to the pond where, for a short time in 1944, the Germans dumped the ashes produced by crematorium 4--the pond which made television history when, in the 1973 BBC television series *The Ascent of Man*, Jakob Bronowski was filmed walking into that pond whilst giving a peroration on the darker side of technological progress.

Stäglich also reviewed the incineration capacity of the crematoria, and he claimed there were no reliable data. “In the literature on the camp, yet another report by SS-Sturmbannführer Bischoff, dated June 28, 1943, is frequently cited. It states that the individual crematoria were capable of incinerating the following number of corpses *daily*. 1.old crematorium (parent camp)340 corpses 2.new crematorium

(Birkenau)1,440 corpses 3.new crematorium (Birkenau)1,440 corpses
 4.new crematorium (Birkenau)768 corpses 5.new crematorium
 (Birkenau)768 corpses Total 4,756 corpses Where this report was discovered is not mentioned. On the subject of the incineration capacity of the crematoria one usually cites as the authority a “Kalendarium der Ereignisse im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau (“Chronology of Events in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp”), compiled by Danuta Czech, Custodian of the Polish States Museum at Auschwitz. I have been unable to determine whether this lady was ever interned at the camp or what her source of information may be. The estimates listed above strike one as absurd. The sheer punctiliousness of the accounting--right down to the very last corpse--is suspicious, for cremation is a complicated technical process, involving so many variables that the incineration capacity of a crematorium is not always the same.”

Some research would have helped. Stäglich would have found that the document was found in the archive of the *Zentralbauleitung* and that it was held in the Auschwitz museum. What is truly astonishing, however, is that he did not compare Bischoff’s numbers to what Stäglich refers to as the “alleged” number of ovens in Birkenau. On the following page he mentions that the Polish State Auschwitz Museum claims that the four crematoria in Birkenau had 46 “cremation units,” or muffles, and that even Butz had accepted that number. Later he mentions that the Report of the Soviet War Crimes Commission made the “careless” statement that “the four crematoria in Birkenau had, altogether, 12 ‘ovens’ with 46 ‘retorts.’”--a number which, at that point, Stäglich considers “not many.” Be that as it may, what is interesting is that if we take the total capacity of crematoria 2 to 5 (1,440 +1,440 +768 +768 =4,416) and divide this number by 46, we come to the exact number of 96 corpses per “cremation unit” or “retort” or “muffle” per day. This should have given Stäglich some reason to reconsider the validity of the information provided by the museum and the Soviets.

Even a cursory comparison between the document and information available to him would have shown that crematorium 1 had in 1943 six muffles, crematoria 2 and 3 fifteen muffles each, and crematoria 4 and 5 eight muffles each, and that as a result Bischoff assumed for accounting purposes for crematoria II to V a cremation capacity of 96 corpses per muffle per day, or an average of 4 corpses per muffle per hour ($24 \times 4 = 96$; $15 \times 96 = 1,440$; $8 \times 96 = 768$). The old crematorium had a lower capacity per muffle per day, because the ovens were of an older design and construction. Of course: these numbers are averages, and include down time for cleaning and so on. It is important to note here that Bischoff's numbers are conservative. In his notes on the Final Solution in Auschwitz, Höss noted that *"[j]e nach Körperbeschaffenheit wurden bis zu drei Leichen in eine Ofenkammer gebracht. Auch die Dauer der Verbrennung war durch die Körperbeschaffenheit bedingt. Es dauerte im Durchschnitt 20 Minuten.* [Depending on the size of the bodies, up to three corpses could be brought into one muffle. Also the duration for the incineration was determined by the size of the body. On average it took 20 minutes.]” This means that one muffle could burn a maximum of nine bodies per hour. Bischoff's number is less than half.

Undeterred, Stäglich soldiered on. Taking as his point of departure a double-muffle oven delivered to Mauthausen with a capacity of ten to 35 corpses per ten hours, he assumed that the Auschwitz ovens would be the same. “Starting with the premise that there really were four crematoria in Birkenau, and that each crematorium contained one oven capable of cremating at most 35 corpses *per diem* then the highest capacity of all four crematoria would be a total of 140 corpses daily. That does not seem excessive for a complex the size of Auschwitz, each component camp of which was planned for over 100,000 inmates--all the more so, since contagious diseases were rampant there.... While these are no more than purely hypothetical estimates, they are probably closer to reality than the absurd figures given in the letter attributed to SSSturmbannführer Bischoff--even if one assumes that all four

crematoria had 46 units.... The claim that the Birkenau crematoria were built only for use in a “mass extermination program” thus proves to be totally false.” It will be clear by now that Stäglich refuses to consider the evidence at hand. He complains in the next page that he has copies of the plans of the crematoria, but he did not find it necessary to consult them when “hypothetically” establishing the number of crematoria ovens. They are only useful to him when it concerns his argument that they did not reveal a provision for a gas chamber.

We can continue analysis of Stäglich’s arguments at nauseam only to reveal that his total inability or unwillingness to responsibly and rationally weigh the evidence at hand. He mentions, for example, a letter that talks about a gas door for corpse cellar I in crematorium, equipped with a peep-hole made of 8-mm glass. “Could this be the famous peep-hole through which the SS physicians who allegedly supervised the “gassing” of inmates are said to have observed the death--throes of the victims? Probably not. Like the other documents of its kind, it really proves nothing. At that time, gas-tight doors were not uncommon, since every cellar had to double as an air raid shelter. The peep-holes in these doors were a source of light and a means of observing the outside....Air raid shelters had to be secure not only against explosives, but against gas as well. Considering that Birkenau had no other fortified places, it would only have been common sense to make the cellars of the crematoria into air raid shelters.” Stäglich’s speculation is non-sensical. First of all if, as he assumed, corpse cellar 1 was used as a mortuary, then the problem arises about the protocol during an air raid. Would the living join the putrefying dead for the duration of the alarm? Furthermore the design of the structure does not indicate an air-raid shelter. The concrete columns are enough to support the roof, but not to withstand a bomb. In fact, when the gas chamber of crematorium I was adapted into a air raid shelter in 1944, the room was subdivided that very reason in many small rooms, divided by heavy walls designed to support the reinforced roof. Finally the loca-

tion; unlike crematorium I, crematorium II and III were very far from any location where SS were present in sufficient numbers to warrant such a facility. In Auschwitz I, crematorium I was adjacent to the SS hospital and the SS Kommandantur, and thereby was the obvious structure to be made into an air raid shelter; in Birkenau the alleged air raid shelters of crematoria II and III were more than a mile distant from the SS quarters.

In conclusion Stäglich determined that those who believed that the documents he presented supported the extermination hypothesis revealed their critical ineptitude, gullibility, and prejudice. “No historian who holds to the traditional scholarly methods of researching and evaluating sources would accept a mode of argumentation based on the premise that documents can be made to serve a desired end by the use of unwarranted assumptions and arbitrary interpretations.” After a critical examination of his methods, it is clear that his judgement certainly applied to his own mode of argumentation.

Stäglich’s book was enthusiastically received by the negationists, and continues up to today to be one of the staples in their mail-order catalogues. He was invited to join the editorial advisory committee of the *Journal of Historical Review*, and gave a paper on his book and experiences at the fifth International Revisionist Conference in 1983.

And then there was, of course, Richard Harwood’s *Did Six Million Really Die? The Truth At Last*. Like all the other negationist works, it claimed direct descent from Rassinier’s work. “Since the war, Rassinier has, in fact, toured Europe in search of somebody who was an actual eye-witness of gas chamber exterminations in German concentration camps during World War Two, but he has never found even one such person....Certainly, the most important fact to emerge from Rassinier’s studies, and of which there is now no doubt at all, is the utter imposture of “gas chambers”.” For Harwood, the whole Holocaust was a piece of atrocity propaganda created by Jews to swindle the Germans.

With exception of the writings of Robert Faurisson, which will be discussed in the next chapter, the work of Rassinier, Butz, Christophersen, Stiglich and Harwood constituted the main body of revisionist scholarship on Auschwitz in the year that Irving joined that cause. After slogging through a significant and representative cross-section of their arguments, it will be clear that none of the writings considered are worthy of the designation “scholarship.”

VIII Auschwitz and the Faurisson Affair

“Demnant: “There are people who claim that in Auschwitz Jews were never gassed.”

“Klehr: “Jews never gassed? No? Yes, I have already been asked about that...Three elderly ladies come to visit us here. That is such an official society. They always want to support us a little bit, to give us a present on our birthdays, and so on, and one of them asked me once if people were gassed in Auschwitz? I said--I will tell you openly and honestly, but if it were someone else, I would have answered that I did not know. But because it is you, I will tell you precisely, that people were gassed. And anyone who maintains that there are no gassing...Yes, I don't understand him, he must be crazy or on the wrong...When you are three, four years in Auschwitz and experiences everything, then I cannot get myself to lie about it and say that no gassings were conducted.”

When, in September 1996, David Irving took out a Writ of Summons against Penguin Books Ltd, Deborah Lipstadt, and four book sellers, a new act began in a public drama that had begun eighteen years earlier as the so-called Faurisson Affair. The central issue at stake in this drama was the allegation that Auschwitz had not been an extermination camp, that the gas chambers belonged to the world of legend, and that, consequently, the Holocaust was a Hoax. The central protagonist in this drama was the onetime lecturer in French literature at the University of Lyons-2, Dr. Robert Faurisson. It was Faurisson who brought Holocaust denial to public attention, it was Faurisson who orchestrated the defence of the two Zündel Trials in Toronto, it was Faurisson who created in early 1988 the brief for Leuchter's investigation in Auschwitz--the very investigation that produced the Leuchter report which pulled David Irving into the middle of the second Zündel Trial,

which in turn led to Deborah Lipstadt's description of David Irving's role in the trial which has become the content of Irving's complaint against Penguin, Lipstadt, and the four others. Therefore, in order to understand the background of the events of 1988, it is necessary to consider the so-called "Faurisson Affair" in some detail.

As a student of French literature, Faurisson developed early a special interest in debunkment, using a radical method of textual criticism he called the "Ajax method" because "it scours as it cleans as it shines." All of this was of little public interest, until Faurisson turned his attention to the Holocaust, and more specifically Auschwitz. Surveying the literature, the great debunker found many contradictions in, among other things, statements about the total number of victims who had died in Auschwitz. Shortly after the liberation the Russians had given the number of four million victims. Commandant Rudolf Höss had mentioned at one time three million victims, of whom two and half million had been gassed--the rest having died from "natural causes," and at another time had mentioned a number of some 1,130,000 victims. And as historians like Gerald Reitlinger had estimated that there "only" 700,000 Jews had died in Auschwitz. Then Faurisson discovered other contradictions in the literature: for example, the plan of the crematoria published in the war-time War Refugee Board report, based on the testimony of two escaped prisoners and released in November 1944, showed little relation to the plans of the crematoria published after the war. And of course, many witness testimonies contradicted each other, while some plagiarized other texts. Faurisson concluded that all these contradictions pointed only at one possible conclusion: the story that Auschwitz had been an extermination camp was a hoax.

One cannot deny that he worked hard to make himself at home in the subject. For example, in 1975 he visited Auschwitz for one day, and in 1976 he stayed there for ten days. Ten years after his first visit, he was sufficiently at home in the subject to be qualified as an expert witness

for the defence on the subject in the first Zündel Trial in Toronto. In the examination in which the defence counsel Douglas Christie presented Faurisson's credentials, the issue of his first visit to Auschwitz came up. "[Christie]: 'Right. In your inquiry what did you do then?' [Faurisson]: 'So I went to visit first what is called Crematorium 1.' Q.: 'Where is that?' A.: 'In Auschwitz I.' Q.: 'Yes.' A.: 'you have in the same building a path, on the left, called 'Krematorium,' and on the right a place called 'Gas Chamber.'" Q.: 'Yes.' A.: 'I got first into the place called 'Krematorium'. There were there two furnaces with two openings." Q.: 'What did you do?' A.: 'I noticed some things which were not normal.' Q.: 'What did you notice? Tells us what you noticed.'" A.: 'I noticed, for example, that there was no soot at all.' Q.: 'How did you find that out?' A.: 'Putting my finger like that, I saw that there was no soot.' Q.: 'Inside the furnaces?' A.: 'yes.' Q.: 'All right.' A.: 'So I decided to find the highest possible responsible..." Q.: 'person.' A.: '...person, of the Auschwitz Museum.' Q.: 'And then what did you do.'" A.: 'I found that man called [J]an Machalek. I asked him to come to the spot. I asked him if those ovens were genuine or not.' Q.: 'Yeah. Don't tell us what he said. What did you ask him for?' A.: 'I can say that I showed all the same that there was no soot?' Q.: 'Yes.' A.: 'Okay. The conclusion was that it was a reconstruction, a rebuilding and not something genuine.'

A specialist in scouring words, Faurisson had discovered like a latter-day Holmes the implications of the immaculate muffles of the Auschwitz incinerators. And he remembered that, thirty years earlier, a certain toxologist René Faivre had investigated a room in the concentration camp Struthof in the Alsace by taking samples from the walls around the ventilation system and having them analyzed forensically. The results had been lost. And, ignoring Polish investigations that had established the presence of the hydrogen cyanide in six zinc ventilation covers of the gas chamber of crematorium 2, and dismissing similar tests that had found such traces in the many bags of human hair

found near the crematoria--the French scholar maintained that it would have been a usual practice to “disinfect” human hair with Zyklon B--Faurisson wondered if it was not time to repeat Faivre’s experiment in Auschwitz.

Yet unlike Holmes, Faurisson proved a lousy student of evidence. In the following pages, I will consider Faurisson’s published writings, concentrating on the manner in which he deals with Auschwitz. I will ignore for the sake of brevity the more biographical aspects of Faurisson’s turn to Holocaust denial.

As I have discussed in Chapter Five, one of the important contemporary pieces of evidence concerning the use of Auschwitz as an extermination camp is the war-time diary of Dr. Johann Paul Kremer, *Dozent* of Anatomy at the University of Münster. Kremer had served in Auschwitz in the late Summer and Fall of 1942. Faurisson “attacked” the text of Kremer’s diary in a 50-page essay entitled “Professor of Medicine Johann Paul Kremer Faces the Horrors Caused by Typhus in Auschwitz during September and October 1942.” It began with a two-page introduction about the prevalence of exanthematous typhus during the Second World War, and the German inability to suppress it. The horror of Bergen-Belsen was caused by exanthematous typhus, and both the Germans before the liberation of the camp and the English afterwards could do little about it. “Neither the Germans nor the English killed in Bergen-Belsen; typhus killed: first and foremost typhus, but also other related epidemics caused by malnutrition. There was in Belsen not a “war crime” (“*crime de guerre*”) perpetrated by one particular nation but, if one desires to hold on to the term “crime” (which is always off when one talks about war), one should say, in my judgement, that those horrors are “a crime of war” (“*un crime de la guerre*”), a “crime” caused by human folly. As the famous engraving of Dürer shows, peste accompanies war.”

We will forego the task of analyzing Faurisson's exculpating language, with the suggested equivalence between the inability of the German jailors to stop the epidemic in a concentration camp of their making and the inability of the English liberators to immediately stop the ravaging effects of the disease after they took over the camp. Instead we will concentrate on Faurisson's textual analysis of Kremer's diary. The first observation one can make is that Faurisson's approach was wrought with contradiction. Following his own principles of textual exegesis, Faurisson completely discarded any testimony given in Cra-cow--that is any external evidence given by the author of the diary that helped to elucidate his own text. Yet, at the same time, Faurisson was happy to provide an exegesis of various diary entries to establish that Dr. Kremer was first of all a decent scientist. For example, on January 13, 1943, Kremer wrote that "There is no Aryan, Negroid, Mongoloid or Jewish science, only true or false science." "I had never dreamt there existed anything like "a gagged science." By such manoeuvres science has received a mortal blow and has been banished from the country! The situation in Germany today is no better than in the times when Galileo was forced to recant and when science was threatened by tortures and the stake. Where, for Heaven's sake, is this situation going to lead us in the twentieth century!!! I could almost feel ashamed to be a German. And so I shall have to end my days as a victim of science and a fanatic of truth." Faurisson happily quoted these lines as a character reference, but remarkably failed to provide the context of Kremer's observation on the state of science in Germany. "Mrs. Glaser left for Krefeld today. I heard from Gülker at the Sanitary Office for National Health that Fenner had put in a good word for me at the District Office--concerning the chair of heredity biology--but that they had told him I would not be taken into consideration on account of my Driburg work--A Noteworthy Contribution to the Problem of the Hereditary Nature of Deformations--They had nothing else against my person. There we have the much praised freedom of scholarship. It is difficult to imagine a greater gagging of it! Science with a blindfold over its eyes

is and remains only a farce. And so I have really become a victim of my sincere belief in scientific ideals and in the unlimited freedom of research, as I had never even dreamt there existed anything like “a gagged science.” By such manoeuvres science has received a mortal blow...” In other words, Kremer’s outburst was triggered by problems he faced in his career: as a *Dozent* he was, at the age of fifty-nine, stuck at the bottom end of the academic hierarchy, and his attempt to spend the last ten years of his academic career in the well-paid and highly-honored comfort of a chair had obviously failed. Given this context, it is clear that, without any further corroboration, his rant cannot be taken as convincing evidence for his integrity as a scientist.

Faurisson also desired to portray Kremer as a true humanitarian. For this he quoted the diary entry of July 26, 1945, when German refugees from the East were streaming into Münster. “The weather is still very hot and dry. The corn ripens before its time, gnats are pestering us more than ever, and Russians, Poles and Italians still harass the starving, needy and homeless inhabitants. People are crowded in goods trains like cattle and carried hither and thither, while at night they try to find shelter in the stench of dirty, verminous bunkers. Quite indescribable is the fate of these poor refugees, driven into uncertainty by death, hunger and despair.”

Having constructed Kremer’s moral universe, Faurisson ventured to reconstruct the circumstances of his time in Auschwitz. For that purpose he provided one page with the various entries in the so-called “Auschwitz Calendarium” that mention an exanthematous typhus epidemic during the summer of 1942. Thus Kremer had arrived in Auschwitz in the midst of a typhus epidemic. And Faurisson proceeded to quote the various references in Kremer’s diary to exanthematous typhus.

After having argued the presence of a typhus epidemic, which no-one contests, Faurisson had to “neutralize” Kremer’s entries that mentioned outright murder. The most problematic one was, of course, the entry of September 2. “September 2, 1942. Was present for the first time at a special action at 3 a.m. By comparison Dante’s inferno seems almost a comedy. Auschwitz is justly called an extermination camp!” Not without justification, Faurisson showed that the translation of this text was imprecise. The original German is slightly different. “*Zum 1. Male draussen um 3 Uhr früh bei einer Sonderaktion zugegen. Im Vergleich hierzu erscheint mir das Dante’sche Inferno fas wie eine Komödie. Umsonst wird Auschwitz nicht das Lager der Vernichtung genannt.*” Faurisson noted that the adverb “*draussen*” (“outside”) had not been included in the translation, and neither had been the personal pronoun “*mir*” (“to me”). Furthermore in German Auschwitz was called “*das lager der Vernichtung*” (“the camp of extermination”) and not “an extermination camp.” Hence the correct translation should read as follows: “September 2, 1942. Was present for the first time **outside** at a special action at 3 a.m. By comparison Dante’s inferno seems **to me** almost a comedy. Auschwitz is justly called **the camp of extermination!**” All of this made a tremendous difference, according to Faurisson. “Special Actions,” so he claimed, were usually interpreted as gassings. Yet Kremer said that he participated in a special action that took place outside. Hence it could not refer to a gassing, since the Germans gassed people inside. Then there was the issue of the term “*Vernichtung*” and the fact that Kremer called Auschwitz “the camp of extermination.” This, Faurisson claimed, did not refer to what legend knows as “an extermination camp,” but to “a camp in which extermination occurs.”

To understand the entry of September 2, Faurisson claimed, it was necessary to put it in the context of the entries of September 1 and September 3. “September 1, 1942. Have ordered SS officer’s cap, sword-belt and brace from Berlin by letter. In the afternoon was present at the gassing of a block with Cyclon B against lice. September

2, 1942. Was present for the first time at a special action at 3 a.m. By comparison Dante's inferno seems almost a comedy. Auschwitz is justly called an extermination camp! September 3, 1942. Was for the first time taken ill with the diarrhoea which attacks everybody in the camp here. Vomiting and colic-like paroxysmal pains. Water did not cause it as I had not drunk any. Neither was it the bread. People who take white bread only (diet) also fall ill. Most probably it is the unhealthy tropical climate, very dry and tropically hot, with clouds of dust and insects (flies)." This context made it clear, Faurisson argued, that the entry of September 2 should be considered within the context of the epidemic, referred to obliquely in the entry of September 1 as the delousing of a barrack with Zyklon B serves to kill the primary hosts of the typhus virus: lice. There is a description of the effects of illness in the entry of September 3. Thus the entry of September 2 ought be read as referring to an event related to the epidemic. Noting that Kremer had not provided the potentially incriminating term *Sonderaktion* within quotations marks, Faurisson observed that this was absolutely appropriate because the term *Sonderaktion* routinely occurred in German military vocabulary. "The real work of professor of medicine Johann Paul Kremer at Auschwitz is his laboratory research on all kinds of diseases, especially typhus. But at times he is also asked to participate in special actions: assist in taking charge of a transport, in solving some difficulty, at the sorting of the ill in the hospital wards, and so on. I believe to know that, in the French army, all extra efforts, which are not really covered within one's normal duties, carry the pompous name "*mission exceptionnelle*" (special mission), the word "mission" denoting a "task" without necessarily implying an idea of movement. At three o'clock in the morning, Dr. Kremer is asked for a special action that takes place "outside" (*draussen*), which means that there are also special actions that take place "inside" (*drinnen*). It is a pity that we cannot precisely establish what this action was, but we know it was horrible, at least in his eyes....One always claims that this special action concerned the arrival of a convoy from Drancy. That is not impossible.

In fact, a convoy from Drancy arrived in Auschwitz on September 2, 1942. One should verify the hour of arrival. It is not difficult to imagine the arrival of those people who were not affected by the epidemic in a camp that has fallen prey to typhus. The task of the doctor was not only to separate those fit to work from those who are unfit....It is also necessary to find billets for the arrivals in the barracks in the camp. Or always, or almost always, there are at the place of arrival ill people and people who are on the verge of death. One should imagine the crowding. To assist with that for many hours, sometimes in the middle of the night, sometimes at dawn, sometimes during the day, that must have been Dantesque. One may imagine the terrible anxiety of those who arrive in that hell....After the war, in a similar fashion, the German populations deported from the East, who were discreetly referred to as “displaced persons,” were also crammed in overpopulated camps ravaged by epidemics.” Thus ends Faurisson’s “debunkment” of Kremer’s diary entry of September 2. The only other trumpcard he has not shown yet, but which he will produce close to the end of his essay, is the final “proof” that with the words “Dante’s Inferno” he referred to a hell caused by typhus. After all, in a letter he wrote back home on October 21, he announced that he did not know for certain, but that he expected “to be back in Münster before December 1, so that I will have definitively turned my back to this hell Auschwitz, where now not only typhus and so on reigns, but also typhoid fever.” And Faurisson triumphantly exclaimed: “Here then that “inferno of Dante” of his entry of 2 September 1942! Professor of medicine Johann Paul Kremer has seen the horrors of a massive epidemic *destroying* in Auschwitz both prisoners and guards: he has never seen the monstrous gassing operations meant to exterminate human beings.” So much for the application of the “Ajax Method” to history.

I will not deal with his attempt to negate the plain meaning of some of the other entries, and move straight to the entry of October 12. “October 12, 1942. (The second inoculation against typhus; strong reaction

in the evening (fever). In spite of this was present at night at another special action with a draft from Holland (1,600 persons). Horrible scene in front of the last bunker! Hössler!) This was the 10th special action. 2. *Schutzimpfung gegen Typhus; danach abends starke Allgemeinreaktion (Fieber). Trotzdem in der Nacht noch bei einer Sonderaktion aus Holland (1600 personen) zugegen. Schauerliche Szene vor dem letzten Bunker (Hössler)! Das war die 10. Sonderaktion.*” Faurisson attached great significance to the fact that the German text did say “*Sonderaktion aus Holland (1600 Personen).*” It is, admittedly, rather awkward in German: “Special Action from Holland (1600 persons).” To make it grammatically correct one needs to add between “Special Action” and “from” something like “of a draft” or “of a group of people.” Yet this common sense interpretation of Kremer’s shorthand notation did not satisfy Faurisson’s sense of the possible. He brazenly proposed that the preposition “*aus*” referred to the German nouns of “*Auswahl*” or “*Auslese*,” synonyms of “*Selektion*,” selection. The verb “to chose from” was in German “*auswählen*” or “*auslesen*.” On the basis of this tenuous link he proposed now that the text referred to “a simple medical selection (to separate those fit for work and those unfit for work; or also, in that situation, the sick and the healthy; or the contagious and the not-contagious) enacted on a group of 1,600 people.”

After much thought, the logic of Faurisson’s interpretation still eludes me, even if it was not without precedent: in 1949 the historian Jean Bruhat had employed in the Kravchenko trial the kind of philological reasoning to whitewash the Soviet regime. “The Purges of the Bolshevik Party,” he testified, present absolutely no mystery.” “Every Soviet citizen who joins the Bolshevik Party knows that by entering it, he undertakes a certain number of responsibilities. And no one compels him to be a member of the Bolshevik Party. Among other obligations, he must accept this one, which is to account publicly at any moment for his activity. That is what is called a Purge.”

Faurisson had no difficulty neutralizing the obvious reading of the sentence “Horrible scene in front of the last bunker!” as referring to the situation at either Bunker 1 or Bunker 2 in Birkenau, the converted cottages that served as gas chambers until the completion of the four new crematoria in the Spring of 1943. Completely ignoring the fact that both the SS and the inmates referred in common parlance to those extermination installations as “bunkers,” Faurisson stated that the true meaning of the sentence must be obvious to “anyone who knows the topography of the Auschwitz camp.” And with that he leads us to a place more than two miles distance from bunkers 1 and 2. “The “last bunker” cannot be but the bunker at the end of the camp, the famous bunker no. 11 that houses the prison of the camp, very far from the place where the deportees disembarked (the railway platforms that also served as the place of selection). It is in front of that bunker (exactly between bunker 10 and 11) that the place of executions was located.” The problem, of course, is that while Faurisson may know the topography of the camp, he shows himself wholly ignorant of the nomenclature. The buildings he refers to, the camp prison and the adjacent barrack with the execution place in between, are, were, and always have been known as “*Block 11*” and “*Block 10*,” not “*Bunker 11*” and “*Bunker 10*.” The noun “bunker” referred in camp jargon either to the two cottages (1 and 2, or perhaps “the first” and “the last”) that served as gas chambers or, after the completion of crematoria 2, 3, 4 and 5, to their gas chambers probably. The latter because these gas chambers took over the function of the “bunkers.”

Of course, Faurisson would not look at external evidence to guide his interpretation. Yet if he had chosen to do so, he could, for example, have found in his research in the Auschwitz archive a description of the situation at the “last bunker.” On May 10, 1945 Judge Jan Sehn, member of the Polish Central Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, took the testimony of a surviving Sonderkommando of the crematoria, Shlomo Dragon. Dragon had worked at

Bunker II, the gas chamber in the grove of birch forests that had been the site of most of the mass killings in the second half of 1942 and the first months of 1943. Dragon told how he was first brought to the Bunker in December 1942. "We were taken into a forest where there was a brick cottage covered with thatch; its windows were bricked in. On the doors to the interior of the cottage was a metal plate with the inscription "Hochspannung--Lebensgefahr" ("High Voltage--Danger"). Two wooden barracks were at 30 or 40 meters distance. On the other side of the cottage were four pits 30 meters long, 7 meters wide and 3 meters deep. The edges of these pits were burned and blackened. We were lined up in front of the house; then [SS-Unterscharführer] Moll arrived and told us we would work here at the burning old and lice-infected people, that we would be given something to eat and in the evening we would be taken back to the camp, and that we had to work. And if we did not, we would be beaten and for that purpose there were always clubs and dogs at hand. The SS who escorted us had indeed dogs. Then we were split in a number of groups. I was detailed with 11 others in a group which, as we learned later, was to remove the bodies from this cottage. We were all given masks, and were led through the door into the cottage. Moll opened the door, and only then could we see that the cottage was full of naked corpses of both sexes and all ages. Moll ordered us to remove these corpses from the cottage through the door to the yard. We started work with four men carrying one body. This annoyed Moll. He rolled up his sleeves, and threw a body through the door into the yard. When, despite this example, we said we were incapable of doing that, he detailed two of us to carry each body. Once the corpses were in the yard, a dental technician, assisted by an SS man, pulled out the teeth. A barber, also watched by an SS man, shaved off the hair; After that another group loaded the bodies onto a cart. This cart ran on a narrow-gauge track to the edge of the pits. Still another group prepared the pit for burning the corpses. First of all, big logs were put in the bottom, then smaller and smaller wood, in criss-cross fashion, and finally dry twigs. Another group took the bodies that had

been brought by the cart and threw them into the pit. Once all the bodies had been brought from the cottage to the pit, Moll poured kerosene over them in the four corners of the pit and set fire to it by throwing a burning rubber comb over the kerosene-soaked areas. That is how the fire started and the corpses burned. While Moll started the fire, we were in front of the cottage and could see what he was doing. After having removed all the bodies from the cottage, we had to clean it thoroughly, wash the floor with water, spread it with sawdust, and white-wash the walls. The interior of the cottage was divided into four rooms by partition walls. One, in which one could house 1200 naked people, the second with a capacity of 700, the third of 400, and the fourth with a capacity of between 200 and 250. In the first room, the biggest, there were in the wall two little windows. The three smaller rooms each had one small window. These windows were closed by the wooden doors. Each room had a separate access. On the entrance door there was a metal sign with the inscription "Hochspannung--Lebensgefahr," as I mentioned earlier. When the door was opened, this sign was invisible but one could see another "Zum Baden" ("To the Baths"). The people who were in these rooms saw on the exit door another sign with the inscription ("Zur Desinfektion")("To Disinfection"). Behind this door there was obviously no disinfection, because through these doors we removed the bodies into the yard. Each room had its own entrance door."

Dragon continued to explain how this cottage was known as Bunker II, and that there was also another cottage, Bunker I, which contained only two chambers and which could hold less than 2,000 people. He explained that he and his fellow workers were mainly involved with the removal and burning of the corpses, and that only occasionally was he present at the actual, mostly nightly gassings, which was mainly run by the SS men themselves. His role at those occasions was to help undress ill people. At those times he witnessed how, after all had been driven into the cottage, the doors were closed, and how *SS-Rottenführer*

Steinmetz collected a tin of Zyklon B from a red cross van, donned a gas mask, opened it, threw it through one of the windows, closed the window, and carried the tin back to the van.

Dragon also gave a graphic account of the situation inside Bunker II the next morning. "In general we found, when we opened the rooms, the bodies of the gassed in lying positions. When there were many, they were on top of one another, often in standing positions, with their upper bodies bent down. In many cases I saw on the lips of the gassed a white foam. In the rooms it was after they were opened very hot and one could sense the gas. It caused an itching feeling at the throat. On one's lips one senses a sweetish, pleasant taste." Dragon recorded that Bunker I was demolished in 1943, and that in the same year the barracks situated next to Bunker II were also dismantled, and that at that time the cremation pits were filled with earth. Bunker II remained, however, standing to be used once more during the Hungarian Action of 1944.

If Faurisson missed Dragon's account, he certainly should have been able to consult that of Pery Broad, as it had been published by the time he began his investigation. A non-commissioned officer in the Auschwitz Political Department, the 34-year old *SS-Unterscharführer* Pery Broad was captured by the British near Ravensbrück on 6 May, 1945. In the prisoner-of-war camp he worked as a translator, and wrote voluntarily a report on his activities in Auschwitz. The Broad report corroborated Dragon's account of the Birkenau extermination installations, those "innocuous looking farmhouses, the 'bunkers' as those gas chambers were generally called." "At some distance from the Birkenau camp, which was growing at an incredible rate, there stood, amidst pleasant scenery, two pretty and tidy-looking farmhouses, separated from one another by a grove. They were dazzlingly whitewashed, cosily thatched and surrounded with fruit trees of the kind that usually grew there. Such was the first hasty impression! Nobody would have thought it credible that in those insignificant little houses as many people had

perished as would have filled a city. The attentive spectator might have noticed signs in many languages on the houses. The signs read: "To disinfection." then he might observe that the houses were windowless, but had a disproportionate number of remarkably strong doors, made air-tight with rubber and secured with screwed-down bolts, while small wooden flaps were fixed near the bolts. Near the small houses there were several incongruously large stables, such as were used in Birkenau to accommodate prisoners. The roads leading to them bore the tracks of many heavily loaded vans. If the visitor discovered, in addition, that from the back doors there led a railway track to some pits hidden by brushwood fences, then he would certainly guess that the houses served some special purpose." There followed a detailed account of the killing procedure, from the arrival of the victims at the bunker, to the arrival of the tins of Zyklon B in an ambulance commanded by the medical orderly SS-Oberscharführer Josef Klehr. And Broad described the last phase of the killing process: the incineration of their bodies on the huge pyres. It corroborated Dragon's account given a month earlier--a testimony given in Poland and which was not and could not have been available to either Broad or his interrogators. Yet Broad could add the unique perspective of an outside observer. For example, Broad knew that the SS leadership was concerned about the fact that the killings at Bunkers I and II could not be kept secret. "The great pyres were spreading such a stench that the whole countryside for miles around had been infected. At night, the red sky above Auschwitz was visible from far away. But it would have been impossible to do away with the immense quantities of corpses, both of those who died in the camp and of those who had perished in the gas chambers, without the huge pyres. The chimney of the Auschwitz crematorium [crematorium 1] showed dangerous clefts due to overheating. Sentries were punished for gossiping: they were supposed to be guilty of betraying the secrets, but it was by reason of the unmistakable sweet smell and the nightly flames that the neighbourhood of Auschwitz learnt about the goings-on in the camp of death. Railwaymen used to

tell the civilian population how thousands were being brought to Auschwitz every day, and yet the camp was not growing larger at a corresponding rate. The same information was supplied by the police escorts of the transports. The result was that a party speaker, when making his speech in the town of Auschwitz, had to retreat as most of the audience was hostile.” The creation of four new crematoria, which ended the need to incinerate the corpses on large pyres, allowed the Germans to restore the very secrecy that allowed, thirty years later, a man like Faurisson to negate the existence of these bunkers.

Fearful of external evidence, Faurisson stayed away from Dragon, Broad, Klehr, and the many other testimonies that describe the operation of the bunkers in excruciating detail. Ignorantly of context, he soldiered on, with as his only compass the linguistic insights offered by his “Ajax Method.” Persistence paid. After many years of work he finally was able in late 1978 to propagate his ideas in the prestigious daily *Le Monde*. I will consider below the circumstances that led Faurisson’s “breakthrough.” Here I will limit myself to the conclusion about the Kremer diary that he was able to present to the French nation at large. “The physician Johann Paul Kremer’s diary should be quoted correctly. It will thus be observed that when he speaks about the horrors of Auschwitz, it is an allusion to the typhus epidemic of September-October 1942. On October 3, he wrote: “At Auschwitz, whole streets have been annihilated by typhus.” He himself would contract what he calls “the Auschwitz disease.” Germans would die of it. The sorting out of the ill from the healthy was the “selection” or one of the forms of the “special action” performed by the physician. The sorting out took place either within buildings or outdoors. Never did he write that Auschwitz was a *Vernichtungslager*, that is, according to a terminology developed by the Allies after the war, an “extermination camp” (by which we are to understand a camp endowed with a gas chamber). In reality, what he wrote was: “It is not for nothing that Auschwitz is called the camp of annihilation (*das Lager der Vernichtung*).” In the etymological sense of the

word, typhus annihilates those whom it strikes. Another seriously mistaken quotation: for the date of September 2, 1942, Kremer's manuscript reads: "This morning, I was present, outdoors, for the first time, at a special action." Historians and magistrates customarily suppress the word "outdoors (*draussen*)" in order to have Kremer say that the action took place in a "gas chamber." Finally, the atrocious scenes in front of the "last bunker" (this was the courtyard of Bunker 11) were executions of prisoners sentenced to death, executions the physician was obliged to attend. Among those sentenced were three women who had arrived in a convoy from Holland." This passage received the reply it deserved in Pierre Vidal-Naquet's brilliant essay "Un Eichmann de papier" ("A Paper Eichmann"). Vidal-Naquet characterized Faurisson's method as "the Art of Not Reading Texts," and in his comment on Faurisson's interpretation of Kremer's diary Vidal-Naquet amply demonstrated that, unlike Faurisson, he understood the art of reading texts. For example, as to Faurisson's discussion on the all-important distinction between *Vernichtungslager* and *das Lager der Vernichtung*, Vidal-Naquet wrote that "the fact that Auschwitz was the *Lager der Vernichtung* has no relation to typhus epidemics." "Indeed, Faurisson, who is so concerned with precision when it comes to translation, did not perceive that Kremer, in speaking of typhus, did not use the verb *vernichten*. He wrote on October 3, "In Auschwitz whole streets have been stricken down by typhus (*In Auschwitz liegen ganze Strassenzüge an Typhus darnieder*)." The difference in verbs (*darniederliegen* instead of *vernichten*) is significant, and Faurisson allowed himself to be fooled by the translation of the Polish publisher. Finally, a detail which I mention to show how Faurisson reads texts: it is false that Kremer had typhus and that what he called the Auschwitz illness is typhus. The indications in the diary for September 3, 4 and 14, show clearly that the Auschwitz illness is diarrhea with a moderate fever (37.8 degrees C. On September 14), Kremer was, in fact, vaccinated against (exanthematic) typhus and against typhoid fever. Faurisson's interpretation is thus not admissible, and the explanation--so dear to those revisionists, like Butz,

prepared to admit that there was a lot of dying in Auschwitz--of the death rates at Auschwitz by typhus stands condemned along with it. One must return to what is to be learned from the camp archives and from Kremer's confessions: that the "special actions" correspond to the arrival of convoys of deportees (who were, as a rule, duly registered in the camp archives); that deportees not enrolled in the camp were gassed in the bunkers of Birkenau (small houses located in the forest); that those suffering from illnesses in the camp (and specifically from typhus) as well as male and female "Muslims" were also gassed; and that at the last moment, there were occasionally painful scenes, such as that of October 18, 1942, with three "young and healthy" Dutch women who "did not want to enter the gas chamber and cried to save their lives" and who were shot, scenes that disturbed the SS-imposed order. When Kremer spoke of *the* camp of annihilation, he was not, it is true, referring to a juridico-administrative concept, which did not figure, as is also true, on the official rolls of the Third Reich. He was simply speaking about what he saw. On the level he most cherishes, that of philological precision and accurate translation, Faurisson's interpretation is incoherent; on the level of intellectual ethics and scientific probity, it is bogus."

The same judgment applies to Faurisson's analysis of the confessions of Kommandant Höss. He found in Höss's autobiography, written in Poland awaiting his sentence, an account how he had been beaten up immediately after his arrest by the British in March 1946, and on the basis of this he concluded that his entire confession had been the result of torture. Furthermore there were discrepancies between his different confessions--the one he gave immediately after his arrest, the one he gave in early April in Nuremberg, the one he gave later that month to prison psychologist Dr. Gustave M. Gilbert, and the two major confessions he wrote in Poland. And to make matters worse, Höss was weak on the technical details of gassing. Hence he was useless as a witness. Yet, at the same time, Faurisson was prepared to subject Höss's

language to a most detailed exegesis whenever it suited him. For example, he juxtaposed the following two of Höss's statements. "The door was opened a half an hour after the gas was thrown in and the ventilation system was turned on. Work was immediately started to remove the corpses." Closely reading this passage, Faurisson noted the adverb "immediately." In other words, work began immediately when the ventilation began, that means when the room was still highly toxic. This was very dangerous. It was evident, Faurisson argued, that the Sonderkommando only could have entered the space equipped with gas masks. The second statement by Höss seemed, however, to preclude this. "They dragged the bodies from the gas chambers, removed the gold teeth, cut off the hair, then dragged the bodies to the pits or to the ovens. On top of that, they had to maintain the fires in the pits, pour off the accumulated fat, and poke holes into the burning mountain of bodies, so that more oxygen could enter. All these jobs they performed with an indifferent coolness, just as if this was an everyday affair. While dragging the bodies, they ate or smoked. Even the gruesome job of burning the bodies dug up after being in mass graves for a long time did not prevent them from eating." Faurisson observed that Höss saw the Sonderkommando dragging bodies while eating and smoking, they were obviously not wearing gas masks--probably because of their "indifferent coolness." In short, there was an inexplicable contradiction between the extreme toxicity of the gas chamber and the behaviour of the Sonderkommandos. Adding to the collection the official instruction manual of Zyklon B, which stipulated that spaces that had been fumigated with the agent should air out for at least 20 hours, Faurisson came to the conclusion that Höss obviously did not know what he was writing about, and that his testimony was worthless. Yet on examination, it is clear that his "Ajax Method" did not do the texts justice. The second quotation taken from Höss occurs in the middle of a paragraph that deals with the "strange" behaviour of the Sonderkommando. It did not discuss the extermination procedure in any logical order. When Höss mentions that the Sonderkommando ate or smoked

while dragging bodies, he did not say “while dragging bodies from the gas chambers.” In fact, there was a lot of body-dragging in Auschwitz: in crematoria 2 and 3 bodies were dragged within the incineration halls from the elevator doors to the ovens, in crematoria 4 and 5, bodies were dragged not only from the gas chambers to the morgue, but also from the morgue to the incineration room, and in the case of the open air burning of the buried corpses in the late summer and fall of 1942, bodies were dragged from the opened mass graves to the incineration pits. At no time did the Sonderkommando need a gas mask for this awful job. Likewise Faurisson misrepresented the Zyklon B instruction manual. The rule for spaces to be aired for 20 hours applies to rooms without any special ventilation system. After 20 hours of natural ventilation, and another hour with closed windows and doors, the room should be available for all activities except sleeping: this should wait another day. The situation in the gas chambers was different. With its powerful ventilation system, and with the fact that most of the hydrogen cyanide was absorbed by the victims’ bodies, the time could be reduced to 20 minutes.

While Faurisson examined the testimony of witnesses for every possible contradiction, he steadfastly refused to apply his “Ajax Method,” or even the most basic rules of criticism, to the utterances of his hero Rassinier. Faurisson accepted his writings without criticism. Given Rassinier’s glaring abuse of sources and their systematic violation of even the most elementary rules of legitimate scholarship, Faurisson’s endorsement of his works can only be explained as a testimony of his bad faith--of his need to cling to a belief in order to oppose another belief, a belief which, so I sense, Faurisson maintains in the absence of any true conviction.

Since the early 1970s Faurisson sought public attention for his work, but for many years he did not get a foot on the ground. The prestigious daily *Le Monde* refused to publish his letters, and also elsewhere the mainline press ignored him. Only the extreme-right *Défense de*

l'Occident (Defense of the West) was interested, and in June 1978 published an article entitled “Le ‘problème des chambres à gaz’” (“The ‘Problem of the Gas Chambers.’”). Because of its limited circulation, Faurisson sent an off-print to a number of important people, adding a convenient summary of his arguments. “Conclusions (after thirty years of research) of revisionist authors: (1) Hitler’s “gas chambers” never existed. (2) The “genocide” (or: the “attempted genocide”) of the Jews never took place; clearly, Hitler never ordered (nor permitted) that someone be killed for racial or religious reason. (3) The alleged “gas chambers” and the alleged “genocide” are one and the same lie. (4) This lie, which is essentially of Zionist origin, has allowed a gigantic politico-financial swindle of which the principal beneficiary is the State of Israel. (5) The principal victims of this lie and this swindle are the German and the Palestinian peoples. (6) The tremendous power of the official information channels has, until now, assured the success of the lie and censored the freedom of expression of those who denounce the lie. (7) The supporters of the lie know now that their lie is in its last years; they misrepresent the purpose and meaning of revisionist investigations; they label what is just a return to a concern for historical truth as “resurgence of Nazism” or “the falsification of history.”

Not many of the recipients gave the material a second thought. Yet the Nazi-hunters Beate and Serge Klarsfeld--the former a German by birth, the latter a Holocaust survivor--saw a gathering storm, and they invited Joseph Billig, who had assisted in the Nuremberg prosecution of A. Rosenberg, and Georges Wellers, editor of “Le Monde,” to contribute to a volume entitled *The Holocaust and the Neo-Nazi Mythomania* (1978). Wellers, a survivor of Auschwitz, wrote two essays united under the heading “Reply to the Neo-Nazi Falsification of Historical Facts Concerning the Holocaust.” One of the two essays dealt with Paul Rassinier’s demographical “proof” that the Holocaust was a hoax, and a second essay is entitled “The Existence of the Gas Chambers.” In his introductory remarks, Wellers summarized the allegations of the nega-

tionists, and noted the paradox that a Frenchman and former resistor, Rassinier, had laid down the foundations of negationism. “The paths marked out by Rassinier are faithfully followed by his imitators, who constantly refer to the master, citing him as a ‘classic’ who has ‘definitively’ demonstrated this or that,” Wellers observed. Yet the pupils had started to go beyond the master, denying even the few concessions Rassinier had made to historical truth. Wellers mentioned them briefly, to end with the remark that, “[f]inally, for a certain R. Faurisson, everything is crystal clear: ‘The time is ripe,’ it is the ‘imposture of genocide.’”

If Klarsfeld’s aim was that the publication of *The Holocaust and the Neo-Nazi Mythomania* would finish the issue, he must have been disappointed. In the fall of 1978, shortly after the book appeared, the existence, technology and operation of the gas chambers became in France an object of public contention. The catalyst for this was the notorious *L’Express* interview with Louis Darquier de Pellepoix. Living since the end of the war in comfortable exile in Spain, the former Commissioner General for Jewish Affairs of the Vichy government alleged that the Holocaust had not occurred, that there had been no gas chambers in Auschwitz. He claimed: “Only lice were gassed in Auschwitz.”

The Darquier interview provided Faurisson with the opportunity he needed. Within days he was published in the socialist newspaper *Le Matin*. Faurisson commented that the Darquier affair ought to convince the French that the Holocaust was fiction and the gas chambers fabrications “In common with the Frenchman, Paul Rassinier (a former member of the resistance and a deportee), with the German, Wilhelm Stäglich, the Englishman, Richard E. Harwood, the American, Arthur R. Butz (author of the Hoax of the Twentieth Century, such a remarkable work that clearly no one has been able to reply to him) and twenty other authors who are either ignored or calumniated as I hereby proclaim...that the massacres in so-called “gas chambers” are a historical lie.”

A few weeks later *Le Monde* was forced, under the threat of legal action to publish a letter by Faurisson entitled “Le problème des chambres à gaz’ ou ‘le rumeur d “Auschwitz”” (“‘The Problem of the Gas Chambers’ or ‘the Rumor of Auschwitz.’”) The letter began with the declaration that “no-one contested the use of crematoria ovens in certain German camps.” The high mortality due to epidemics had made those incineration facilities necessary. “It is the existence of ‘gas chambers,’ true slaughterhouses for humans, which is contested.” Faurisson argued that any visitor to Auschwitz or Majdanek could observe that the gas chambers could not have worked because it would have resulted in a “catastrophe” for the perpetrators, who would be killed themselves. Furthermore it would be impossible to cram 2,000 people in a room of 210 square meters, and it would have been ridiculous to then sprinkle them with pellets of an insecticide. Faurisson argued that the plans that did exist showed that the alleged gas chambers were typical morgues, and that the gas would have taken too long to be extracted from the room. Finally he noted that in all the trials no-one had been able to produce German documentation for Bunkers I and II. Faurisson concluded with the statement that “Nazism is dead, quite dead, and also its Führer. Today only the truth remains. Let us dare to proclaim it: The non-existence of the ‘gas chambers’ is good news for poor humanity. Good news like this should no longer be suppressed.”

Publication of such language in the influential and prestigious *Le Monde* brought, for the first time anywhere, the negationist denial of the gas chambers into public prominence. Until then, such ideas had only circulated within the fringe. And it was to stay in the public arena. Worried by the effect of Faurisson’s letter, the editors of *Le Monde* had asked a response from Wellers who was well prepared to answer Faurisson. Wellers’ letter, “Abondance de preuves” (“An Abundance of Evidence”) appeared next to Faurisson’s. Wellers quoted the documents that had become well known by now. First of all he quoted Bischoff’s letter of 29 January 1943, which contained the information that

“the planks from the concrete ceiling of the cellar used as a mortuary could not yet be removed on account of the frost. This is, however, not very important, as the gassing basement (*Vergasungskeller*) can be used for that purpose.” Furthermore Wellers invoked the statement of Pery Broad, Höss’s autobiography, the Vrba-Wetzlar report, the manuscripts of the *Sonderkommandos*, and so on. Specifically to the charge that those who would have worked the gas chambers would have killed, Wellers mentioned the powerful ventilation system that had been built in the walls of corpse cellar 1, the gas chamber. Wellers ended his letter with the observation that he did not address himself to fanatics, because there is no hope to convince them, but to people of good will, ignorant of the facts, and who could be taken in by the fallacies of Nazi apologists. While Wellers competently refuted the latter’s arguments, the publication of his letter proved soon a mistake: the publication of the two letters on the same page created the appearance that Faurisson’s and Wellers’ arguments were in principle commensurate in intellectual respectability--that, in short, there were (as the negationists have tried to establish all along) a “revisionist” and an “exterminationist” thesis concerning the Holocaust the advocates of which ought to be given equal opportunity to plead their cases.

Faurisson’s coup had immediate reverberations outside France. Four days after the publication of his “good news,” the Italian Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi responded in an interview with the *Corriere della Sera*. Naively, in hindsight, Levi tried to find some rational core in Faurisson’s position by assuming an actual personal link between Faurisson’s ideas and the events of thirty-five years earlier. “The operation has succeeded: it is not enough to read the horrors of Darquier de Pellepoix in *L’Express* last November, not enough to allow the murderers of those days space and voice in respectable magazines, so that they may dictate their truth with impunity: the truth that the millions of dead in the camps never died, that Genocide is a fable, that in Auschwitz they only used gas to kill lice. All that is obviously not enough. Obviously the

time is ripe, and from his university chair Professor Faurisson comes to put the world at ease. Fascism and Nazism have been denigrated, slandered. We don't talk about Auschwitz any more: that was a sham. We talk about the lie of Auschwitz, the Jews are cheats, they always have been cheats, and liars, liars enough to concoct the gas chambers and the crematorium ovens all by themselves, *after the event*. I don't know who Professor Faurisson is. Perhaps he is only a fool, even if he does hold a university office. Another hypothesis is more likely. Perhaps he himself was one of those in charge at the time, as Darquier was, or perhaps he is the son, or friend, or mainstay, of people in charge, and is striving to exorcize an episode that, in spite of modern permissiveness, weighs on his conscience. We are familiar with certain psychological mechanisms. Guilt is corrosive. In times now long since gone in Italy and France, it was also dangerous. People start by denying in court, in public, then in private, then more and more to themselves. The trick succeeds. Black turns white. The dead are not dead, there is no murderer, there is no more guilt. There never was. It wasn't me who did something. That thing itself no longer exists. No, Professor, life is not like that. The dead are truly dead. Even the women, and even the children, tens of thousands in Italy and France, millions in Poland and the Soviet Union. That's not so easy to conceal. You don't have to wear yourself out to find the evidence. If you really want to be informed, ask the survivors--there are enough of them in France. Listen to them. They saw themselves dying day after day, one by one, after their comrades who walked the dark path to the crematoria. They returned (those who did return), and they found their families wiped out. The path to avoiding guilt is not that one, Professor. Even for chair-borne Professors, facts are stubborn. If you deny the slaughter organized by your friends of that time, you must explain why, from 17 million in 1939, Jews were reduced to 11 million in 1945. You must deny the hundreds of thousands of widows and orphans, and you must deny us, the survivors. Come and debate with us, Professor, and you'll find it harder to teach your pupils. Are all of them so badly informed that they

accept this stuff? Has none of them raised a hand to protest? Then what have the university authorities done in France, and the law? By letting you deny the dead, they have tolerated your killing them a second time.”

Neither common sense nor an awareness of what the living owe the dead was to put the matter to rest. According to a nineteenth-century French law, Wellers’ direct attack on Faurisson had given the latter a right of response. Faurisson did not hesitate to make use of it, and *Le Monde* printed his reply to Wellers on January 16th. He claimed that he had believed in the gas chambers until he had read the work of Rassinier, and that he had reflected on the issue for fourteen years, and re-searched it assiduously for another four. “I visited and revisited Auschwitz and Birkenau where one presents us with a reconstructed “gas chamber,” and the ruins that are said to be “crematoria with gas chambers.” At Struthof (Alsace) and Maidanek (Poland) I have examined sites that are presented as “gas chambers in their original state.” I have analyzed thousands of documents.....I have searched in vain for a single deportee capable of proving to me that he has seen, with his own eyes, a “gas chamber.” I certainly did not want an illusory abundance of proofs; I would have been satisfied with only one proof, only one proof. That proof I never found. What I found, instead was many false proofs worthy of a witch trial--proofs that dishonored the judges that accepted them.” As to Wellers’ invocation of Bischoff’s letter of 29 January 1943, Faurisson approvingly quoted the interpretation offered a few years earlier by the American Arthur R. Butz that the term “*Vergasungskeller*” referred to a carburation chamber. The manuscripts of the *Sonderkommandos* he simply tried to brush off with the remark that they had been “miraculously” rediscovered, in other words that they were most likely forgeries. And so on.

The editors noted wearily that they only printed the letter because they were legally obliged to do so, and they warned that any other response to Faurisson would give him a renewed right to publish his views. (In

fact, Wellers did write another long rebuttal published on February 21, in which he did not mention Faurisson by name, nor directly refer to his letter, but in which he presented his arguments in the form of a general reflection on the musings of Rassinier, who had died three years earlier. It provided the editors of *Le Monde* with the legal means to deny Faurisson the right of response.)

Many regarded the publication of Faurisson's letters with confusion and mortification, and responsible historians who feared an unending cycle of negationist assertions and professional rebuttals joined together to end the farce. The well-known Holocaust historian Léon Poliakov and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, historian of ancient Greece, wrote a declaration that was consequently endorsed by 35 other prominent French historians and published in *Le Monde* on February 21. Entitled "La politique hitlérienne d'extermination. Une déclaration d'historiens" (The Hitlerian Policy of extermination. A Declaration by Historians), the manifesto pronounced that "the question of how technically such a mass murder was possible should not be raised. It was technically possible because it occurred. This is the necessary starting point for all historical investigation of the subject. It has fallen to us to recall that point with due simplicity: there is not nor can there be a debate over the existence of the gas chambers."

Faurisson wrote a rebuttal of the statement, but it was refused for publication. In this letter, entitled "A proof...one single proof," which Faurisson published a year later in his book *Mémoire en défense*, he offered what seemed to be a constructive proposal. "For four years now I have wished for a public debate with anyone who desires to engage in it on "the problem of the gas chambers." One responds to me with criminal complaints....I know a manner to advance the debate. Instead of repeating ad nauseam that there is a superabundance of proofs that attest to the existence of "gas chambers" (let us recall the value of this assumed superabundance for the "gas chambers"--mythical--of the *Altreich* [the German Reich within its borders of 1937], I

propose that, to begin at the beginning, one supplies me with a proof, one single precise proof of the actual existence of one “gas chamber,” one single “gas chamber.” Let us examine this proof together, in public.”

If we compare the spirit of “A Declaration by Historians” and Faurisson’s “A proof...One single proof,” it is on a first view not easy to feel some sympathy for Faurisson’s attitude. After all, we are heirs to a rational, liberal and individualistic culture that accepts as one of its formative myths the conflict between the Church and Galileo. It is all too easy to see in the statement of the historians a dogmatic pronouncement by a new intellectual inquisition aiming to repress evidence and logic for the sake doctrine, and in Faurisson a champion of free enquiry. And, indeed, negationists have tried to exploit this seemingly obvious parallelism for all it is worth.

There are, however, some problems in applying the myth of the Church versus Galileo to the “Faurisson Affair”—apart from the fact that historians of science have come to realize that the commonplace reading of the “Galileo Affair” as the battle between reactionary obscurantism and the spirit of science does not hold. The most important problem is that the paradigm of scientific enquiry does not really apply to history. Like history, science has an empirical component, but unlike historians, scientists can conduct experiments and repeat them *ad nauseam* in order to find evidence and construct a proof. After all scientists operate in a universe ruled by natural laws, while virtually all historians (with the exception of some radical Hegelians or Marxists) study a world shaped by incessant and unrelenting contingency. A historical proof is a difficult thing. Unlike the scientist, who can design a laboratory experiment so that it offers the ideal situation to study a particular phenomenon, the historian must out of necessity work with often scraps of evidence that accidentally survived the times, often the testimony of witnesses who were absolutely not qualified to bear witness, and so on.

But there is something more important, which goes directly to the heart of the seemingly authoritarian “Declaration of Historians.” It is the issue that relatively quickly after an important historical event has passed--and with important I mean one that has acquired an important place in the historical consciousness--it becomes very difficult if not impossible to offer “a proof...A single proof.” Why is this so? Let’s look at the situation in 1979, thirty-four years after the liberation of Auschwitz. By that year scholars, judges, juries, and the public at large had acquired a consensus as to what had happened in Auschwitz. This knowledge had accrued over more than three decades by different means. There were, of course, inferences people had made on the basis of relevant evidence: confessions by SS men like *öss* and Broad, sworn depositions by eyewitnesses like Dragon and Tauber, original German documents like Bischoff’s letter to Kammler of 29 January 1943, substantial residues of cyanide in the ventilation covers of the gas chambers of crematorium 2, and the forensic investigations of Jan Sehn and Roman Dawidowski. When these pieces of evidence were first studied--mostly in the immediate post-war years--they were things that existed in the present, but allowed the student of Auschwitz to make, by means of a valid inference based on causal regularity, a licensed move to a statement about the development and situation of Auschwitz in the past. But, by the late 1970s, other genres of knowledge been grafted on the original evidence: memoirs of survivors, interpretation of writers, evocations by filmmakers, symbolic monuments designed by architects and sculptors, public rituals of commemoration, theological speculation, and so on. In other words, by the late 1970s, knowledge of “Auschwitz” became transmitted as a mixture of learning and second-hand memory, shaped by public political discourse and private anxiety.

By the 1970s “Auschwitz” had acquired an important place in the public imagination. As such, it was both part of the life of the new generation, but also out of their reach. With that, it entered a certain twilight

zone between memory and history. Eric Hobsbawm described this twilight zone as the no-man's land of time located at the intersection of the past as a generalized record that is open to relatively dispassionate inspection, and the past as a remembered part of, or background to, one's own life. "It is by far the hardest part of history for historians, or for anyone else, to grasp," Hobsbawm observed. "It forms something similar to those particoloured ancient maps filled with unreliable outlines and white spaces, framed by monsters and symbols. The monsters and symbols are magnified by the modern mass media, because the very fact that the twilight zone is important to us makes it central also to their preoccupations."

Having become a central obsession of public discourse, a symbol of evil as such, knowledge of Auschwitz had detached itself from the knowledge of present matters of fact--confessions, sworn depositions, documents, certain amounts of residual cyanide, forensic opinions--and acquired a life of its own. This, of course, does not only apply to Auschwitz, but to all facts of history that become part of public discourse, and knowledge of Auschwitz was now not only direct, but also mediated by art and so on. With that its epistemological status had changed, definitively, and irrevocably. David Hume's argument from Section IV of Part III of Book I of *A Treatise Concerning Human Nature* (1739-40) that all historical knowledge is based on valid inferential arguments based on direct and certain pieces of evidence available in the present--that is that historical knowledge ultimately stems from a direct apprehension of "the facts"--is proven wrong in a situation where knowledge is so obviously mediated by social factors. The knowledge about Auschwitz as it was available in the late 1970s, or as it is available today, follows more Alexis de Tocqueville's observation, made in Chapter II of the Second Part of his *Democracy in America*, that social factors mediate perceptions and understandings, and that only a small

part of any individual's knowledge is based on original, unmediated perception of evidence, while most of that person's knowledge is transmitted as one's patrimony through social networks.

In 1979 knowledge of Auschwitz had become part of the intellectual patrimony of the West. Recently the philosopher of history Leon Pompa explained the epistemological conundrum that follows from the circumstance that people most often engage a historical fact after they have come across it as an already accepted item of knowledge. By the late 1970s Auschwitz figured in history textbooks and in encyclopedias. It was alluded to in political speeches and demonstrations, and it had been the subject of plays such as Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy*, films like Resnais's *Night and Fog*, television series like *Holocaust*, novels like William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*, and so on. By the time the Faurisson Affair emerged most people had *come to learn* about Auschwitz through such references, but it was not in virtue of inferences drawn from these references that Auschwitz had become an item of historical knowledge. To the contrary: those references to Auschwitz had been made upon the assumption that its existence and operation as an extermination camp was already known to be true. This was unavoidable because if it were otherwise, the references to Auschwitz in the political and cultural life of the West would fail to serve their purpose. In short, the discourse on Auschwitz existed because a consensus about its history existed.

Because Auschwitz had become part of our general cultural and historical inheritance, it had become more or less independent of the potential or actual availability of evidence. What mattered much more was the question if people accepted the beliefs that constitute one's knowledge of Auschwitz before interpreting the available evidence. Taking Pompa's ideas as our point of departure, one could say that, by the time Faurisson offered his challenge, the inherited knowledge of Auschwitz could be supported by evidence, but that more importantly one should accept the fact that the community as such did not accept the

inherited account of Auschwitz because there it was possible to cite documentary evidence, but was prepared to interpret the evidence in that way because it had inherited the belief for which it seems to be evidence.

Pompa demonstrated that this inheritance of shared historical beliefs is not just a contingent feature of our knowledge of history. At least in part, it constitutes our sense of our place in history and, therefore, of our knowledge of history. Inherited historical belief has priority over inferential historical belief because the former is the precondition for our judgement about the validity of our inferences. “[O]ur concept of historical reasoning is so dependent upon a set of accepted historical beliefs, which are partially constitutive of our sense of the structure of a determinate past, that, if we had to countenance their possible falsity, we should be left with no idea how to put any others in their place or, therefore, why we should accept the conclusions of historical reasoning as conclusions about the past.” Every empirical historian operates within a context of inherited beliefs, and this allows her to discover new facts, and assimilate them into the body of inherited knowledge. “[G]iven our incapacity to find an independent criterion of historical truth, we shall be able fully to warrant claims to truth only for those products of historical reasoning which can, in some or other way, be linked to the inherited set which provides the general structure of our concept of the determinate past. That is the reason why, when, by historical argument, we try to establish facts about parts of history which, for contingent reasons, do not connect in any way with what we have received, the area of disagreement among experts becomes so wide that we are often not justified in accepting any of the many accounts which can be offered as more than plausible hypotheses. But with regards to facts which can be connected to those, which are, so to speak, known by transmission, there is scope for the establishment of many new ones, so that the body which we hand on to our successors about our known past may be a much larger body than that which we

received. But it will, nevertheless, retain one part of its content in which it overlaps with what we received, and it is in virtue of this that historical belief can be thought of as being factual rather than fictional in character.” In other words, in order to raise questions about, for example the operation of the gas chambers in Auschwitz, much of what we may call our inherited knowledge about Auschwitz must be accepted. Without inherited knowledge of history, we would have no capacity to have *any* historical beliefs at all.

Pompa used the case of Caesar’s assassination, first employed by Hume in his discussion of the foundations of historical knowledge, to illustrate this point. “It may seem a conceptual possibility that Caesar never existed,” Pompa argued, “but it cannot be a historical possibility.” It cannot because facts are not independent, but both interrelated to each other and progressively entrenched in the account as it is transmitted from one generation to the next. “If we were to believe that Caesar was not assassinated, an enormous range of other implicated facts, both about Caesar and about the Roman history of his time in general, would have to be abandoned,” Pompa observed. This raises, of course, the issue of our general trust in the way information is communicated socially. “If we take the case of Caesar’s assassination, the first to know it would, no doubt, be those who participated in it or who witnessed it. From there, belief in it would be acquired by public communication, by word of mouth or by seeing or hearing of his funeral cremation and so on. By the time it came to the general constitutional muddle which ensued, or the measures which were eventually taken by Antony and Octavian against Brutus and Cassius, Caesar’s death would be so much a presupposition of what was going on in a large part of Roman constitutional life that it would already be beyond the rational possibility of doubt. But these are ways in which it would come to be an item of public knowledge for the Romans, rather than evidence for it. If anyone were to be asked why he believed that Caesar was dead, he might well refer to the way in which he had learnt of it, but

this would not, except in a few cases of those who saw his dead body, count as evidence for it. If the question were pressed further, most would simply fall back upon the answer that that was what everybody else believed. In part, of course, this amounts to saying that it becomes an item of knowledge as belief in it becomes more widely accepted and as its effects multiply. But it is not merely a matter of the wider dissemination of the belief. For it also becomes more deeply entrenched within that wider body of belief, and the practices which depend upon it, to a degree which, at a certain point, makes it impossible rationally to question it. After a certain time, belief in the event becomes so constitutive within a communal pattern of interlocking beliefs that there is no way in which doubts about it can rationally be entertained. Thus, if we were not prepared to accept that Caesar was assassinated, relying largely on the fact that, despite a lack of the availability of much evidence for most of the population, it has been transmitted to us as an item of public knowledge for the Romans, we would need, in turn, to disbelieve a very large part of Roman history as we have also received it.”

Or, if we apply Pompa’s discussion to Auschwitz, one could say that the non-existence of the gas chambers may seem a conceptual possibility, but cannot be a historical possibility because their historical existence is the *a priori* of most of our knowledge of the Second World War. Our knowledge of the gas chambers is not independent of, for example, our knowledge of the ideological radicalization of the Nazis after the beginning of Operation Barbarossa. In our understanding of the history of the Second World War, the operations of the *Einsatzgruppen* in the East, the deportations of German Jews from the West, the German treatment of Soviet prisoners-of-war, the expansion of the concentration camps, the first experimentations with Zyklon-B as a killing agent, and the adaptation of the morgues of crematoria 2 and 3 in Auschwitz into gas chambers are interrelated to each other. To challenge the existence of one of these facts would be to challenge all of them. This does not

mean that one may not reconsider one's interpretation of the meaning of those facts in their interrelationship to those other facts. While some like to emphasize the importance of one relation, others may attach greater weight to another relation. Yet the facts are there, supporting each other, and when a person desires to deny one fact, he must re-write the whole history of the Second World War.

From an epistemological perspective this may be less than ideal, but, as Pompa argued, centuries of experience teaches that by and large the social acceptance and transmission of historical fact has been reliable. "[W]hat has come down to us as fact is the product of a basically truth-preserving process." This does not mean that all beliefs we inherit were equally certain: some are seen as more, and some as less reliable. But, as Pompa noted, in those cases the tradition clearly earmarked such beliefs as less certain. In short, the wide range of certainty that historians ascribe to recorded facts are a proof of the general truth-preserving character of the process of transmission.

This excursion into the epistemological labyrinth that confronts every historian makes clear why the declaration by the 37 French historians that there can be no debate over the existence of the gas chambers showed a realistic assessment of the possibilities and limitations of historical investigation. It also shows why Faurisson's call for "a proof...a single proof" revealed the shallow amateurism of the dilettante. Yet the daily press was not the ideal place to provide a course in the complex epistemology of historical knowledge, and so what could and should have become a very important theoretical engagement concerning the historical (im)possibility that the gas chambers had not existed came to an early end

The one lasting result of the exchange of letters was that Faurisson had become well-known in France. Fame came, however, at a high personal price. Students at the university of Lyons-2 staged demonstrations against him, and in response the university administrators suspended

Faurisson's lectures. And the staff of the Center of Contemporary Jewish Documentation in Paris, which had been Faurisson's main source of information, refused to serve him.

In the months that followed Faurisson also became known also abroad. In August 1979 the Italian magazine *Storia illustrata* printed a long interview with him, in which Faurisson's statements were left unchallenged. Hitler, so the French scholar declared, had not engaged any more in genocide than Roosevelt. Both had interned enemy aliens in internment camps: the latter the Japanese, and the former the Jews. Yet because he had not been able to intern all Jews, Hitler had forced those who were left in the cities and villages to wear a sign. "Those who wore the stars could not freely move everywhere at all times. They were like paroled prisoners. It seems that Hitler was concerned less with the Jewish Question than with ensuring the safety of the German soldier. The German soldier would otherwise have been unable to distinguish the Jews from the non-Jews. The sign marked them for them." Thus the segregation of Jews from the non-Jews occurred not for ideological, but for military reasons. To Faurisson, the fact that the Jews built 700 bunkers in the Warsaw ghetto proved their threat. Even the children challenged the military situation. "I know that sometimes that children between six and fifteen years of age could not constitute a danger and that they should not have been obliged to wear the star. But if one accepts this military logic, there exist today enough accounts and memoirs in which Jews tell us about the way they engaged, even as children, in all kinds of illicit activities or resistance against the Germans." Faurisson's logic was allowed to go unchallenged.

Shortly after giving his interview to the *Storia illustrata*, Faurisson crossed the ocean, to begin his missionary activity in the United States. In fact, his name had already become known in progressive circles. News had reached American academia that the French academic had been hindered in his pursuit of knowledge, and in response to that violation of academic freedom the following text was circulated,

and signed by several hundred academics. “Dr. Robert Faurisson has served as a respected professor of twentieth century French literature and document criticism for over four years at the University of Lyon-2 in France. Since 1974 he has been conducting extensive independent historical research into the “Holocaust” question. Since he began making his findings public, Professor Faurisson has been subject to a vicious campaign of harassment, intimidation, slander and physical violence in a crude attempt to silence him. Fearful officials have even tried to stop him from further research by denying him access to public libraries and archives. We strongly protest these efforts to deprive Professor Faurisson of his freedom of speech and expression, and we condemn the shameful campaign to silence him. We strongly support Professor Faurisson’s just right of academic freedom and we demand that university and government officials do everything possible to ensure his safety and the free exercise of his legal rights.”

The most prominent academic to put his name under the document was Noam Chomsky. Faurisson must have appeared to the famous linguist and public intellectual, who showed open disgust for the general subservience of the mainstream intelligentsia--“the herd of independent minds”--to the propaganda systems of their own governments, a fellow traveller worthy of support. The same year that he put his signature under the petition in support of Faurisson, Chomsky derided the proven willingness of many intellectuals to “disseminate propaganda concerning the evil practices, real or fabricated, of current enemies of the state. It is remarkable to see how susceptible intellectuals have been, over the years, to the machinations of the atrocity fabrication industry.” Faurisson did not belong to the herd, and therefore he deserved support.

Faurisson’s first stop was California, where he attended the first congress sponsored by the Institute for Historical Review. There he was to present a paper entitled “The mechanics of gassing,” but because he

felt that his English was rather bad, Faurisson asked a Canadian participant, Ernst Zündel, to read his paper on his behalf. It marked the beginning of an interesting relationship.

Faurisson's paper began with a discussion about the difficulty of gassing people as it imposed severe risks for the executioner. Therefore Höss's recollection that the crews began clearing the gas chambers *sofort* ("immediately") after the gassings did not make any sense, as too much hydrogen cyanide would have remained in the bodies and in the air pockets between them. "What kind of superpowerful fan is able to instantly disperse so much gas drifting through the air and hidden in air pockets?" the paper asked, and it continued with the observation that "it is abundantly clear from Höss's description that the fan in question must have been endowed with magical powers in order to be able to disperse all the gas with such flawless performance so that there was no cause for concern or need for verification of the absence of the gas!" Then the paper reviewed the Degesch instructions for handling Zyklon-B, which stipulated that rooms fumigated with the agent should be aired at least for 21 hours, and discussed at some length the danger for explosion. At the end the paper would once more consider the issue that, according to Höss, the Sonderkommando had entered the gas chambers "immediately" after the deaths of the victims. "I contend that this point alone constitutes the cornerstone of the false evidence, because this is a physical impossibility," Faurisson wrote and Zündel spoke. "If you encounter a person who believes in the existence of the 'gas chambers,' ask him how, in his opinion, the thousands of cadavers were removed to make room for the next batch?" As far as we know, no-one at the meeting rose to point out that, after gassing 2,000 people in the basement of crematorium 2 in one operation, even the Germans had to allow some time before "the next batch." After all, it would take the crematoria ovens of that same crematorium more than a day and half to incinerate the bodies.

Turning to the remains in Auschwitz, the paper mentioned that the gas chamber of crematorium 2 had been merely a morgue, and that it would have been too small to accommodate the between 2,000 and 3,000 victims mentioned by Höss. Then it mentioned the obliteration of traces. “Do not be deceived into believing that before their retreat the Germans blew up the “gas chambers” and crematory ovens to conceal any trace of their alleged crimes. If one wishes to obliterate all trace of an installation which would be intrinsically quite sophisticated, it must be scrupulously dismantled from top to bottom so that there remains not one shred of incriminating evidence.” The paper did not mention that eyewitnesses mentioned that, indeed, the gas chambers had been “scrupulously dismantled,” and that only after the perforated columns and ventilators had been removed the rooms were dynamited.

Then the paper turned to what was to become a focus of Faurisson’s studies in the next years, and which was to lead to the Leuchter Report nine years later: the design, technique and operation procedures of American gas chambers. “The real gas chambers, such as those created in 1924 and developed by the Americans around 1936-1938 offers some idea of the inherent complexity of such a method of execution,” the paper proclaimed. And there followed a lengthy description of the gassing procedure in American prisons, and the extensive safety precautions taken to prevent any accidents.

After discussing the American gas chambers, Faurisson returned to the German gas chambers. “If the Germans had decided to gas millions of people, a complete overhaul of some very formidable machinery would have been absolutely essential. A general order, instructions, studies, commands and plans would surely have been necessary also. Such items have never been found. Meetings of experts would have been necessary: of architects, chemists, doctors, and experts in a

wide range of technical fields. Disbursement and allocations of funds would have been necessary. Had this occurred in a state such as the Third Reich, a wealth of evidence would surely have survived.”

Faurisson’s paper generated a discussion, and Zündel especially liked its approach. Comparison between the structures in Auschwitz and American gas chambers was to be the key to the future of negationism, and was to provide the basis for Leuchter’s involvement in the Second Zündel Trial in 1988--an involvement that directly led to Irving’s adoption of the negationist position. On his return to France, Faurisson made a stop in Washington DC to give a lecture at the headquarters of the National Alliance, the American neo-Nazi party. Faurisson made use of his stop-over to visit and photograph the gas chamber in the State Prison in Baltimore, Maryland. He sent those photos to Zündel who, as Faurisson testified in the Second Zündel Trial, became obsessed by the American gas chambers, and urged Faurisson to continue his investigations in that direction. But, as Faurisson testified in Zündel’s 1988 trial, “I had some trouble after that that I could not really work on this question.”

Indeed, on his return home to France Faurisson became, once again, the center of public debate. In April 1980 the so-called Faurisson Affair was given new life with the publication of Serge Thion’s massive, 350-page long book *Vérité historique ou vérité politique? La dossier de l'affaire Faurisson. La question des chambres à gaz (Historical Truth or Political Truth? The File of the Faurisson Affair. The Question of the Gas Chambers)*. With the strong declaration of the 35 French historians, published in *Le Monde* on February 21, 1979, Faurisson had become the underdog opposed by the defenders of the status quo, and as such for the champions of the radical left, in search for a new cause to unmask the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie, Faurisson became their hero, and they began to fashion, in imitation of the “Dreyfus Affair,” a so-called “Faurisson Affair.” Thion, a left-wing radical, rallied to Faurisson’s case, and presented this as the logical consequence of his commitment to the

principles of freedom of thought. Yet it still remains baffling, however, to see with what ease Thion was willing to assimilate Faurisson's point of view, and categorically dismiss the great abundance of evidence that attests to the historical reality of the Holocaust. "What is thus most incredible for anyone preoccupied with this question is--given the enormity of the facts and the generality of their representation--the narrowness of the sources, once one is willing to eliminate the crowd of hearsay witness who in fact did not see. It is literally stupefying to observe that the centerpiece is the set of confessions before Allied tribunals by the heads of the German camps. Once one is prepared to imagine the situation of those defeated men, gambling with their own lives between the hands of their jailers, a paltry game in which truths and lies are the basic tokens in a tactic of survival, one will not be prepared to accept all their declarations as valid currency." A true defender of the underdog, be it the Algerian in his battle with the French Republic, the Vietnamese in their battle with the United States, Faurisson in his battle with the establishment, Thion even had no difficulty feeling sympathy for men like Höss or Frank when they were in the dock. To Thion, the Nuremberg war crimes tribunals had been not much different from the Stalinist show trials, and therefore they had no evidentiary value.

In a lengthy response to the book entitled "A Paper Eichmann," Pierre Vidal-Naquet refuted Thion's points. First of all he observed that there is much more evidence than Thion mentions. "I dare say as well that "hearsay witnesses who in fact did not see" also have something to teach us. When, for instance, a man is separated from the rest of his family and learns from former detainees that exit from the camp is by way of the smokestack, when there exists an immense amount of analogous testimony, when one knows that the interested parties never reappeared, such testimony is, all the same, deserving of some attention." Then Vidal-Naquet turned to the basic assumption that the trials would have been show trials. He observed that the Nuremberg trials, or

the Polish Auschwitz Trial, were of a radically different genre than the Stalinist show trials in which the accused, the police and the magistrates shared a common knowledge. “The first rule is that the accused adopt entirely the language of his accusers; but that rule, if characteristic of all trials of the Moscow sort, is valid for them alone. The second rule, which is fundamental, is that absolutely everything that the accused says, either during the official investigation or publicly at the trial, must be politically significant, in accordance with party policy.” In other words, show trials are carefully scripted, and somehow assume that they occur within a process of historical necessity that embraces all participants in equal measure. Consequently the accused know what part to play.

Within months after bringing Thion’s book on the market, La Veille Taupe published Faurisson’s *Mémoire en Defense--contre ceux qui m’accusent de falsifier l’histoire. La question des chambres à gaz* (*Testimony in Defense--Against those who Accuse me of Falsifying History: The Question of the Gas Chambers*). The true significance of the book, which made it the topic of conversation everywhere, was not to be found in the amalgamate of Faurisson’s scholarship, but in Noam Chomsky’s ill-advised preface. As we have seen, Chomsky had in 1979 signed a petition in support of Faurisson’s academic freedom to challenge the inherited account of the Holocaust, and one thing had led to another. Entitled “Some Elementary Commentaries on the Right to the Freedom of Speech,” Chomsky reviewed the reasons why he had signed the 1979 petition, and dismissed the outcry that had resulted from it. He stated that he had often signed petitions on behalf of people whose ideas he found detestable--Russian dissidents who supported American policies in Indochina--and observed that in those cases no-one had raised an objection. “If someone had, I would have regarded him with the same contempt that those who denounce the petition in favour of Faurisson’s right deserve, and for the same reasons.” Then Chomsky went on to contrast the freedom-loving practice in the United States

with the stifling intellectual climate in France. Back home, he proudly stated, Arthur Butz (“whom one may consider the American equivalent of Faurisson”) was not subjected to harassment, negationists had not been hindered in running an international conference, and the American Civil Liberties Union had defended the right of neo-Nazis to march through the largely Jewish town of Skokie. The French, in other words, had much to learn.

In his final paragraph he addressed the tricky question of Faurisson’s alleged antisemitism. “Let it be said that even if Faurisson were a rabid antisemite or a fanatic Nazi-supporter--and these are accusations that are levelled against him in letters that I have received and for which there is no space here to cite in detail--that has absolutely no bearing on his legitimacy of the defence of his civil rights. On the contrary, that would make the defence of these rights even more necessary since, once again, and for this there is evidence for many years, and even centuries, it is exactly the right to express the most dreadful ideas freely that must be defended most rigorously.” Yet, in the end, Chomsky said that Faurisson was really a kind of “relatively apolitical liberal.” Chomsky ended his preface with questioning the past attitude of Faurisson’s critics to the French war in Indochina, or to Stalinism. The implication was obvious: they were engaged in selective indignation.

The Chomsky preface initiated a second wave of publicity for Faurisson, which led, among other things, to a radio interview on December 17, 1980. Faurisson said, among many other things, that the alleged Holocaust was a historical lie that served a huge political and financial swindle that benefited the State of Israel at the expense of the German and Palestinian peoples. This statement led to Faurisson’s indictment under France’s Race Relations Law. At the same time Faurisson was also indicted under Article 382 of the Civil Code for willfully distorting history. Finally Faurisson faced a libel suit initiated by the French historian Léon Poliakov, whom Faurisson had accused of fabricating his sources with reference to the Gerstein report. The first two trials cer-

tainly put Faurisson in the position of the Dreyfusian underdog persecuted by the system, and brought him much publicity, and even sympathy. Absorbing all of Faurisson's energies to remain out of prison, the trials generated, however, not much new negationist "scholarship," and hence I will limit myself to the observation that Faurisson was convicted in each case.

By the mid 1980s Faurisson finally emerged from his legal troubles. By now he had become a very well-known figure. His theories had even led a book-length consideration of the issue by the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, of which I quote here one of the more salient passages. "I have analyzed thousands of documents. I have tirelessly pursued specialists and historians with my questions. I have tried in vain to find a single former deportee capable of proving to me that he had really seen, with his own eyes, a gas chamber" (Faurisson in Pierre Vidal-Naquet, 1981:81) To have "really seen with his own eyes" a gas chamber would be the condition which gives one authority to say that it exists and to persuade the unbeliever. Yet it is still necessary to prove that the gas chamber was used to kill at the time it was seen. The only acceptable proof that it was used to kill is that one died from it. But if one is dead, one cannot testify that it is on account of the gas chamber.--The plaintiff [Faurisson] complains that he has been fooled about the existence of gas chambers, fooled that is, about the so-called Final Solution. His argument is: in order for a place to be identified as a gas chamber, the only eyewitnesses I will accept would be a victim of this gas chamber; now, according to my opponent, there is no victim that is not dead; otherwise, this gas chamber would not be what he or she claims it to be. There is, therefore, no gas chamber."

Published in newspapers, books by supporters, neutral observers and opponents, Faurisson's theory that Auschwitz had not been an extermination camp, and that the gas chambers were a legend fabricated to extort money from the Germans, had become part of public discourse.

It is therefore not surprising that when, in 1984, the Canadian- German publisher Ernst Zündel faced prosecution for Holocaust denial, he turned to Faurisson for help.

Zündel is the author of various neo-Nazi books with such tantalizing titles as *The Hitler We Loved and Why* and publisher of a range of negationist publications that included Thies Christophersen's *The Auschwitz Lie*, and Richard Verrall's (alias Richard Harwood) *Did Six Million Really Die?* This book began with the claim that it offered "irrefutable evidence that the allegation that 6 million Jews died during the Second World War, as a direct result of official German policy of extermination, is utterly unfounded." The Holocaust, in short, was a "most colossal piece of fiction and the most successful of deceptions."

In 1983 the Holocaust survivor Sabina Citron issued a private complaint against Zündel, who was charged under section 177 of the Criminal Code of Canada for wilfully publishing statements that he knew to be false and cause injury to a public interest. The charge concerned Zündel's activity as the author and publisher of *The West, War and Islam*, and his publishing of *Did Six Million Die?* The Crown assumed the carriage of the charge, and in 1984 indicted Zündel. In early 1985 Zündel was tried in the District Court of Ontario. District Court Judge Hugh Locke presided, attorney Peter Griffiths represented the Crown, and attorney Douglas Christie acted on behalf of Zündel. From the very beginning, two issues were central: the first was that of free speech, the second one Harwood's claim that the Holocaust was a hoax. The latter argument centred on Auschwitz, which is no surprise considering that Faurisson organized Zündel's 10-men research team. Throughout the trial the defence tried to make the case that no gassings had taken place in Auschwitz, and that therefore Harwood's book did not contain false statements.

Faurisson had cast himself in the role as an expert witness for the defense. In court, he claimed that the War Refugee Board report was one of “the three pillars of the story of the gas chamber.” Consequently, it was his job to demolish its credibility. Christie asked Faurisson why he attached no credence to the report. “[Defense Counsel]: “Now, in respect to this W.R.B. Report, you say because of the drawings respecting the gas chambers that are in the W.R.B. Report, and that in relation to the plans you found; is that right?” [Faurisson]: “Yeah.” Q.: “Any other reason why you say we should not believe the W.R.B. Report of Dr. Vrba and others?” A.: “The plan of Auschwitz, the plan of the crematorium.” Q.: “What about them?” A.: “They do not--they are nothing.” Q.: “What do you mean, they’re nothing?” A.: “When you see the reality of the place...” Q.: “Yes.” A.: “...It does not stand, that’s all. When you see on the same level a gas chamber, then a track to put the people, the bodies in the furnaces, and when you see that in fact this place which was a mortuary was underground, that you had a little lift, and on the--at the other level you had the furnaces...” Q.: “Yes.” A.: “...And the furnaces are not at all like they have been drawn by Dr. Vrba, and he said...” Q.: “What do you conclude from that, doctor?” A.: “I conclude that it is not exact.” Q.: “What do you conclude about the author of that, if he says it is exact? A.: “I say, ‘You say something which is not exact.’” Q.: “All right. So is there any other reason why we should not believe the W.R.B. Report?” A.: “Yes, because, for example, you have the report of the Polish major.” Q.: “Yes, which is part of the W.R.B. Report? A.: “Yes, I remember that, that there are many things; this Polish major says that the people were gassed by a hydrocyanic bomb.” After a diversion on the statement of another witness, Christie asked Faurisson if he had any other reasons to say that the War Refugee Board report should not be considered credible. He answered: “I think it’s sufficient for me.”

A couple of days earlier, one of the authors of the War Refugee Board report, Rudi Vrba, had testified for the prosecution. In cross-examination by Zündel’s defense counsel Christie, Vrba had given the following

explanation when challenged on the reliability of the drawings.

“Mr.Christie: “How do you explain the fact that you’ve drawn on the diagram that I showed you every crematorium the same shape in 1944, when you drew the diagram upon your escape?” A.: “Because I had only two days to write the whole report, and to try to depict the crematoria. There was a great urgency with that plan, because the objective of the plan was to get it to Hungary and to use this whole report towards the Hungarian Jews of imminent deportation. Under that conditions I didn’t lose much time with details like what is the difference between Krematorium I and II and Krematorium II and III, but I limited myself to depict the position of the gas chambers and crematoria [on] one side, and the geographic position of the whole murderous complex on the other side.” Q: “Sure. I now produce and show to you a diagram which came from, I suggest, your War Refugee Report of 1944 in which you depicted a crematoria. Correct?” A.: “That’s right.” Q.: “Is it accurate?” A.: “This I cannot say. It was said that as we were not in the large crematoria, we reconstructed it from messages which we got from members of the Sonderkommando working in the crematorium, and therefore, that approximately how it transpired in our mind, and in our ability to depict what we have heard.”

Prosecutor Peter Griffiths came back to Vrba’s statement when he cross-examined Faurisson. He asked the French professor if he had been in court during Vrba’s testimony. “[Faurisson]: “Yes. Yes.” Q.: “And did you hear Dr. Vrba say that when he drew those maps they weren’t meant to be architectural drawings but to give an idea of what was there?” A.: “Yes, yes.” Q.: “Does that change your opinion at all? A.: “It doesn’t change my opinion because it is like when he said that it was -- he used a Latin expression--licence as a poetarium.” Q.: “Poetic licence.” A.: “Poetic licence.” Q.: “For those of us who are not classical scholars.” A.: “So he used this expression, and I don’t think that it explains me anything of what he said in “I Cannot Forgive.” The same thing when he says, you see, it’s not the work of an architect. It doesn’t

change anything in substance, because when he says there were four-- nine ovens with four opening, they were around the chimney, all was on the same ground, there is a series of fantastic errors.” This was the sum-total of Faurisson’s ability to apply the “Ajax Method” to the War Refugee Board report.

On Faurisson’s suggestion, the defence had engaged Dr. William Lindsey, who had worked as a chemist for DuPont. Lindsey had been in Auschwitz where he had made a cursory examination of the gas chamber of crematorium 1, and he had studied the German documentation of Zyklon B. In negationist circles he was considered with respect since his publication of an article in the *Journal of Historical Review* entitled “Zyklon B, Auschwitz, and the Trial of Dr. Bruno Tesch.” In this article, Lindsey had argued that the allies had originally “invented” the Holocaust during the war as part and parcel of the usual atrocity propaganda, and that, after the war, they had decided to continue to push that story, against all evidence to the contrary, to cover up their own misdeeds and create a foundation for post-war allied solidarity. “With no “Holocaust” to take their place in the columns of the world’s newspapers, the many surreptitious, undercover activities, plans and responsibilities of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his proto-United Nations conspirators prior to, during and after the war--today still too-little publicized--would have come under immediate, murderous, and lasting scrutiny. This would have resulted in the United Nations wartime charges and the (still-vulnerable) “integrity” of this organization being ripped asunder in a manner which would have made the revelations about the Allied lies found in the World War I Bryce Committee Report on propaganda charges look by comparison like reports on a love feast. If the many plans already formulated diplomatically and formally or informally in war conferences were to be fully, irreversibly implemented as the planners wished, the “New” United Nations organization would have to meet the full support of those who might otherwise strongly oppose it. The wartime “atrocity propaganda” charges made

by the victors to inflame their soldiers and citizenry, and to justify and condone their own use of progressively more violent, ruthless measures against Germany and Japan, *simply had to be sustained after the war.*”

On paper, Lindsey showed the very kind of eloquence and argumentation which attracted Zündel, and he also seemed to know a decent amount about hydrogen cyanide in general, and Zyklon B in particular. But, as an expert witness, Lindsey’s performance was not very satisfactory. When Christie asked if he believed that either 2.5 million or even 1 million people had been gassed in the crematoria, Lindsey answered that “I find it, from my point of view, I find it is absolutely impossible to believe that. The method as described, the rate at which they can burn these bodies and carry out the gassing procedure, I find it’s impossible.” In the witness stand Lindsey showed very little eloquence, and contrary to the impression he had given in the many notes that accompanied his article, Lindsey proved unable to back up his opinions with demonstrable scientific facts, and therefore his testimony had failed to satisfy Faurisson’s demands. The case ended with Zündel’s conviction for publishing *Did Six Million Die?*, And he was sentenced to a prison term of fifteen months.

Despite Zündel’s conviction, Holocaust deniers celebrated the trial, soon to be known in their own circles as “The Great Holocaust Trial,” as a watershed. First of all, it had given them a very public platform, comparable to that which Faurisson had occupied in the late 1970s in France. Since then, Holocaust deniers had sought to engage Holocaust scholars in an open debate on the issues that divided them. Arguing that their “revisionist” or “heterodox” interpretation of the Holocaust is as legitimate as what they term the “exterminationist” or “orthodox” approach, they seek legitimacy by becoming a partner in discussion. Yet they did not get the opportunity because Holocaust scholars realized that there was no debating with people who are, in Lipstadt’s words, “contemptuous of the very tools that shape any honest debate:

truth and reason. Debating them would be like trying to nail a glob of jelly to the wall.” And so the examinations and cross-examinations of the expert witnesses of both sides took the place of the scholarly debate. For this very reason Faurisson, who had unsuccessfully called for a public debate, welcomed the trial “where the two sides found themselves face to face before a judge and a jury.” Therefore Zündel’s legal defeat could still be re-interpreted as a resounding victory for the negationist cause. “For the first time in modern history, the consensus reality most accurately described as Exterminationism, was tested and challenged in a court of law,” one of Zündel’s supporters claimed. Zionists, Holocaust historians, and the public at large, had been shown to have no answer to “the revisionist revelations within the Great Holocaust Trial.” Instead of addressing the “radical questions [the trial] has raised and the bedrock of previously censored facts it has unearthed,” those who pushed the Holocaust Hoax had only turned up “the volume on their hysterics.” “How pathetic they are, and how doomed to defeat. Slinking away from debate, hiding behind a judge’s robes and the scene-flats of tinsel town, the “Holocaust” hoaxers have an inevitable appointment with destiny. The seeds of their denouement were planted by Ernst Christof Friedrich Zündel, son of Swabian lumberjacks and peasants....On a snowy Sunday, on an eve of his judicial ordeal, Ernst announced to a small circle of friends, “When this trial is over, the ‘Holocaust’ hoax will be known as ‘Before Zündel and After Zündel.’” The proof of that prophecy lies not only in the head-spinner of Reagan at Bitburg, but in the renaissance of enthusiasm, solidarity and determination that has arisen among the rapidly-swelling ranks of revisionists world-wide, who are coming out of seclusion to form an unbeatable coalition of *activist* truth-seekers, eager to confront nothing less than the mind-polluters and enslavers of humanity.”

On appeal the ruling against Zündel was overturned on procedural grounds and a new trial was ordered, all who were to be involved in the second trial knew exactly what was to come. While there was a change

in the cast of characters who were to appear on the bench and represent the crown--District Court Judge Ron Thomas was to preside, and John Pearson and Catherine White were to conduct the prosecution--Christie was to represent Zündel again, and, as it became soon clear, Faurisson was once more to head the research team. Lindsey was not to be asked to testify in the second trial.

IX The Leuchter Report

“I see nobody on the road,” said Alice. “I only wish *I* had such eyes,” the King remarked in a fretful tone. “To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too.”

According to his own account, Fred Leuchter had never heard of Ernst Zündel, Robert Faurisson, or Holocaust denial until one morning in early 1988. “Like all American children born during and after World War II, I was taught about the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis on the Jews. By the time I had reached college, I had no reason to disbelieve any of my education, except that I had some problems swallowing the numbers of decedents, said to total better than six million persons. But there it stopped. I believed in the Nazi genocide. I had no reason to disbelieve. Some twenty-four years later, a very believing engineer sat at his desk working one snowy January afternoon in 1988, when the telephone rang. This very believing engineer was about to receive a very shocking history lesson which would cause him to question that fifty-year-old Holocaust lie and the application of that lie to generations of children. “Hello, this is Robert Faurisson”--and that very believing engineer would believe no more.”

The idea to engage an engineer to “prove” the Auschwitz gas chambers to be a hoax was not new. As we have seen, Arthur R. Butz had done his best more than ten years earlier by studying the material then available to him in Evanston, and Robert Faurisson had made a big issue of it in his writings from 1978 onwards, when he had become convinced that a comparison between the “alleged” gas chambers of Auschwitz

and gas chambers used for the execution of those condemned to death in various American states would yield great results. When he began to prepare for the Second Zündel Trial, Faurisson suggested that Zündel approach Bill Armontrout, Warden of the Missouri State Penitentiary in Jefferson City, Missouri. Armontrout's prison included a gas chamber operated by cyanide gas. Constructed in 1939, it had been used 39 times. Zündel's legal aide Barbara Kulaszka wrote Armontrout, and the latter responded in a letter of January 13, 1988. "I received your letter regarding Queen vs. Zündel and the testimony of an expert witness dealing with execution by "gas chambers". I have considerable knowledge in that area, however, I suggest you contact Mr. Fred Leuchter, 108 Bunker Hill Street, Boston, MA 02192, home telephone number 617-322-0104. Mr. Leuchter is an engineer specializing in gas chambers and executions. He is well versed in all areas and is the only consultant in the United States that I know of."

Faurisson had found the man he had been looking for. After a few initial telephone conversations, and two trips of Faurisson to Boston, Leuchter left with Carolyn, his wife of two weeks, to Toronto to meet Zündel and his defence team. "Two days of lengthy meetings followed, during which I was shown photos of the alleged German gas chambers in Poland, German documents and Allied aerial photographs. My examination of this material led me to question whether these alleged gas chambers were, in fact, execution facilities. I was asked if I would go to Poland and undertake a physical inspection and forensic analysis resulting in a written evaluation of these alleged execution gas chambers, some at places I had never even heard of." Leuchter agreed, and left for Poland on February 25, accompanied by his wife, a draughtsman, a video-cameraman, an interpreter, and, "in spirit," Zündel and Faurisson, "who for obvious reasons could not accompany us in person, but who nevertheless were with us every step of the way." The party returned on March 3, having spent three days in Auschwitz and half a day in Majdenek. In those camps Leuchter studied the lay-out of

the crematoria--or better of what remained of them--and illegally took various samples of the brickwork and plaster, which he brought back to the United States to be analyzed by the Alpha Analytical Laboratories in Ashland, Massachusetts on residual cyanide content.

Back home, Leuchter wrote a report entitled *An Engineering Report on the Alleged Execution Gas Chambers at Auschwitz, Birkenau and Majdanek Poland*, which Christie submitted to the court. The crown successfully challenged, however, Leuchter's credentials. Leuchter admitted that his formal education was in the humanities, that he had no engineering license, and that he had no expertise regarding chemistry, toxicology or incineration. As a result, Judge Thomas ruled that the Leuchter report could not be admitted as evidence. Leuchter, however, was allowed to testify on a very narrow range of issues: his observations of the camps, his taking of the samples, and the issue of the gas chambers. Yet while the jury never saw the report, Irving did, and as he testified, it led to his conversion to negationism. In fact, he was so enthusiastic that he became its English publisher. And so we will consider it in some detail.

Let us first of all allow Leuchter to present his methodology and conclusion. He used, as he wrote, a seven-step approach:

“

1. A general background study of the available material.
2. An on-site inspection and forensic examination of the facilities in question which included the taking of physical data (measurements and construction information) and a considered removal of physical sample material (brick and mortar) which was returned to the United States for chemical analysis.
3. A consideration of recorded and visual (on-site) logistic data.
4. A compilation of the acquired data.
5. An analysis of the acquired information and comparison of this information with known and proven design, procedural and logistic information and requirements for the design, fabrication and operation of actual gas chambers and crematories.
6. A consideration of the chemical analysis of the materials acquired on site.
7. Conclusions based on the acquired evidence. ”

In a section entitled “Synopsis and Findings,” Leuchter summarized the results of his seven--stepped approach as follows: “After a study of the available literature, examination and evaluation of the existing facilities at Auschwitz, Birkenau and Majdanek, with expert knowledge of the design criteria for gas chamber operation, an investigation of crematory technology and an inspection of modern crematories, the author finds no evidence that any of the facilities normally alleged to be execution gas chambers were ever used as such, and finds, further, that because of the design and fabrication of these facilities, they could not have been utilized for execution gas chambers. Additionally, an evaluation of the crematory facilities produced conclusive evidence that contradicts the alleged volume of corpses cremated in the generally alleged time frame. It is, therefore, the best engineering opinion of the author that none of the facilities examined were ever utilized for the execution of human beings and that the crematories could not have supported the alleged work load attributed to them.”

Before we go into a detailed discussion, it is good to note two things. The first is the very limited research he did before he left for Poland. During his testimony during the trial, he told the court that he reviewed some parts of Hilberg's *Destruction of the European Jews*, a De-gesch document on how to handle Zyklon-B which had been submitted as evidence in the Nuremberg Trials (NT-9912), a Dupont flyer on safety when handling its own brand of hydrocyanide, and some negationist literature, among which was the article by Lindsey on the Trial of Bruno Tesch, an article by a certain Friedrich Paul Berg on German Delousing Chambers, and Arthur Butz's *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*.

The second issue is that Leuchter did not attach too much significance to his samples. When Pearson asked him "what percentage of your conclusions is based on these conclusions you draw from the cyanide traces?" Leuchter answered: "Ten per cent." "[Pearson]: "What other-- what are the other foundations for your conclusion?" [Leuchter]: "The other foundations are that the facilities that I looked at were physically not designed and could not have been operations as gas chambers." Q.: "And what do you rely on for that conclusion?" A.: "I rely on my knowledge of gas chamber construction and design." Q.: "So you rely on your knowledge and experience as somebody constructing gas chambers in the United States for the purposes of executing one person as humanly as possible with as less danger to other people as possible." A.: "Partially." Q.: "Well, that's your only experience, isn't it?" A.: "It's my only experience at constructing gas chambers. I don't believe anyone has had any experience constructing larger gas chambers that took more than two people. But, the--" Q.: "Did you read the testimony of the commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höss?" A.: "I did." Q.: "Okay. So, you've told us about your experience and you said that the hydrogen traces account for ten percent of your conclusion. What per cent of your conclusion is your experience in the construction of modern gas chambers?" A.: "Twenty, maybe thirty percent." Q.: "Okay. What else is

there then, please?" A.: "Good engineering design in terms of building structure, air moving equipment, plumbing equipment that would be utilized to handle the air and mechanical equipment that would be utilized to introduce gas and gas carriers into a structure." Q.: "And what percentage of your opinion is based on that?" A.: "Fifty or sixty percent." Q.: "And that is all based on the assumption that the physical plant presently at that location in Poland is what was there in 1942, '43, '44 and '45. Is that right?" A.: "That is correct." "

Given the fact that Leuchter himself based ninety percent of his conclusion on considerations of engineering, we do well to follow his cue, and concentrate on his observations as an engineer. I will provide first of all the full passage that contains his main observations on the gas chambers, and then analyze the various statements it contains separately. "Bunkers 1 and 2 are described in Auschwitz State Museum literature as converted farm houses with several chambers and windows sealed. These do not exist in their original condition and were not inspected. Kremas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are described historically and on inspection were verified to have been converted mortuaries or morgues connected and housed in the same facility as crematories. The on-site inspection of these structures indicated extremely poor and dangerous design for these facilities if they were to have served as execution gas chambers. There is no provision for gasketed doors, windows or vents; the structures are not coated with tar or other sealant to prevent leakage or absorption of gas. The adjacent crematories are a potential danger of explosion. The exposed porous brick and mortar would accumulate the HCN and make these facilities dangerous to humans for several years. Krema I is adjacent to the S.S. Hospital at Auschwitz and has floor drains connected to the main sewer of the camp--which would allow gas into every building at the facility. There were no exhaust systems to vent the gas after usage and no heaters or dispersal mechanism for the Zyklon B gas to be introduced or evaporated. The Zyklon B was supposedly dropped through roof vents and put in

through windows--not allowing for the even distribution of gas or pellets. The facilities are always damp and not heated. As stated earlier, dampness and Zyklon B are not compatible. The chambers are too small to physically contain the occupants claimed and the doors all open inward, a situation which would inhibit removal of the bodies. With the gas chambers fully packed with occupants, there would be no circulation of the HCN within the room. Additionally, if the gas eventually did fill the chamber over a lengthy time period, those throwing Zyklon B in the roof vents and verifying the death of the occupants would die themselves from exposure to HCN. None of the alleged gas chambers were constructed in accordance with the design for delousing chambers which were effectively operating for years in a safe manner. None of these chambers were constructed in accordance with the known and proven designs of facilities operational in the United States at that time. It seems unusual that the presumed designers of these alleged gas chambers never consulted or considered the United States technology, the only country then executing prisoners with gas."

Let us consider this central statement sentence by sentence. "Kremas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are described historically and on inspection were verified to have been converted mortuaries or morgues connected and housed in the same facility as crematories."

The sentence does not make any sense. I presume that Leuchter meant to write "[The alleged gas chambers of] Kremas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are described historically and on inspection were verified to have been converted mortuaries or morgues connected and housed in the same facility as crematories." If this is what he meant, and I cannot imagine any other possible explanation for why he wrote what he wrote, we must ask how he had determined "on inspection" that all these alleged gas chambers had been morgues. While he could have done so safely in crematorium 1, where the space is still available for inspection, and while he could have inferred from the underground position of the alleged gas chambers of crematoria 2 and 3 that these most likely would

have been designed as morgues, and while he would have found evidence in the blueprints provided by Faurisson that these places had indeed been designated as morgues (*Leichenkeller*), he could not have come to that conclusion studying the remains of crematoria 4 and 5. First of all virtually nothing is left of these structures except concrete slabs and some low walls reconstructed after the war, and the blueprints of these buildings do not show any designation of gas chambers as morgues. So it is unclear on the basis of what evidence he was able to come to a verification in the case of crematoria 4 and 5.

“The on-site inspection of these structures indicated extremely poor and dangerous design for these facilities if they were to have served as execution gas chambers,” Leuchter claimed. “There is no provision for gasketed doors, windows or vents; the structures are not coated with tar or other sealant to prevent leakage or absorption of gas.” It is a mystery how Leuchter, on the basis of the remains of the crematoria, could have come to this statement. With the exception of crematorium 1, the other four crematoria are merely rubble, a fact which Leuchter admitted in cross-examination, and which he also observed in the paper he presented at the Ninth International Revisionist Conference in 1989. Simply stated, there is simply not enough evidence remaining to establish if there were, or not, the gasketed doors, windows or vents. There is, however enough left to see that the walls had been plastered: in 1990 the forensic scientists of the Institute of Forensic Research in Cracow used plaster samples from the gas chambers of crematoria 2 and 3 as the basis for their analysis of residual cyanide. Yet, undeterred by all of this, Leuchter had no hesitation to determine on the basis of the few remains of the gas chamber of crematorium 2 that the walls of that room had been rough, unsealed brick and mortar, and that those walls that had never been painted. This was important because, if the wall had been coated with tar or painted, the bricks that remained would have been protected from the hydrogen cyanide, and it would have been impossible for a chemical reaction to occur

between the hydrogen cyanide and the brick and mortar. But because he, or at least Faurisson, had aimed to establish that the absence of residual cyanide in the bricks pointed to the fact that no hydrogen cyanide had been used in those rooms, he had to postulate *a priori* that the walls had not been coated or painted. However, as we have seen, the remains of the rooms do not support such an assumption.

“The adjacent crematories are a potential danger of explosion,” Leuchter observed. His reasoning was based on the fact that hydrogen cyanide is combustible, and that because the gas chambers were located not too far from the incineration ovens, there ought to have been a danger for explosion. Yet during cross-examination Leuchter had to admit that hydrogen cyanide became combustible at 60,000 parts per million, and that it was lethal at 300 parts per million, that is at 0.5 percent of the combustion point. “ Q.: “And I want to ask you about your answer to me. I said it takes a higher concentration of hydrogen cyanide to exterminate insects than it does to kill human beings. You said no. We go to the Degesch manual and it says that it requires twenty times as much to kill beetles as to kill rats and it takes three times as much to kill rats [than] it does to kill humans.” A.: “Maybe it depends upon the insects. Most of the work that I’ve been looking at, they’ve been killing lice and ticks. And their recommendation for general fumigation purposes is three thousand per million.” Q.: “What is twenty times 833 parts per million?” A.: “What is twenty times 833 parts per million?” Q.: “Right.” A.: “16,600.” Q.: “16,600. So what Degesch are saying, the people who make the product, is that if you want to kill beetles, you should have a concentration of--of what, sir?” A.: “16,600, apparently.” Q.: “Right, And it takes three hundred parts per million to kill a human being in a matters of minutes?” A.: “Or more.” Q.: “In a matter of minutes.” A.: “Twenty minutes, fifteen minutes, yes.” Q.: “Right. And here they’re talking about a time of exposure from 2 to 72 hours, right?” A.: “Right.” Q.: “Now, you gave us as a conclusion about the danger of explosion, didn’t you?” A.: “Yes.” Q.: “This was a big

factor in your mind, this possibility of explosion. Did you look at the Degesch manual when it talked about inflammability?" A.: "I'm looking at it now, counsellor." Q.: "Page five?" A.: "Yes." Q.: "'Liquid HCN,' that is hydrocyanic acid, right?" A.: "Correct." Q.: "... *Burns like alcohol. Aaseous [H]CN forms an explosive mixture with air under certain conditions. The lower explosion limit, however, lies far above the concentration used in practical fumigation work.*" So, they tell us that if we're going to exterminate beetles, we have to have a concentration of 16,600 and they tell us if we have a concentration of 16,600, the lower explosion limit lies far above that concentration." A.: "The lower explosion limit is six per cent." Q.: "And what's six percent?" A.: "Six thousand." Q.: "Isn't it sixty thousand, sir?" A.: "Correct. Sixty thousand." Q.: "Sixty thousand parts per million of air. Right?" A.: "Correct, but you must understand that at the Zyklon-B material, when the gas is being given off, you have a percentage per volume of air of ninety to one hundred per cent. That means you have almost pure hydrogen cyanide at the carrier." Q.: "At the point where the Zyklon-B is vapourizing, I agree, you have a ninety-nine per cent concentration level. But how far did you tell us these ovens were from the chamber we are talking about?" A.: "150, 160 feet." Q.: "And doesn't gas diffuse, sir?" A.: "It may or it may not." Q.: "And what would its concentration be 150 or 160 feet away?" A.: "I have no idea and no one could answer that question for you." Q.: "Right, you don't know, do you?" A.: "Most people would tell you it's very dangerous." And thus Pearson effectively and publically demolished Leuchter's argument that there would have been a danger of explosion, as the concentration used in the gas chambers was around 300 parts per million., that is at 0.5 per cent. Irving, who was to testify the following day, was in the audience and watched it all. It obviously did not leave an impression.

"The exposed porous brick and mortar would accumulate the HCN," Leuchter wrote in his report, "and make these facilities dangerous to humans for several years." Yet in the trial he admitted that hydrogen cyanide had only a very short life--a few days at best, and that the only

way it would remain in the walls was if the cyanide would combine with iron present in brick or mortar to make the harmless pigment ferro-ferri cyanide, also known as Prussian blue.

“Krema I is adjacent to the S.S. Hospital at Auschwitz,” Leuchter observed, and he continued to assert that it “has floor drains connected to the main sewer of the camp--which would allow gas into every building at the facility.” He is right in observing a floor drain in the former gas chamber of crematorium 1. Yet there is no way in which he could positively determine if first of all this drain was “connected” to the main sewer of the camp, and second of all if the war-time camp possessed a “main sewer” at all: the main survey of the Polish military base that was to become the *Stammlager*, drawn up in December 1939, indicates that the water supply was by means of outside pumps while outside latrines had to serve the soldiers’ needs. Projecting expectations about the usual infrastructure of American military installations to Polish military barracks in the 1930s does not show much historic sense. But even if the drain was connected to a main sewer, it would have been very unlikely that the hydrogen cyanide would have been able to travel from the gas chamber to other buildings. Hydrogen cyanide is very soluble in water. The water would dilute the hydrogen cyanide to such a degree that it would become a harmless solution to be dumped in the Sola river. Once dissolved in the water, the hydrogen cyanide would not evaporate again to (possibly) penetrate into other buildings.

“There were no exhaust systems to vent the gas after usage,” Leuchter observed. Prompted by Christie, Leuchter repeated this, according to him, crucial piece of evidence at various points during his testimony. Discussing crematorium 2, he stated that he did not find any capability to ventilate the alleged gas chamber. “[Christie]: ‘In this on-site inspection, did you find any roof vent capabilities as indicated on the various drawings that were given?’ [Leuchter]: ‘there was no ventilation capability for this facility at all. The door to the facility, the one door, as you

can see, goes into the main area of the building, and it should be remembered that morgue 2 and morgue 1 and morgue 3 were all [under]ground. They were in actuality a basement for the building. They were floor level and they were ground level and with no structure above them. To the right of the building where it says 'Crematory', that was a structure that was ground up and was one and a half storeys with a stack for the furnaces. Now, these-- both facilities, as I said, were underground. This was Underground. There was only one door going to the morgue at that time and absolutely no way of getting air into the facility. There was a second door down at this end with a stairway, and in my opinion there will be no way of adequately ventilating this building and it would take a very long time since the only way you could allow the gas to come out would be through the stairway. Since there were no other apertures, it wouldn't even make sense to put an exhaust fan in because there would be no way of getting air into the building, because there was no air intake at any point in the facility." Without a proper ventilation system, the basement of crematorium II could not have been used as a homicidal gas chamber. "[Christie]: "And can you tell us why you hold that opinion?" [Leuchter]: "Yes, essentially for the same reasons that I felt that the mortuary at Krema I was not an execution gas chamber. The building was not sealed with tar or pitch in any manner. There was no ventilation system. There was no means at all for introducing the Zyklon B gas. There was a story in something I read in some of the available literature that there was a hollow column that the materials would drop through. All of the columns was solid reinforced concrete." When, during cross-examination, Pearson confronted Leuchter with a letter written by the leader of the Auschwitz *Zentralbauleitung*, Karl Bischoff, which mentioned that Topf would proceed with "the installation in time for aeration [*Belüftung*] and ventilation [*Entlüftung*]" immediately when transport became available, Leuchter wrongly concluded that "this ventilation system was, in fact, the blower for the furnace. It had nothing to do with ventilating the alleged gas chamber area. Since Topf made it, we know they manufactured

furnace equipment, crematory equipment.” Yet the plans of the crematoria show that built in the walls of the gas chamber were ducts indicated in the drawings as “*Belüftung*” and “*Entlüftungskanal*.” The remains of this system can still be seen in the ruined east wall of the gas chamber of crematorium 3. Ignoring important evidence, and refusing to examine the blueprints in relation to the correspondence and the remains of the crematoria Leuchter had jumped to the wrong conclusion. There was a ventilation system.

If he had spent a little bit more time in Auschwitz, and consulted the archive of the camp, Leuchter would have been able to find independent confirmation in the testimony of Henryk Tauber, who had been a Sonderkommando in crematorium 2, and who had given testimony immediately after the war. “Besides that, in the gas chamber there were electric wires running along the two sides of the main beam supported by the central concrete pillars. The ventilation was installed in the walls of the gas chamber. Communication between the room and the ventilation installation proper was through small holes along the top and bottom of the side walls. The lower openings were protected by a kind of muzzle, the upper ones by whitewashed perforated metal plates. The ventilation system of the gas chamber was coupled to the ventilation ducts installed in the undressing room. This ventilation system, which also served the dissection room, was driven by electric motors in the roof space of the crematorium.” But Leuchter never even thought about cross-referencing his own observations, the German blueprints, and the testimonies of eye-witnesses. He could, for example, have found some use for the statements of the well-known Israeli artist Yehuda Bakon during the Eichmann trial. In 1943 the then fourteen-year-old Bakon had been imprisoned in the Czech family Camp in Birkenau, and there he had joined a squad of inmates who had to bring papers to be burned in the crematoria. As a result, he had been able to enter the buildings, and seen the gas chambers from within. In the summer of 1945, after his liberation, Bakon who was already

a talented draughtsman at the time drew various views of Auschwitz from memory. He showed them during his testimony. “ Attorney general: “What are you holding in your hand now?” Witness Bakon: “This is a view of the gas chambers and also Nos. 1 and 2 which were underground, and what one saw above. They looked like water sprinklers; I was curious and examined them closely. I saw there were no holes in them, this was just a sham; at first sight it seemed to be an actual shower-head. Above there were lights covered with wire, and in each gas chamber there were two pipes leading from the ceiling to the floor, and around them were four iron columns surrounded by strong wire. When the operation was over and the people were forced inside, the SS opened some device above, like a drainage pipe, and through it introduced Zyklon B.” Presiding Judge: “Did the gas remain in the middle of the chamber and spread from there?” Witness Bakon: “Yes.” Judge Raveh: “Is that what we see in the centre of the picture.” Witness Bakon: “Yes, there were two of these in each gas chamber in crematoria Nos. 1 and 2--that is to say, there were four; their dimensions were 40 x 40 centimetres; below were the ventilators and also holes for cleaning with water. Afterwards, when they dismantled the crematoria, we saw the ventilators separately.” Presiding Judge: “Were these air vents?” Witness Bakon: “Yes. There were several openings. One opening was for the purpose of ventilation and one for washing the floor.” Presiding Judge: “This drawing of the gas chamber will be marked T/1320.” Attorney general: “In order to make it quite clear, Mr. Bakon, what purpose did this ventilation serve?” Witness Bakon: “The ventilation made it possible for other people to enter at once.” Q.: “To ventilate the chamber after the killing?” A.: “Yes. The bodies were removed from the chamber, there was a lift there--actually it consisted only of boards 2 1/2 x 1 1/2 metres. I saw the lift on which they transferred the bodies to the top floor of that crematorium, from where there were rails of small trains with waggons, and they conveyed the bodies to the incinerators. I also saw the incinerators, and I remember that members of the Sonderkommando also showed me the crate in which they

collected the gold teeth, which were melted down into gold bars.” Q.: “What do you have before you now, in this picture?” [*Hands a picture to the witness.*] A.: “Crematoria 3 and 4--they were built in a different style--they were older.” Q.: “Are these the ones you mentioned in your earlier testimony?” A.: “Yes.” Q.: “At the end there is a small structure. What is that?” A.: “Here, there were two gas chambers, on the extreme right-hand side.” Attorney general: “I submit this to the Court.” Presiding Judge: “What does the arrow signify?” Witness Bakon: “The arrow points to the gas chambers, to the small structure containing the gas chambers.” ”

Leuchter did not consult the records of the Eichmann Trial, nor for that matter testimony given at other trials. During the cross-examination Pearson asked Leuchter why he did not consult any witnesses when he did his investigation. “ [Leuchter]: “I don’t know who I would speak to, sir, because I would submit that the person that I should speak to have would have to be someone who was operating the chamber. If I am to believe the literature, these people all died in the operation of the chamber.” Q.: “How about some of the people that cleared the bodies out of the chambers?” A.: “Well, from what I’ve been able to determine from most of the literature, these people are expendable and probably all deceased and were deceased shortly after the operation of the facility.”

The SS men who had been involved in the gassings had not been expendable, and Leuchter could have found some interesting testimony about the operation of the gas chambers from, for example, a well-known witness like Pery Broad, or a more obscure SS man like Hans Stark. Like Broad, Stark had been employed in the Auschwitz Political Department, better known as the “Camp Gestapo.” Stark provided during the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial useful evidence about the procedures in the Political Department, and the various ways of execution. One of these was gassing in crematorium 1. “As early as autumn 1941 gassings were carried out in a room in the small crematorium which

had been prepared for this purpose. The room held 200-250 people, had a higher-than-average ceiling, no windows and only a specially insulated door, with bolts like those of an airtight door. There were no pipes or the like which would lead the prisoners to believe that it was perhaps a shower room. In the ceiling there were openings of about 35 cm in diameter at some distance from each other. The room had a flat roof which allowed daylight in through the openings. It was through these openings that Zyklon B in granular form would be poured.” Stark participated in various of those gassings. Sometimes his business was to check the numbers. “About 200-250 Jewish men, women and children of all ages were standing at the crematorium. There may also have been babies there. There were a great many SS members present, though I could not say what their names were, plus the camp commandant, the Schutzhaftlagerführer, several Blockführer, Grabner and also other members of the Political Department. Nothing was said to the Jews. They were merely ordered to enter the gas-chamber, the door of which was open. While the Jews were going into the room, medical orderlies prepared for the gassing. Earth had been piled up against one of the external walls of the gassing room to ceiling height so that the medical orderlies could get on the roof of the room. After all the Jews were in the chamber the door was bolted and the medical orderlies poured Zyklon B through the openings.” One time Stark was ordered to pour Zyklon B into the room because only one medical orderly had shown up. It was essential, he claimed, that Zyklon B was poured simultaneously through both openings. “This gassing was also a transport of 200-250 Jews, once again men, women and children. As the Zyklon B--as already mentioned--was in granular form, it trickled down over the people as it was being poured in. They then started to cry out terribly for they now knew what was happening to them. I did not look through the opening because it had to be closed as soon as the Zyklon B had been poured in. After a few minutes there was silence.

After some time had passed, it may have been ten or fifteen minutes, the gas-chamber was opened. The dead lay higgledy-piggledy all over the place. It was a dreadful sight.”

Stark described the procedure at crematorium 1. In order to understand the slightly different arrangement at crematorium 2, Leuchter could have profited from Tauber’s testimony. “Crematorium 2 had a basement where there was an undressing room and a bunker, or in other words a gas chamber (Leichenkeller/corpse cellar)....The roof of the gas chamber was supported by concrete pillars running down the middle of its length. On either side of these pillars there were four others, two on each side. The sides of these pillars, which went up through the roof, were of heavy wire mesh. Inside this grid, there was another finer mesh and inside that a third of very fine mesh. Inside this last mesh cage there was a removable can that was pulled out with a wire to recover the pellets from which the gas had evaporated.”

These wire-mesh columns had been made in the camp metal workshop. One of the inmates employed there, the Pole Michael Kula, testified immediately after the war that he had made various metal parts for the Birkenau crematoria, including the four wire-mesh columns in the large gas chambers of crematoria 2 and 3. As we have seen, Tauber had described the three structures of ever finer mesh. Within the innermost column there was a removable can to pull after the gassing the Zyklon “crystals,” that is the porous silica pellets that had absorbed the hydrocyanide. Kula, who had made these columns, provided some technical specifications. “Among other things the metal workshop made the false showers intended for the gas chambers, as well as the wire-mesh columns for the introduction of the contents of the tins with Zyklon into the gas chambers. These columns were around 3 metres high, and they were 70 centimetres square in plan. Such a column consisted of 6 wire screens which were built the one within the other. The inner screen was made from 3 millimetre thick wire, fastened to iron corner posts of 50 by 10 millimeters. Such iron corner posts were on

each corner of the column and connected on the top in the same manner. The openings of the wire mesh were 45 millimeters square. The second screen was made in the same manner, and constructed within the column at 150 millimeters distance from the first. The openings of the second were around 25 millimeters square. In the corners these screens were connected to each other by iron posts. The third part of this column could be moved. It was an empty column with a square footprint of around 150 millimeters made of sheet zinc. At the top it was closed by a metal sheet, and at the bottom with a square base. At a distance of 25 millimetres from the sides of this columns were soldered tin corners supported by tin brackets. On these corners were mounted a thin mesh with openings of about one millimeter square. This mesh ended at the bottom of the column and from here ran in the [Verlaenderung] of the screen a tin frame until the top of the column. The contents of a Zyklon tin were thrown from the top on the distributor, which allowed for a equal distribution of the Zyklon to all four sides of the column. After the evaporation of the gas the whole middle column was taken out. The ventilation system of the gas chamber was in installed in the side walls of the gas chambers. The ventilation openings were hidden by zinc covers, provided with round openings.”

These wire mesh columns do not appear in the blueprints of the crematoria. The reason for this is easily explained: first of all they only became part of the building’s equipment relatively late in the construction process. Originally crematorium 2 had not been designed to be a site of mass murder, and the space labelled as “*Leichenkeller I*” had indeed been designed to serve as a morgue and not as a gas chamber. The “mother” set of blueprints of the building were drawn up in that first phase, and they remained the basis of the documentation after the building’s purpose had been expanded to include gassing. Furthermore the wire-mesh columns had no structural function in the building. They were, in fact, more like pieces of equipment attached to four of the seven structural columns that supported the roof (most likely

columns 1, 3, 5, and 7), and therefore there was no need to draw up a new set of blueprints after the decision had been made to insert them into the morgue. As pieces of equipment it was relatively easy to dismantle these columns after the cessation of gassings and before the demolition of the crematoria, which explains why Leuchter did not find any remains.

These columns were connected to small holes that penetrated the concrete ceiling of the gas chamber, which opened to four small “chimneys” for lack of a better word. These are visible on one of the photos of crematorium 2 taken by the SS during construction, the aerial photos taken by the Americans in 1944, and have been described by, amongst others, Henryk Tauber. “The undressing room and the gas chamber were covered first with a concrete slab then with a layer of soil sown with grass. There were four small chimneys, the openings through which the gas was thrown in, that rose above the gas chamber. These openings were closed by concrete covers with two handles.” Tauber also witnessed the way the Germans inserted the Zyklon through these small chimneys. “Through the window of the incineration room, I observed how the Zyklon was poured into the gas chamber. Each transport was followed by a vehicle with Red Cross markings which entered the yard of the crematorium, carrying the camp doctor, Mengele, accompanied by *Rottenführer* Scheimetz. They took the cans of Zyklon from the car and put them beside the small chimneys used to introduce the Zyklon into the gas chamber. There, Scheimetz opened them with a special cold chisel and a hammer, then poured the contents into the gas chamber. Then he closed the orifice with a concrete cover. As there were four similar chimneys, Scheimetz poured into each the contents of one of the smallest cans of Zyklon, which had yellow labels pasted right round them. Before opening the cans, Scheimetz put on a gasmask which he wore while opening the cans and pouring in the product. There were also other SS who performed this operation, but I have forgotten their names. They were specially designated for it and

belonged to the “*Gesundheitswesen*.” A camp doctor was present at each gassing. If I have mentioned Mengele, that is because I met him very often during my work. In addition to him, there were other doctors present during the gasings, like König, Thilo and a young, tall, slight doctor whose name I do not recall.” Today, these four small holes that connected the wire-mesh columns and the chimneys cannot be observed in the ruined remains of the concrete slab. Yet does this mean they were never there? We know that after the cessation of the gasings in the Fall of 1944 all the gassing equipment was removed, which implies both the wire-mesh columns and the chimneys. What would have remained would have been the four narrow holes in the slab. While there is not certainty in this particular matter, it would have been logical to attach at the location where the columns had been some form-work at the bottom of the gas chamber ceiling, and pour some concrete in the holes, and thus restore the slab.

“The Zyklon B was supposedly dropped through roof vents and put in through windows,” Leuchter observed, “not allowing for the even distribution of gas or pellets.” Leuchter attached great importance to the even distribution of the gas, and this could not be obtained by inserting the Zyklon at some points. In cross-examination he was challenged on this assumption, which also had led Leuchter to conclude elsewhere in the report that, on the basis of his calculation of the ideal air-flow requirement, a gas chamber of 2,500 square feet could only hold 278 people. “ [Pearson]: “Some of the calculations that you made were based on the executed person occupying nine square feet?” [Leuchter]: “That’s correct.” Q.: “How do you calculate that measurement?” A.: “The space required is determined by what’s necessary for air circulation and those figures are normally used by all air moving engineers throughout the world.” Q.: “So once again, we’re talking about figures that you would use in the United States in 1988 to conduct the execution of a condemned person. Is that right?” A.: “Yeah, or in 1810. It doesn’t matter when it is, the requirements for moving air have stayed

the same.” Q.: “But would you agree with me that if you want the person to die quickly, if you put a premium on executing the person quickly, you want to have as much flow of air as possible. If you’re not really concerned about how long it takes, the amount of time it takes for the air to flow, it isn’t as important. Would you agree?” A.: “Within reason.” Unlike the State of Missouri, which stipulates in one of its statutes that an execution by gas should take occur as quickly as possible, the SS were not bound by any statute or protocol to ease the suffering of their victims.

“The facilities are always damp and not heated.” Essential for Leuchter’s argument was that the gas chambers had been operated on low temperature. “We know that the facilities in question were operated at low temperatures,” he testified in court. “We know that there would have been a considerable amount of condensation of liquid hydrogen cyanide on the walls, floor and ceiling of these facilities.”

Leuchter was even prepared to testify that “these facilities were operated at zero degrees fahrenheit or near zero temperatures and perhaps below that.” It is not clear on the basis of what evidence Leuchter came to this conclusion. There is, in fact, ample evidence that the gas chambers were heated. One piece of anecdotal evidence was given by Yehuda Bakon during the Eichmann trial. In 1943 he had joined a group of youngsters who had to pull a cart, the so-called *Rollwagenkommando*. “Q. “Who gave you orders where the cart should go?” A. “The Blockälteste (block elder) always went with us and he knew what we had to do. Our tasks were quite varied: Sometimes we had to collect papers, sometimes we had to transfer blankets, sometimes we had to go to the women’s camp to which other people did not have access. With the Rollwagenkommando we went through all the camps of Birkenau, A, B, C, D, E and F, as well as the crematorium.” Q. “You went into the crematorium?” A. “Yes.” Q. “Did you see the crematorium from the inside?” A. “Yes. We had to take wooden logs that were in the vicinity of the crematorium for the fire. Sometimes these had to be taken for regular heat-

ing in the camps. And when we finished our work and it was cold, the Kapo of the Sonderkommando took pity on us and said: "Well, children, outside it is cold, warm yourselves in the gas chambers! There is nobody there." Q. "And you went to warm yourselves inside the gas chambers?" A. "Yes. Sometimes we went to warm ourselves in the *Kleidungskammer*, sometimes in the gas chambers. It sometimes happened that when we came to the crematorium, we were told: "You cannot enter now--there are people inside." Sometimes, it was in crematorium 3, after they had been burned, we took the ashes, and in winter the ashes were to be used for the road." Q. "Did you use human ashes to spread on the roads?" A. "Yes." Q. "For what purpose?" A. "So that people could walk on the road and not slip." There are also German documents that attest to the fact that the gas chamber was heated (a fact which, as I have pointed out above, strongly suggests that that room was *not* anymore to be used as a morgue. The most important is a letter the chief architect of Auschwitz, Karl Bischoff, sent to Topf on March 6, 1943. In it, Bischoff discussed the heating of morgue 1 of crematorium 2. "In accordance with your proposal, the department agrees that morgue 1 will be preheated with the air coming from the rooms with the 3 installations to generate the forced draught. The supply and installation of the necessary ductwork and ventilators must follow as soon as possible. As you indicate in your letter, the work should begin this week."

Both Bakon's testimony and Bischoff's letter demolish Leuchter's argument that the gas chamber of crematorium 2, and by implication of crematorium 3, was not heated.

"As stated earlier, dampness and Zyklon B are not compatible." For once, I have no complaint with Leuchter's assertion, yet it has become irrelevant.

“The chambers are too small to physically contain the occupants claimed and the doors all open inward, a situation which would inhibit removal of the bodies.” Surviving Sonderkommandos and Kommandant Höss claimed that the gas chambers of crematoria 2 and 3, which were 210 m² each, held up to 2,000 people at a time. This meant some nine to ten people per square meter. Leuchter categorically refused to accept the possibility that 2,000 could be crammed in such a space, but during cross-examination he had to admit that he could not back up his judgement. “ [Pearson]: “Have you ever put 2,000 people into a room?” [Leuchter] “No. But I’m sure I couldn’t get them into that room.” Q.: “You’ve never done it, you have not conducted any experiments but you’re sure. Is that what you’re saying?” A.: “That’s what I’m saying. I don’t believe anyone else has either.” Perhaps more important is the fact that Leuchter was simply wrong when he stated that the doors all open inward. There is no evidence in the rubble of crematoria 2 to 5 to come to any judgement if the doors opened one way or another. The blueprints that have been preserved in the archive of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oswiecim, however, directly and convincingly refute Leuchter’s assertion. Drawing BW (B) 30/12, which shows Walther Dejaco’s drawing for the modification of the entrance to the basement of crematoria 2 and 3, shows that the doors to the gas chamber, indicated here as “*L.[eichen] Keller 1*”] swing to the outside; drawing BW (B) 30b, which shows Walther Dejaco’s design for crematorium 4, shows that the doors to the gas chambers, located on the left of the plan but depicted on the right of the elevation, open again to the outside.

“With the gas chambers fully packed with occupants, there would be no circulation of the HCN within the room.” It is undoubtedly true that packing the gas chamber with people did not aid the rapid circulation of the hydrogen cyanide. Yet the design of the hollow, perforated columns did help to allow the gas to reach the higher reaches of the gas

chamber, where the air was not displaced by the bodies, and where the heavy panting of panicking 2,000 people, or less, would--so one would assume--cause some circulation.

“Additionally, if the gas eventually did fill the chamber over a lengthy time period, those throwing Zyklon B in the roof vents and verifying the death of the occupants would die themselves from exposure to HCN.” This is an odd sentence, as the adverb “eventually” suggests that even Leuchter assumes that it would take some time before the gas would reach the roof vents. Nevertheless, during his testimony Leuchter repeated his assertion that the SS men dropping the Zyklon-B through the roof vents would face real danger. “The gas would come back up while they were doing this and probably kill all of the personnel operating the facility.” Pearson did not accept this reasoning, and forced Leuchter to address this issue once more during cross examination. “[Pearson]: “Now, hydrogen cyanide is slightly lighter than air?” [Leuchter]: “that’s correct.” Q.: “It means it rises slowly?” A.: “Very slowly.” Q.: “very slowly. So this stuff you told us about people on the roof who dropped the gas down and how they would be committing suicide, it would take a matter of minutes before the gas got to them, wouldn’t it?” A.: “Unquestionably.” Q.: “So, if they closed the vent and got off the roof, there would be nothing to concern them, would there?” A.: “If they got off the roof. But at some point they have to do an inspection to determine whether the parties are deceased.” Q.: “They send in the Sonderkommandos to do that, sir, and they don’t care what happens to them.” A.: “Right, all right.” ” In fact, for this purpose the doors of the gas chambers were equipped with spyholes. Again, Tauber’s testimony is rather specific on this point. “Crematorium 2 had a basement where there was an undressing room and a bunker, or in other words a gas chamber (Leichenkeller/corpse cellar)....From the undressing room people went into the corridor through a door above which was hung a sign marked “*Zum Bade*”, repeated in several languages. I remember the [Russian] word “*banya*” was there too. From the

corridor they went through the door on the right into the gas chamber. It was a wooden door, made of two layers of short pieces of wood arranged like parquet. Between these layers there was a single sheet of material sealing the edges of the door and the rabbets of the frame were also fitted with sealing strips of felt. At about head height for an average man this door had a round glass peephole. On the other side of the door, i.e. on the gas chamber side, this opening was protected by a hemispherical grid. This grid was fitted because the people in the gas chamber, feeling they were going to die, used to break the glass of the peep-hole. But the grid still did not provide sufficient protection and similar incidents recurred.” Also experience helped in guessing when it was time to turn on the ventilators. After a few gassings the men operating the gas chambers knew how long it took how many people to die as the result of how much hydrogen cyanide.

“None of the alleged gas chambers were constructed in accordance with the design for delousing chambers which were effectively operating for years in a safe manner.” One wonders why the Germans would have bothered to use the design of delousing chambers for their gas chambers. First of all, the delousing chambers were designed to operate with very high concentrations of hydrogen cyanide--between 40 and 70 times the concentration the Germans used to kill humans in Birkenau--and these concentrations were applied for a couple of hours. Secondly, the delousing chambers were, as Leuchter observed, designed in such a way that it guaranteed the highest possible safety for its users whilst allowing for the greatest possible efficiency in the quick loading and unloading of the chamber. The issue of safety was of lesser importance in the gas chambers, as the Sonderkommando who entered the room were expendable. Furthermore efficiency in the filling of the room with living people and retrieving their bodies afterwards was less important in the case of the gas chamber. While in the case of the delousing chambers the rate-determining factor was the technology of the room itself, in the case of the gas chambers it was in

the cremation process which, invariably went considerably slower than the gassing. In other words, the delousing rooms were designed to operate more or less continuously with high doses of hydrogen cyanide, with relatively short periods of down-time in between, while the gas chambers were designed to operate for very short times with low doses of hydrogen cyanide, while remaining idle for extended periods of time.

“None of these chambers were constructed in accordance with the known and proven designs of facilities operational in the United States at that time. It seems unusual that the presumed designers of these alleged gas chambers never consulted or considered the United States technology, the only country then executing prisoners with gas.” It is obvious that, in late 1941 or early 1942, a letter from Kommandant Höss to the Warden of, let’s say, the Missouri State Penitentiary in Jefferson City, Missouri, which had been equipped with an state-of-the-art hydrogen cyanide gas chamber in 1939, would not have elicited a steady stream of collegial advice as to the design and operation of gas chambers. Furthermore, it is not clear why Höss would have bothered, as became clear in Leuchter’s cross examination. “[Pearson]: “Would you agree with me that the gassing process itself is not a very difficult or complex process? The difficulty arises in constructing chambers which meet the requirements of safety and humane execution.” [Leuchter]: “That’s probably true, yes.”

The fallacy of Leuchter’s reasoning, which went back to Faurisson, was the assumption that American gas chambers would be comparable with German gas chambers. First of all, in the case of the American types, all was designed to provide for a quick and, given the circumstances, “humane” execution that not only satisfies the sense of decency of the witnesses who, seated in an adjacent room equipped with air-sickness bags, can see all through a glass window, but also preempts a possible constitutional challenge on the grounds of “cruel and unusual” punishment. This means, in the case of gas chambers, that

everything is designed to introduce the gas immediately after the execution command is given, and to ensure that the concentration of gas in the room reaches quickly such a level that death follows immediately. Related to the necessary “constitutionality” of the American gas chambers and the irrelevance of this notion in the case of the Auschwitz killing installations is the fact that the former are, in a sense, only the last station in a long, ritualized path that takes the condemned a week to travel, and that provides both a sense of legality while dissolving at the same time any possibility of individual accountability. Michael Lesy wrote in his *The forbidden Zone* that, “[s]ince there’s no holy law to protect them, prison officials rely on a system of divided responsibilities.” “Procedures are so fragmented that no single person remains responsible. All actions are mediated by others or shared with other. Everything is done by administrative decree and court order, conveyed from person to person, down a chain of command and obedience: “I-did-what-I-did-because-he-did-what-he-did.” By the time a death sentence is carried out, it’s impossible to accuse any particular person of anything. In Georgia, murderers die, but no one man ever kills them.” The whole ritual develops on the understanding that it may be stopped, even a second before the final command, because of a last-minute stay of execution. The situation in Auschwitz could not have been more different.

We have now considered every word of the paragraph devoted to the Auschwitz gas chambers in the section entitled “Design and Procedures at the Alleged Execution Gas Chambers.” It is clear that almost all his engineering opinion concerning the crematoria at Auschwitz must be defined as uninformed rubbish. It is important here to remember that Leuchter attached great significance to his observations as an engineer: in fact, as he claimed in the Toronto court, 90% of his conclusion that no homicidal gassings could have taken place in the Auschwitz gas chambers were based on these observations.

Despite the fact that Leuchter adamantly asserted that the Auschwitz “facilities” could not have worked as gas chambers, he was in the end prepared to calculate how many people could have been killed in these spaces (I presume if they would have worked). “The alleged gas chamber in each of Kremas 2 and 3 had an area of 2500 sq. ft. This would accommodate 278 people based on the 9 square foot theory.” Leuchter assumed that it would take a week to ventilate the room as he had not found evidence of a ventilation system, and so, with a sleight of hand, the daily extermination capacity became a weekly one. Crematoria 2 and 3 had been in operation for a total of 84 and 72 weeks respectively, and thus Leuchter came to a maximum extermination capacity of 23,352 persons for crematorium 2 and 20,016 persons for crematorium 3. Using a similar approach, he concluded that the gas chambers of crematorium 4 could kill 209 people daily/weekly, and those of crematorium 5 could kill 570 on a daily thus weekly basis. As each of these had been in operation for 80 weeks, the maximum extermination capacity for crematorium 4 had been 16,720 people and crematorium 5 had been able to gas a total of 45,600 people. This gave a total of 105,688--a number that did not include the 6,768 people who could have been killed in crematorium I, or the people killed in Bunkers I and II--gassing installations for which Leuchter did not provide any data.

It is clear that Leuchter’s numbers are wrong. First of all if one refuses to assume that the gas chambers could be used only once a week, we come to a total of $7 \times 105,688 = 739,816$. If then one assumes instead of a density of one person per nine square feet a more realistic figure of one person per two square feet, then one comes to a killing capacity of above 3.3 million victims for the four crematoria of Birkenau as they operated between the Spring of 1943 to the fall of 1944. If one adds to this the killing capacity of crematorium I and Bunkers I and II, the figure becomes even higher, rising to at least 3.5 million people.

Leuchter did not only study the technology of the gas chambers. He also was prepared to act as an expert witness for the construction of incinerators. He wrote in his unique style that “a consideration of crematories, both old and new, must be made to determine the functionality of the German Kremas at accomplishing their attributed tasks.” It is important to note that, during cross-examination, Leuchter had to admit that he had no expert knowledge of crematories. “

[Pearson]: “Now, you devote in your report, one, two, three, four, five, six--seven paragraphs to gas chambers and you devote one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen--seventeen sections or paragraphs to crematoriums.” [Leuchter]: “I’m not sure that is entirely true, counsellor, because there’s information interspersed throughout this as necessary.

You’re simply going by the section headings and I would submit if you would read each section in each paragraph, you would see that the two are intertwined and there is information contained on gas chambers throughout.” Q.: “Well, unfortunately I haven’t been given an opportunity to read it so you’ll have to bear with me. I’m just going by the headings. What expertise do you have with designing crematoriums?” A.:

“Nothing in design, sir.” Q.: “All right. Do you operate a crematorium?”

A.: “No.” Q.: “What experience do you have with crematoriums?” A.: “I

made a determination before and after I began this project to apprise myself of crematorium design and operation. I consulted with a number of the crematorium manufacturers, I received data from these manufacturers on instruments that are used for cremation, and likewise, I visited two crematories and I watched the entire operation several times and the cremation of a number of corpses from the start of putting the corpses into the retort, until the bones were crushed and the ashes were put into the urn.” Q.: “You said both before and after you were retained. What made you look into this before you were retained?” A.: “There’s a misunderstanding there, counsellor. What I said before and after I went to Poland.” Q.: “All right. Sorry. So once again,

we’re talking about knowledge that you picked up since February when

you were retained, I will suggest on a part-time basis or while you were working on one of a number of projects that your company was engaged in. Is that right?" A.: "Most likely, yes." Q.: "And I suggest, sir, that that really doesn't give you the expertise required to give opinions and extrapolate with respect to crematoriums." A.: "Only to the extent, sir, that it is common and expected of an engineer that's dealing with any given problem to investigate the problem and then to investigate procedures relative to that problem." Q.: "Sir, you went to school in Massachusetts?" A.: "I did." Q.: "Do they give degrees of engineering in Massachusetts?" A.: Some schools do." Q. For instance, does MIT give out degrees in engineering?" A.: "It does." Q.: "You don't have a degree in engineering, do you?" A.: "No, I do not." Consequently, the court rejected Leuchter's qualifications as an expert witness of the design and construction of crematories.

Leuchter's lack of expertise did not prevent either Zündel nor Irving including Leuchter's observations on the Auschwitz crematoria and his conclusions regarding the total incineration capacity of these installations for the period that they were in operation. After a short historical introduction, in which he observed that Orthodox Judaism forbade cremation, he reviewed modern practices. "Earlier retorts were simply a drying or baking kiln and simply dried the human remains. Modern retorts of brick-lined steel actually blow fire from a nozzle onto the remains setting them afire, causing combustion and rapid burning.... These modern retorts or crematories burn at a temperature of 2000+°F, with an afterburner temperature of 1600°F. This high temperature causes the body to combust and consume itself, allowing for the burner to be shut down....At 2000°F or more with a 2500 cfm blowered air supply from the outside, modern retorts will cremate one corpse in 1.25 hours. Theoretically, this is 19.2 in a 24 hour period. Factory recommendations for normal operation and sustained use allow for three (3) or less cremations per day. Older oil, coal and coke furnaces with forced air (but no direct flame application) normally

took 3.5 to 4 hours for each corpse. Theoretically, this could allow for 6.8 corpses in a 24 hour time period at a maximum. Normal operation permits a maximum of three (3) cremations in a 24 hour time period. These computations are based on 1 corpse per retort per cremation.” This led Leuchter to the conclusion that, with 3 furnaces with 2 muffles each, crematorium 1 would have had a theoretical incineration rate of $(6 \times 6.8 =)$ 40.8 corpses per day, and a “real-time” rate of $(6 \times 3 =)$ 18 corpses per day. Crematoria 2 and 3 could have incinerated then “theoretically” $(15 \times 6.8 =)$ 102 and practically $(15 \times 3 =)$ 45 corpses per day, and crematoria 4 and 5 respectively $(8 \times 6.8 =)$ 54.4 and $(8 \times 3 =)$ 24. This resulted in a combined daily incineration capacity in Auschwitz of 353.6 (theoretical) or 156 (practical). These numbers led Leuchter to infer that, over the history of the crematoria which operated over a minimum of 72 weeks (crematoria 1 and 3) and a maximum of 84 weeks (crematorium 2), the total number of cremations would have been 193,576 (theoretical) and 85,092 (practical).

As with his calculations for the gas chambers, Leuchter operated in a make-believe universe, in which he consulted neither German documents nor the testimony of witnesses. Leuchter claimed that, before his journey to Poland, he had studied Raul Hilberg’s *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Hilberg mentioned in note 110 in Chapter Nine, “Killing Center Operations,” a letter written by the Auschwitz Zentralbauleitung. Dated June 28, 1943, the letter reads as follows: “ 28 June, 1943. Concerns: the completion of crematorium 3. Reference: none To the SS-Administrative and Economic Head Office, department C, SS-Brigadeführer and General Major Dr. Ing. Kammler Berlin--Lichterfelde--West Unter den Eichen 120-135. Report the completion of crematorium 3 at 26 June 1943. Therewith all the crematoria ordered have been completed. Capacity of the now available crematoria per 24 hours: 1. old crematorim 1 3 x 2 muffle ovens 340 persons 2. new crematorium 2 in KGL 5 x 3 muffle ovens 1,440 persons 3. new crematorium 3 5 x 3 muffle ovens 1,440 persons 4. new crematorium 4 8

muffle oven 768 persons 5. new crematorium 5 8 muffle oven 768 persons Total per 24 hours 4,756 persons The leader of the Central Building Administration of the Waffen SS and Police Auschwitz, Signed: Jahrling SS-Sturmbannführer. Cc: dossier--Janisch dossier--Kirschnek file KGL BW 30. " In short, according to a war-time German document, the daily incineration capacity of the five Auschwitz crematoria was 4,756 corpses per day. In his cross-examination, Pearson confronted Leuchter with Hilberg's reference. " [Pearson]: "Now, that document suggests that there is a capacity on a twenty-four hour period of 4,756 persons in the crematoriums?" [Leuchter]: "Yes." Q.: "That's quite different from your report, isn't it?" A.: "It is." Q.: "Have you looked at that document before?" A.: "I have never seen that document before."

Each of the ovens of crematoria 2 to 5 were calculated to have a capacity of 96 corpses per day ($15 \times 96 = 1,440$; $8 \times 96 = 768$), or an average of four corpses per muffle per hour. Is this German statistic possible? If one followed normal civilian practice, *in which it is absolutely essential to preserve the identity of the remains from the beginning of incineration to the final gathering of the ashes*, the German figures are absurd. It would be impossible to insert a body in the muffle, cremate it, and remove the remaining bones and ashes within fifteen minutes. But the situation changes radically when the identity of the remains ceases to be important. First of all, if the size of the muffle permits, it becomes possible to insert more than one corpse at the same time, and furthermore it becomes feasible to create something of a continuous process, in which, after initial heating of the incinerators, the burner can be turned off, thus making full use of the phenomenon that at the right temperature the body will combust and consume itself without any further application of an external source of energy.

Henryk Tauber, who worked the incinerators of both crematorium 1 and 2, gave in his testimony an extensive description of the incineration procedures, and implicitly confirmed the validity of the German figures. "In crematorium 1, there were three, two-muffle furnaces, as I

have already mentioned. Each muffle could incinerate five human bodies. Thirty corpses could be incinerated at the same time in this crematorium. At the time when I was working there, the incineration of such a charge took up to an hour and a half, because they were the bodies of very thin people, real skeletons, which burned very slowly. I know from the experience gained by observing cremation in Krematorium 2 and 3 that the bodies of fat people burn very much faster. The process of incineration is accelerated by the combustion of human fat which thus produces additional heat.” If we take Tauber’s figures, it would take 17 hours to incinerate the 340 corpses mentioned in the letter of June 28, 1943.

Tauber provided a very detailed account of the incineration procedure in crematorium 2. “As I have already said, there were five furnaces in crematorium 2, each with three muffles for cremating the corpses and heated by two coke-fired hearths. The fire flues of these hearths came out above the ash boxes of the two side muffles. Thus the flames went first round the two side muffles then heated the centre one, from where the combustion gases were led out below the furnace, between the two firing hearths. Thanks to this arrangement, the incineration process for the corpses in the side muffles differed from that of the centre muffle. The corpses of “*Müselmanns*” or of wasted people with no fat burned rapidly in the side muffles and slowly in the centre one. Conversely, the corpses of people gassed directly on arrival, not being wasted, burned better in the centre muffle. During the incineration of such corpses, we used the coke only to light the fire of the furnace initially, for fatty corpses burned of their own accord thanks to the combustion of the body fat. On occasion, when coke was in short supply, we would put some straw and wood in the ash bins under the muffles, and once the fat of the corpse began to burn the other corpses would catch light themselves. There were no iron components inside the muffle. The bars were of chamotte, for iron would have melted in the furnace, which reached 1,000 to 1,200° Celsius. These chamotte bars were ar-

ranged crosswise. The dimensions of the door and the opening of the muffles were smaller than the inside of the muffle itself, which was 2 meters long, 80 centimeters wide and about 1 meter high. Generally speaking, we burned 4 or 5 corpses at a time in one muffle, but sometimes we charged a greater number of corpses. It was possible to charge up to 8 "*Müselmanns*." Such big charges were incinerated without the knowledge of the head of the crematorium during air raid warnings in order to attract the attention of airmen by having a bigger fire emerging from the chimney. We imagined that in that way it might be possible to change our fate. The iron components, in particular fire bars, still to be found in the camp, were from the fireboxes. Crematorium 2 had fire bars of heavy angle iron. Crematoria 4 and 5 were fitted with fire bars in the form of a lance, or rather were like swords with handles." After the description of the installation, Tauber recalled how on the first day, 4 March, they operated the ovens in the presence of observers from the Political Section, representatives of the Berlin headquarters, and engineers of Topf. For this occasion, the Political department had taken care to provide 45 bodies of well-fed victims recently killed in Bunker 2. "Via the lift and the door leading to the furnace room, we took out the bodies and placed them two or three at a time on trolleys of the type I described for crematorium 1 and charged them into the different muffles. As soon as all the muffles of the five furnaces had been charged, the members of the commission began to observe the operation, watch in hand. They opened the muffle doors, looked at their watches, expressed surprise at the slowness of the cremation process. In view of the fact that the furnaces were not yet hot enough, even though we had been firing them since the morning, and because they were brand new, the incineration of this charge took about 40 minutes." Tauber went on to explain that later on incineration became more efficient, and they could incinerate two loads per hour. In fact, the Sonderkommando tried to overload the muffles, because this would allow them some free time. "According to the regulations, we were supposed to charge the muffles every half hour. Ober Capo

August explained to us that, according to the calculations and plans for this crematorium, 5 to 7 minutes was allowed to burn one corpse in a muffle. In principle, he did not let us put more than three corpses in one muffle. Because with that quantity we were obliged to work without interruption, for as soon as the last muffle was charged, the contents of the first had been consumed. In order to be able to take a pause during the work, we would charge 4 or 5 corpses in each muffle. The incineration of such a charge took longer, and after charging the last muffle, we had a few minutes' break until the first one was again available. We took advantage of this free time to wash the floor of the furnace room, as a result of which the air became a little cooler." According to Tauber's testimony, the incinerators of crematorium 2 should burn, according to the regulations, $(15 \times 2 \times 3 =)$ 90 bodies per hour. This would mean that the official daily capacity of 1,440 would be reached in 16 hours of operation $(90 \times 16 = 1,440)$.

Kommandant Rudolf Höss confirmed Tauber's account. In 1946 he wrote in Polish captivity that "the two large crematories were built in the winter of 1942-43 and brought into service in the spring of 1943." "Each had five ovens with three doors [retorts] per oven and could cremate about two thousand bodies in less than twenty-four hours. Technical difficulties made it impossible to increase the capacity. Attempts to do this caused severe damage to the installations.... The two smaller crematories [4 and 5] were capable of burning about 1,500 bodies in twenty-four hours, according to the calculations made by the construction company called Topf of Erfurt." A few pages later, in a different context, Höss returned to the issue of concerning the incineration capacity of the crematoria. "Depending on the size of the bodies, up to three corpses could be put in through one oven door at the same time. The time required for cremation also depended on the number of bodies in each retort, but on average it took twenty minutes. As previously stated, Crematories 2 and 3 could cremate two thousand bodies in twenty-four hours, but a higher number was not possible without

causing damage to the installations. Crematories 4 and 5 should have been able to cremate 1,500 bodies in twenty-four hours, but as far as I know this figure was never reached.”

There are two more indications that the Topf ovens could, indeed, handle numbers far greater than what Leuchter claimed. The first is a recently discovered note written by Topf engineer Kurt Prüfer on September 8, 1942. Addressed to the SS, Prüfer calculated the daily incineration capacity of the three double muffle ovens of crematorium 1 as 250 corpses, the five triple muffle ovens of crematoria 2 and 3 as 800 corpses each, and the eight muffle ovens of crematoria, 4 and 5 as 400 corpses each. In short, according to Prüfer, the daily incineration capacity was to be 2,650 corpses. While Prüfer’s figures are only 55% of those given by Bischoff, they are still 16 times Leuchter’s practical incineration capacity, and 7 1/2 times Leuchter’s theoretical incineration rate. When considering Prüfer’s figures, it must be remembered that, with the contracts signed, it was in his interest to provide very conservative numbers, as the Topf firm was to be accountable for the functioning of the ovens.

A final indication that the testimony of Tauber and Höss may be trusted, and that the Topf ovens had a much larger capacity than Leuchter claimed, can be found in the patent application T 58240 Kl. 24 for a “Continuous Operation Corpse Incineration Furnace for Intensive Use,” filed by Topf on November 5, 1942. In the first paragraph the application referred to the situation in the camps in the East. “In the gathering camps in the occupied territories in the East with their high mortality rate, as they are affected by the war and its consequences, it has become impossible to bury the great number of deceased inmates. This is the result of both the lack of space and personnel and the immediate and longterm danger to that immediate and farther surroundings that is caused by the burial of the dead who often succumbed to infectious diseases. Therefore there is a need to quickly, safely and hygienically dispose of the constantly great number of corpses. In that

process it will, of course, be impossible, to operate according to the legal stipulations that are valid in the territory of the Reich. Thus it will be impossible to reduce to ashes only one corpse at a time, and the process cannot be done without extra heating. Instead it will be necessary to incinerate continuously and simultaneously many corpses, and during the duration of the incineration the flames and the gasses of the fire will have to engage the corpses to be incinerated directly. It will be impossible to separate the ashes of the simultaneously incinerated, and the ashes can only be handled together. Therefore one should not really talk in the depicted disposition of corpses of "incineration," but it really concerned here corpse burning. To realize such corpse burning--following the principles sketched above--a number of multi-muffle ovens were installed in some of those camps, which according to their design are loaded and operated periodically. Because of this these ovens do not fully satisfy, because the burning does not proceed quickly enough to dispose off in the shortest possible time the great number of corpses that are constantly presented." It is clear that the ovens referred to in the last paragraphs are the multi-muffle ovens supplied by Topf to Auschwitz.

The patent application describes the continuous cremation furnace as a structure in which the corpses are inserted at the top, and as they slowly slide down a system of inclined grids they are quickly reduced to ashes. It does not provide data as to the capacity of the furnace, but in 1985 the consulting engineers Klaus and Christel Kunz made, in consultation with Rolf Decker, manager of incinerator production at the Ruppmann company in Stuttgart, an engineering assessment of Topf's continuous cremation furnace. They assumed that the furnace could be initially loaded with 50 corpses, and in the upper part of the furnace the bodies would dry out through evaporation; having allowed to fall into the second part these corpses would be burned, while the first part would be reloaded. Having been allowed to fall into the third part of the furnace, the remains would be completely reduced to ashes.

“On the basis of the plan one may only theoretically calculate the capacity and duration, because exact data can only be determined through practical trials. Nevertheless it is quite conceivable to introduce, when the object is appropriately dimensioned, some 50 corpses on the shelf, assuming it has a length of 25 meters. The process of evaporation in position a should take some 15 minutes, so that at a continuous operation one could arrive at an incineration capacity of around 4,800 corpses per 24 hours. Pre-heating of such an oven should take at least two days. After this preheating the oven will not need any more fuel due to the heat produced by the corpses. It will be able to maintain its necessary high temperature through self-heating. But to allow it to maintain a constant temperature, it would have become necessary to introduce at the same time so-called well-fed and so-called emaciated corpses, because one can only guarantee continuous high temperatures through the emission of human fat. When only emaciated corpses are incinerated, it will be necessary to add heat continuously. The results of this would be that the installation could be damaged because of the thus created temperatures and one would expect shorter or longer breakdowns.” The report ended with the assertion that it should be possible to increase, after some initial experience, the initial load from 50 to 100 corpses. This would increase the loading rhythm from every 15 to every 20 minutes, and as a result the daily capacity would increase from $(50 \times 60/15 \times 24 =)$ 4,800 corpses to, at least theoretically, $(100 \times 60/20 \times 24 =)$ 7,200 corpses. It is unclear if the incinerator would have ever worked. What is important, however, is that both the text of the patent application and the design of the incinerator makes the incineration process described in Tauber’s testimony not merely plausible, but indeed probable.

With both a war-time German document stating that the daily incineration capacity of the crematoria came close to 4,500 corpses per day, two independent testimonies corroborating this range of cremation capacity, and a war-time patent application by the makers of the ovens

which corroborate the incineration procedure described in these testimonies, there is little reason to dwell much longer with Leuchter's assertion that the theoretical incineration rate was a whole order of magnitude smaller, and that the practical incineration rate was with 156 corpses per day a little over 3 per cent of the official German rate.

Finally I turn to the issue of the samples. As we have seen, Leuchter did not find them too important, but because their alleged evidentiary value impressed Irving, Faurisson, and so many others, it is necessary to consider them in some detail.

First of all it is necessary to point out some of the assumptions that led Leuchter to assume that there would be residual cyanide, in the form of ferro-ferri-cyanide, in the walls of the Auschwitz gas chambers. In the second Zündel trial, Leuchter admitted that one should not expect any residual cyanide in the walls of American gas chambers. " [Pearson]: "You'd agree with me that the purpose of a ventilation fan is to remove the gas from the--the place where the gas is at. [Leuchter]: "That is true." Q.: "And it will have a bearing on what traces are present at some later date. Isn't that right?" A.: "That's very true." Q.: "Very True." A.: "Yes." Q.: "Now, with respect to the delousing chamber, if there was no ventilation at all, we could expect high levels of cyanide traces, couldn't we?" A.: "It depends upon how--the system we used. That's partially true, yes. Q.: "Well, if there's not ventilation at all and there's no way for the gas to get out, then we would expect high levels of cyanide traces, wouldn't we?" A.: "Again, counsellor, it depends upon the ventilation system." Q.: "I'm saying no ventilation system." A.: "Probably." Q.: "All right. Now, if, on the other hand, the location is extremely well ventilated to get all the gas out, I suppose that's the optimum, if the ventilation system works perfectly, and would you agree with me that it's very difficult to reach perfection with respect to ventilation?" A.: "I do." Q.: "Although that's basically one of your engineering tasks with these modern gas chambers you produce, isn't it?" A.: "Yes, it is." Q.: "Do you expect that forty-five years from now, people will be able to find cyan-

ide traces in your gas chambers?” A.: “No, I do not.” ” He continued to explain, good ventilation, heating the room so that the hydrogen cyanide would not condensate on the walls, and walls coated with epoxy or some other sealant prevented the formation of residual cyanide such as ferro-ferri-cyanide in the walls of modern gas chambers.

Leuchter wrongly assumed that Auschwitz gas chambers were not ventilated. Furthermore, he wrongly hypothesized that the gas chambers operated at very low temperatures, and that therefore there would have been “a considerable amount of condensation of liquid hydrogen cyanide on the walls, floor and ceiling of these facilities.” Furthermore he wrongly inferred from the ruins of crematoria 2 to 5 that the walls of the gas chambers had not been coated, and that therefore the liquid hydrogen cyanide could have reacted with the iron in the bricks and mortar to form ferro-ferri-cyanide. Then he wrongly reasoned that, in accordance with American practice, the Germans had used a high concentration of 3,600 parts of hydrogen cyanide per million parts of air--the concentration used in United States gas chambers to ensure that the condemned will die a quick death--while in fact the Germans used a concentration of 300 parts per million to kill their victims. Neither did he consider the amount of hydrogen cyanide that would be absorbed by the bodies of the victims. Finally he did not take into account the effects of changes in the situation of the gas chambers in the last 45 years. For example, the gas chamber of crematorium 1 had been abandoned in 1943, and had been transformed into an air-raid shelter in 1944, undergoing substantial modifications in the process. Then, after the war, it was once more changed, to provide a museological reconstruction of the original gas chamber. Leuchter assumed that the layer of plaster from which he took his samples was the same that had coated in the walls in 1942. There is little to no evidence to support that premise. Then he took no account of the fact that the gas chambers of crematoria 2 and 3 had been purposefully demolished in 1944 and that their remains had been exposed to the elements for 45 years,

and that the walls had been washed with acid rain--a fact of some importance because, contrary to Leuchter's belief, ferro-ferri-cyanide is not stable under all conditions, but tends to slowly dissolve in an acidic environment. Finally, he did not know that the low brick walls that mark the plan of crematoria 4 and 5 were rebuilt after the war using bricks from the original buildings, but not necessarily in the right position. In other words, the walls that now define the outlines of the gas chamber could have been rebuilt using bricks originally used for the construction of the incineration rooms, or the coke storage rooms.

On the basis of wrong assumptions, Leuchter expected that one would find relatively high residual cyanide in the walls of the gas chambers if they had been indeed used for genocidal purposes. When he did not, he immediately jumped to the conclusion that these spaces had not been used as gas chambers. He was strengthened in his conviction by a few "control samples" he had taken from rooms that had been used as hydrogen cyanide delousing chambers. These samples showed a very high degree of ferro-ferri-cyanide--something that did not surprise anyone as the walls of these delousing rooms showed large Prussian blue stains. Leuchter wrongly assumed that the delousing rooms had been exposed to much lower quantities of gas than the homicidal gas chambers--in fact the opposite is true, and while the delousing chambers operated more or less non-stop, the homicidal gas chamber operated only for very short times--and drew his "shattering" conclusion. "One would have expected higher cyanide detection in the samples taken from the alleged gas chambers (because of the greater amount of gas allegedly utilized there) than that found in the control sample. Since the contrary is true, one must conclude that these facilities were not execution gas chambers, when coupled with all the other evidence gained on inspection." As we have seen, also "all the other evidence gained on inspection" was less than it purported it to be.

Perhaps the most damning aspect of Leuchter's investigation is the way he took the samples. I have studied carefully the videotapes which were made of his trip to Poland, and which clearly show that Leuchter took what were for the analysis of cyanide content incorrect samples. When the Alpha laboratories analyzed the cyanide content of the samples, they provided the measurements of the total cyanide concentration in each of the samples. It did not provide the concentration of cyanide on the outer surface of the samples. As Dr. Jim Roth, who analyzed the samples in 1988, explained recently to the American filmmaker Errol Morris, "hindsight being 20/20, the test was not the correct one to have used for the analysis." Roth explained that cyanide will react on the surface of brick or plaster, penetrating the material not more than 10 microns, or 0.01 mm, or one tenth the thickness of a human hair (one micron equals 1/1,000,000 of a meter, or 0.000039 inch). In other words, if one wants to analyze the cyanide concentration in a brick sample, one should take a representative sample of the surface, 10 microns thick, and no more. Yet, as Roth remembered, "[Leuchter] presented us with rock samples anywhere from the size of your thumb up to half the size of your fist. We broke them up with a hammer so that we could get a sub-sample; we placed it in a flask, add concentrated sulfuric acid. It undergoes a reaction that produces a red-colored solution. It is the intensity of this red color that we can relate with cyanide concentration." Roth explained that his laboratory analysis could not make up for faulty sampling technique. If the sample was not representative, the results would be meaningless. Because the cyanide cannot penetrate into the brick for more than 10 microns, it is unavoidable that the cyanide concentration will be diluted 10 times when the sample is 100 microns or 0.1 mm or 0.0039 inch thick, it will be diluted 1,000 times when the sample is 10 mm or 0.39 inch thick. Leuchter did not carefully slice the surface of the materials he was sampling. In fact, as the video tapes clearly show, he hacked happily into the walls, and took samples that counted at least a thousand of layers of material that could not have reacted with the cyanide.

As Roth remarked, “I might have had the back side of the brick, not the front side of the brick, but I didn’t know which side was up and which was down. That’s the point: Which was the exposed surface? I didn’t even have any idea. That is like analyzing paint on a wall by analyzing the timber that’s behind it.” In conclusion Roth stated that “I don’t think the Leuchter results have any meaning.”

Indeed: the only conclusion one may legitimately draw from Leuchter’s sampling is that the very fact that the Alpha laboratories found any residual cyanide at all is extremely significant. In fact, Leuchter’s samples most likely proved the use of morgue 1 of crematorium 2 and 3 as a gas chamber.

As we have seen before, Leuchter’s track record as a forensic scientist was not very impressive, and it is not very useful to waste more energy on his samples. At this point it is more useful to consider the legitimate forensic studies which were undertaken at the Auschwitz crematoria by Polish scientists in the early 1990s. When the first news about the Zündel Trial and Leuchter’s testimony reached the Auschwitz Museum, its director Kazimierz Smolen wrote to the highly experienced and respected Polish forensic scientist Professor Jan Markiewicz, Director of the Institute of Forensic Research in Cracow with the request to take samples from the wall plaster of the gas chambers and analyze them for the presence of hydrogen cyanide. Smolen did not inform Markiewicz about the existence of the Leuchter Report. Markiewicz responded that he thought “the chances of detecting hydrogen cyanide in such samples as nearly none.” Nevertheless, he dispatched two of his employees to the camp, who took on 20 February 1990 22 samples: ten from rooms in Block 3 of the Auschwitz *Stammlager* that had served as delousing rooms, five from the ruins of the gas chamber of crematorium 2 and 3, and one sample each from crematorium 5 and crematorium 1. No samples were taken from crematorium 4--the latter building was left alone since all the walls had been reconstructed after the

war. The results showed traces of hydrocyanic compounds in seven samples taken from Block 3, and in one sample taken from a remaining pillar of the gas chamber of crematorium 2.

The letter that Markiewicz sent to the Museum was leaked to the revisionists, and in the newsletter of the Institute of Historical Review much was made of it. Mark Weber, Associate Editor of the *Journal of Historical Review* then wrote to Markiewicz, and asked him to comment on the relevance of his own findings for the Leuchter Report. Markiewicz responded in a letter dated 7 June, 1991, in which he observed that the initial research had been a little too hasty. “Now, in the light of letters and publications coming to us from different countries, I have arrived at the conclusion that our investigations aiming at the confirmation, if possible, of the use of cyanic preparations in the rooms that survived whole or only in the form of ruins, were rather preliminary in nature and incomplete. We are bent on widening and deepening these investigations and have already been preparing for them. It is only now when suitable materials from literature have become accessible to us that we see the purpose and sense of such studies. Naturally, we shall publish their results and make them accessible to you and your Institute.”

The Institute of Historical Review did not wait, however, for the new report. Immediately after receiving Markiewicz’s letter they published an article entitled “An Official Polish Report on the Auschwitz ‘Gas Chambers’: Krakow Forensic Institute Bolsters Leuchter’s Findings.” It claimed that Polish scientists had “replicated Leuchter’s findings and implicitly corroborated his conclusions.” Wrongly arguing that the whole of the gas chamber of crematorium 2 was protected from the elements by the collapsed concrete ceiling,” and is otherwise in its original condition,” the author of the article found it worth noting that the Cracow scientists had not responded to the “compelling reasons given by Leuchter for doubting the orthodox extermination story.” For example, they had not engaged him on his engineering considerations--a

fact which should not have surprised them because Markiewicz had written in his letter to Weber that they had not known about the Leuchter Report when they took their samples or wrote their report. The main text of the article ended with the following comment. “Auschwitz State Museum officials initiated this investigation rather obviously hoping that the Institute’s report would discredit Leuchter’s findings and corroborate the orthodox extermination account. And just as obviously, if the Institute’s report had, in fact, discredited the American engineer’s conclusions, the Auschwitz State Museum would certainly have wasted no time in giving it maximum publicity. Although neither the Auschwitz State Museum nor the Krakow Institute has (so far) made this September 1990 report public, Revisionists were nevertheless able to obtain a copy of the original document. Professor Robert Faurisson in France and Fred Leuchter in the United States were quick to cite the “Polish Leuchter Report” as corroboration of the Revisionist view of the Auschwitz extermination story.”

Having rudely awakened to the realities of negationism, Markiewicz and his people decided to move with greater care. In the final report, which they published in 1994, they discussed Leuchter’s investigations, their own early sampling and its results. “When the dispute on the Leuchter Report arose, we undertook a closer study of the problem, availing ourselves, among other publications, of J.C. Pressac’s comprehensive work. In consequence, we decided to start considerably more extensive and conscientiously planned researches. To carry them out, the Management of the Auschwitz Museum appointed their competent workers, Dr. F. Piper (custodian) and Mr. W. Smrek (engineer) to join the commission, in which they co-worked with the authors of the present paper, representing the Institute of Forensic Research. Under this collaboration, the Museum workers were providing us on the spot with exhaustive information concerning the facilities to be examined and--as regards the ruins--a detailed topography of the gas chambers we were concerned with. And so they made it possible for us to take

proper samples for analysis. We tried to take samples--if at all possible--from the places best sheltered and least exposed to rainfall, including--also as far as possible--fragments from the upper parts of the chambers (hydrogen cyanide is lighter than air) and also of the concrete floors, with which the gas from the spilled Zyklon B came into contact at rather high concentrations. Samples, about 1-2 g in weight, were taken by chipping pieces from bricks and concrete or scraping off, particularly in the case of plaster and also mortar. The materials taken were secured in plastic containers marked with serial numbers. All these activities were recorded and documented with photographs. Work connected with them took the commission two days. The laboratory analysis of the material collected was conducted--to ensure full objectivity--by another group of institute workers. They started with preliminary work: samples were comminuted by grinding them by hand in an agate mortar, their pH was determined at 6 to 7 in nearly all samples. Next the samples were subjected to preliminary spectrophotometric analysis in the infrared region, using a Digilab FTS-15 spectrophotometer. It was found that the bands of cyanide groups occurred in the region of $2000-22000\text{ cm}^{-1}$ in the spectra of a dozen samples or so. However, the method did not prove to be sensitive enough and was given up in quantitative determinations. It was determined, using the spectrophotographical method, that the main elements which made up the samples were: calcium, silicon, magnesium, aluminium and iron. Moreover, titanium was found present in many samples. From among other metals in some samples there were also barium, zinc, sodium, manganese and from non-metals boron. The undertaking of chemical analysis had to be preceded by careful consideration. The revisionists focussed their attention almost exclusively on Prussian blue, which is of intense dark-blue colour characterized by exceptional fastness. This dye occurs, especially in the form of stains, on the outer bricks of the walls of the former bath-delousing house in the area of the Birkenau camp. It is hard to imagine the chemical reactions and physicochemical processes that could have led to the formation of Prussian blue in

that place. Brick, unlike other building materials, very feebly absorbs hydrogen cyanide, it sometimes does not even absorb it at all. Besides, iron occurring in it is at the third oxidation state, whereas bivalent iron ions are indispensable for the formation of the $[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_6]^{4-}$ ion, which is the precursor of Prussian blue. This ion is, besides, sensitive to the sunlight. [...] We decided therefore to determine the cyanide ions using a method that does not induce the breakdown of the composed ferrum cyanide complex (this is the blue under discussion) and which we had tested before on an appropriate standard sample. To isolate cyanide compounds from the materials examined in the form of hydrogen cyanide we used the techniques of microdiffusion in special Conway-type chambers. The sample under examination was placed in the internal part of the chamber and next acidified with 10% sulfuric acid solution and allowed to remain at open room temperature (about 20°C) for 24 hrs. The separated hydrogen cyanide underwent a quantitative absorption by the lye solution present in the outer part of the chamber. When the diffusion was brought to an end, a sample of lye solution was taken and the pyridine-pyrazolone reaction carried out by Epstein's method. The intensity of the polymethene dye obtained was measured spectrophotometrically at a wavelength equal to 630 nm. The calibration curve was constructed previously and standards with a known CN^- content were introduced into each series of determinations to check the curve and the course of determination. Each sample of materials examined was analysed three times. If the result obtained was positive, it was verified by repeating the analysis. Having applied this method for many years, we have opportunities to find its high sensitivity, specificity and precision. Under present circumstances we established the lower limit of determinability of cyanide ions at a level of 3-4 $\mu\text{g CN}^-$ in 1 kg of the sample. The results of analyses are presented in Tables I-IV. They unequivocally show that the cyanide compounds occur in all the facilities that, according to the source data, were in contact with them. On the other hand, they do not occur in dwelling accommodations, which was shown by means of the

control samples. The concentrations of cyanide compounds in the samples collected from one and the same room or building shows great differences. This indicates that the conditions that favour the formation of stable compounds as a result of the reaction of hydrogen cyanide with the components of the walls, occur locally. In this connection it takes quite a larger number of samples from a given facility to give us a chance to come upon this sort of local accumulation of cyanide compounds.”

Samples 1 to 8 were taken from fumigation chambers in Blocks 1 and 3 in the *Stammlager* and showed concentrations of CN^- that went in one instance (sample 6) as high as 900 $\mu\text{g/kg}$. Samples 9 to 12 were taken from dwelling spaces in Block 3 and 8, and all showed a total absence of CN^- . These rooms were known to have been fumigated with hydrogen cyanide only once. Samples 13 to 52 were taken from places which served as homicidal gas chambers. Samples 13 to 22 were taken in Auschwitz 1. It is a pity that the report does not mention the thickness of the samples, again the knowledge that cyanide only reacts on the surface of brick remains an important fact of consideration. Therefore I would not like to assign more than relative significance to the Polish measurements. Yet, even so, they are important in their own right, as they clearly show the presence of cyanide in the walls of the gas chambers, confirming the “alleged” use of these spaces as killing installations.

A--Sample No. B--Concentration of CN^- ($\mu\text{g/kg}$) Cellars of Block 11
 used as experimental Gas Chambers in 1941 A131415---- B28200----
 24160---- 24160---- Crematorium 1 A16171819202122
 B287600288080 288000292080 288000288080 Crematorium 2
 A25262728293031 B640280820168296 592280816156288
 620280816168292 Crematorium 3 A32333435363738
 B68121216121656 688121281652 68881681656 Crematorium 4

A3940414243-- B4036500trace16-- 4432496012-- 4436496012--
Crematorium 5 A46474849505152 B244369212116560
248289612120600 232329612116600

Finally samples 53 to 59 were taken from the same delousing building BW5a from which Leuchter had obtained his control samples. Samples 53 to 55 were taken from the dark- blue stains on the outer side of the building wall, sample 56 was mortar taken from the outer side of the building wall, samples 57 and 58 were plaster taken from dark blue stains on the inner side of the building wall, and sample 59 was plaster taken from white walls inside the building. Delousing Buildings BW5a A5353a545556575859 B2422436736484034828 2024828740079232428 2422832640084034828

The forensic team also conducted various other tests to study the absorptive behaviour of various materials. In the first test the scientists exposed fresh plaster, fresh mortar, new brick, and old brick, both in dry and wet forms, to a high concentration of hydrogen cyanide (2%) for 48 hours. The results of this test, which simulated the conditions that existed in a fumigation room, showed that the various materials absorbed the hydrogen cyanide with very different rates. material-
Fresh plasterFresh mortarNew brickOld brick conditiondrywetteddry-
wetteddrywetteddrywetted CN⁻ mg/kg244801762700452200

In a second test, the team added carbon dioxide to the hydrogen cyanide, introducing the two gasses in a rate of 5 parts of CO₂ to one part of HCN. This test simulated the conditions that existed in homicidal gas chambers. “[I]n their reasoning the revisionists did not take into consideration certain circumstances, namely, the simultaneous action of cyanides and carbon dioxide on the chamber walls. In the air exhaled by man carbon dioxide constitutes 3.5% by volume. Breathing for 1 minute, he takes in and next exhales 15-20 dm³ of air, comprising on the average 950 cm³ CO₂; consequently, 1000 people breathe out about 950 dm³ of carbon dioxide. And so it can be estimated that, if

the victims stayed in the chamber for 5 minutes before they die, they exhaled 4.75 m³ of carbon dioxide during that period. This is at least 1% of the capacity, e.g. of the gas chamber of Crematorium 2 at Birkenau, the capacity of which was about 500 m³, whereas the concentration of hydrogen cyanide virtually did not exceed 0.1% by volume (death occurs soon at as low HCN concentrations as 0.03% by volume).”

After having been exposed to the CO₂ and HCN mixture, the samples were aired for 48 hours in the open air at a temperature of about 10-15°C, and then subjected to analysis.

material	Fresh plaster	Old mortar	Fresh mortar	New brick	Old brick	condition	dry	wet	dry	wet	dry	wet	dry	wet
CN ⁻ µg/kg	59	20	12	80	01	0002	44	49	23	88	52	36	24	60

While in the tests that simulated the situation in the fumigation rooms the CN⁻ content was higher in the wetted materials, in the tests that simulated the condition in the homicidal gas chambers the results were reversed, that is that the CN⁻ content was lower in the wetted content. “It seems that here a tendency is revealed towards the competitive action of carbon dioxide, which dissolved in water,” Markiewicz’s report explained. And it added that “in this series of tests fresh plaster showed an exceptionally high affinity to hydrogen cyanide.”

The samples of both tests were analysed again one month later. In the samples that had been exposed to hydrogen cyanide only, the average decrease was 56%, while in the samples that had been exposed to the combination of carbon dioxide and hydrogen cyanide, the loss was 73%. “In as many as four samples that loss ranged from 97% to 100%.” This was an important result, as the negationists had claimed that conditions for the preservation of HCN in homicidal gas chambers should have been better than in fumigation gas chambers. In fact, it was opposite.

Finally Markiewicz's team tested the way water elutes cyanide ions. Taking two plaster samples of 0.5 grams each that had been fumigated with hydrogen cyanide, they flushed them with one litre of clean deionized water. The first sample showed a loss in concentration of HCN in $\mu\text{g/kg}$ of 82.5% (160 vs. 28), the second of 90.7% (1200 vs. 112). This test is important as the remains of the gas chambers of crematoria 2 to 5 have been exposed to the elements since the end of the war, and "it can be estimated, on the basis of climatological records, that in these last 45 years or so they have been rinsed rather thoroughly by a column of water at least 35 m in height (!)."

The conclusion of what one should call the Markiewicz Report was straightforward and, as far as the Leuchter Report was concerned, shattering. "The present study shows that in spite of the passage of a considerable period of time (over 45 years) in the walls of the facilities which once were in contact with hydrogen cyanide the vestigial amounts of the combinations of this constituent of Zyklon B had been preserved. This is also true of the ruins of the former gas chambers. The cyanide compounds occur in the building materials only locally, in the places where the conditions arose for their formation and persistence for such a long time. In his reasoning Leuchter claims that the vestigial amounts of cyanide combinations detected by him in the materials from the chamber ruins are residues left after fumigations carried out in the Camp, "once, long ago" (Item 14.004 of the Report). This is refuted by the negative results of the examination of the control samples from living quarters, which are said to have been subjected to a single gassing, and the fact that in the period of fumigation of the Camp in connection with a typhoid epidemic in mid-1942 there were still no crematoria in the Birkenau camp. The first crematorium (Crematorium 2) was put to use as late as 15 March 1943 and the others several months later."

Of course, at the time of the second Zündel trial the Markiewicz report did not exist. Yet at that time it was clear to the court, at least, that Leuchter's methodology and data simply did not meet the judicial demands of admissible evidence. While this impressed the jury and the judge, it did not impress hard-core Holocaust deniers and their allies, who hailed (and continue to hail) the Leuchter Report as an important breakthrough. A large part of the credit of having rescued the Leuchter Report from deserved oblivion must go to David Irving who, convinced by Leuchter's findings, publically converted to hard-core Holocaust denial in April 1988, and became the publisher of the English edition of the Leuchter Report a year later.

PART FIVE *CONCERNING IRVING*

X Auschwitz and David Irving (1977–1988 -1992)

“He wears his faith but as the fashion of his hat.”

Irving came to Holocaust denial late, and through the backdoor. In his *Hitler's War* (1977), he developed the startling theory that while the Holocaust had happened, it had been enacted by Himmler behind Hitler's back and not only without his permission, but even in violation of his express wish that the Jews would be spared. In the original edition of the book, Irving made a number of references to the role of Auschwitz as an extermination camp. Writing about the spring of 1942, Irving stated that the Germans began to round up Jews in France, Holland, Belgium and Slovakia. “From Hans Frank's Generalgouvernement of Poland too--beginning with the ghettos of Lublin--the Jews set out eastward under the direction of one of the cruellest SS leaders, Brigadier Odilo Globocnik, the Trieste-born former Gauleiter of Vienna. Upon arrival in Auschwitz and Treblinka, four in every ten were pro-

nounced fit for work; the rest were exterminated with a maximum of concealment.” A few paragraphs later Irving noted in the summer of 1942 Himmler threw the “murder machinery into top gear.” “On July 19, three days after seeing Hitler, Himmler ordered the “resettlement” of the entire Jewish population of the Generalgouvernement to be completed by the last day of 1942. Each day after July 22 a trainload of five thousand Jews left Warsaw for the extermination center at Treblinka; each week two trains left Przemyśl for the center at Belzec.” Writing about the Hungarian Action in 1944, when more than 400,000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz, Irving noted that “[i]n Auschwitz, the defunct paraphernalia of death--idle since late 1943--began to clank again as the first trainloads from Hungary arrived.” Yet this time the policy of concealment was to fail. “Himmler’s ghastly secret was coming out, for two Slovak Jews had escaped from Auschwitz extermination camp, and their horrifying revelations were published in two reputable Swiss newspapers in early July.”

Hitler’s War attracted the attention of Holocaust deniers. In July 1978, John Tiffany, editorial assistant of the Noontide Press (the book-publishing arm of the Institute for Historical Review), wrote Irving that he considered Irving’s “tremendous” book a “tour de force,” and that therefore the press had ordered a quantity for resale. Tiffany recommended the press’s other offerings to Irving’s attention, offering him a free copies of *The Myth of the Six Million*, Butz’s *Hoax of the 20th Century*, and Rassinier’s *Debunking the Genocide Myth*. In early 1980 Irving received an invitation from the director of the Institute for Historical Review, Lewis Brandon, to speak at the 1980 Revisionist Conference, which was to be dedicated to the memory of Paul Rassinier. Enclosed with the invitation was the programme of the 1979 conference, which included lectures by Arthur Butz, Udo Walendy, and Robert Faurisson. Irving hesitated. In his reply, he stated that “I would have to condition my acceptance of your very kind invitation on knowing who else would participate.” “Of course, I have no desire to limit your own scope, but

for reasons you will probably perceive I cannot speak on the same platform as for example Walendy or Butz. This is pure Realpolitik on my part: I am already dangerously exposed, and I cannot take the change of being caught in Flak meant for others!"

Brandon replied enthusiastically: neither Butz nor Walendy were going to be invited, but Faurisson was mentioned as a back-up speaker. Irving had doubts. He scribbled behind Faurisson's name "on Auschwitz track à le Butz." In the end, Irving did not attend the conference.

One of those who did was a certain Mark Weber, who held a master's degree in central European history from Indiana University, and who worked as a freelance translator in the Washington DC area. In the years that followed, he became one of the central figures on the revisionist scene. Weber was at the time working on a book entitled *The Final Solution: Legend and Reality*. In a working outline, dated May 1981, Weber proposed a book that was to have as its central thesis: "There was no official German policy to exterminate the Jews of Europe. Six million Jews not killed." If completed, the ten chapter book was to provide the most coherent attempt to write a negationist counter-account of the Holocaust. Most importantly, the outline mentioned under the heading Forward {sic!}: "David Irving has conditionally consented to write this."

While Irving was not (yet) prepared to be too publically associated with well-known Holocaust deniers, he did establish an ongoing commercial relationship with the Institute for Historical Review. The institute became the American distributor of some of Irving's books, and from one thing came another: finally, in 1983, Irving caved in and agreed to attend the by now International Revisionist Conference--sharing the platform with, among others, Robert Faurisson and Wilhelm Stäglich.. In his lecture entitled "On Contemporary History and Historiography," Irving presented the thesis he had developed in his *Hitler's War*. Hitler was "so busy being a soldier that he didn't really pay

too much attention to what crimes may or may not have been going on in various far-flung parts of the Reich.” And he added the following remark: “I’m not going to go into the controversy here about the actual goings-on inside Auschwitz, or the other extermination camps or concentration camps. We do know in the meantime that Dachau is a legend, that everything that people found in Dachau was in fact installed there by the Americans after the war--rather like Disneyland--for their local people to go and be impressed by German *Schrecklichkeit*.” At this time Irving was not yet prepared to state that the gaschambers of Auschwitz were built by the Poles, after the war.

At the 1983 conference, Irving met Faurisson for the first time, before his lecture. After Irving’s lecture, Faurisson challenged Irving to prove the fact that a Holocaust had happened, but behind Hitler’s back. A journalist who was present wrote this about it. “Opponents of this heresy [of revisionism] will be heartened to learn how riven with schisms the young upstart already is. For instance, Robert Faurisson opened his talk with a critical response to David Irving. “Dahveed Earveeng sze, Eatlair deent know wot appen at Auschwitz. I esk Dahveed Earveeng, *whot appent* at Auschwitz???” he chided in a real “Com with’ me to zee Casbah” French accent. Irving had already departed....” Therefore Faurisson was forced to communicate to Irving through the *Journal for Historical Review*. In an article entitled “A Challenge to David Irving,” Faurisson observed that Irving had been willing to share his opinions on historical matters he admitted not to have studied. “Irving has the honesty to advise us that, in fact, he has not studied the particular aspect of the history of the Second World war that some call the “Holocaust.” With some insistence he repeated that about the “Holocaust “ specifically he only has some “feelings.” He said that in his mind there has been formed a certain impression of what “probably” took place. He does not for a moment attack the revisionist authors. He does not act like those persons who issue denunciations of the revisionists that are more and more categorical in proportion to

the extent that they have not studied the question. However, even a David Irving sometimes gives in to the temptation to maintain opinions that, from his own point of view, he ought not to maintain since he has not studied the question.” For once, it is not difficult to agree with Faurisson. The latter proceeded with attacking the various statements Irving had made in which he had admitted to various liquidations done at various locations by various criminal elements of various ethnic backgrounds without direct orders from above. As to Irving’s account of the extermination procedures, Faurisson observed that it contained “too much metaphysics, not enough materialism.” And thus Faurisson counselled that it was time for Irving to begin at the beginning. The latter has remarked that he suspected “there was some kind of major crime going on at the initiative of the local criminals on the spot.” This is what Faurisson had to say about it. “Here is my response to David Irving: “You are right to be suspicious. In historical investigation suspicion is the beginning of wisdom. But what you consider to be in some sense a finishing line, a line which must be maintained in order to continue the inquiry, I consider to be the starting line. Start with that suspicion if you wish, but do not stop there. Let that suspicion be a stimulus for an investigator like you. Do not hesitate to question it when you need to. You yourself frankly say that you ‘haven’t investigated that particular aspect of history.’ You even say you ‘haven’t got into that.’ Let someone like me, who has gotten into that subject for many long years and who has conducted some investigations which few others have conducted, investigations as materialist in character as possible, let me tell you that the moment has come for a historian of your importance to get into the subject and to study it for yourself in your own fashion.”

Faurisson’s intellectual argument proved not sufficient by itself. As with so many others, the Zündel case, which was to unite Faurisson’s agenda with Zündel’s showmanship, was to provide the catalyst in Irving’s conversion to Holocaust denial. Irving came in contact with

Zündel in 1984 when the latter began to prepare for his first trial. Zündel sent Irving material, and asked if he were prepared to testify. Irving responded that he was following the development of the case with interest, and that he could be persuaded to go. “In reply to your handwritten inquiry: I would be willing to attend the trial in Toronto as an expert witness, if so invited; you may be aware that my affidavit in the case against Dr Kausch in Hanover W. Germany resulted in his reinstatement in his school director’s job. I am also to be called as a witness in the Heidemann “Hitler Diaries” trial. My fee for attendance at Toronto, assuming a presence there not exceeding three days, would be \$1,000(US), plus return airfare via New York (cheaper than direct) and hotel accommodation. I am sure you are aware that in some respects my evidence may be disadvantageous, but on balance it would help.” In the end Zündel did not take up Irving on his offer.

In a pioneering study on Holocaust Denial written at this time, Irving was already included, as a “soft” variant of the phenomenon. Gill Seidel devoted a whole section to him in her 1986 study *The Holocaust Denial: Antisemitism, Racism & the New Right*, judging that “David Irving makes a very decisive contribution to the ‘soft revisionist’ literature on the second world war.” “His sober writing contains nothing of the vulgar racism which permeates the pamphlets of McLaughlin and Harwood. He does not deny the Holocaust. He does not suggest that the Jews were responsible for the war. Rather, from documentary scraps and by editing documents, Irving claims that Hitler knew nothing of the “Final Solution”, and that his aides carried out the killings behind his back.”

Yet as Seidel’s book appeared, Irving began to move closer to the position occupied by hard-core Holocaust deniers. In a lecture entitled “Censorship of History,” given in Runnymede, Australia, Irving went out of his way to challenge the evidential importance of the appalling situation in the concentration camps revealed in the Spring of 1945. According to Irving, “the starvation, the epidemics, the typhoid had

only broken out in the last two or three weeks of the war.” And it was not the Germans, but the allies who were to be partly blamed. “We have to admit probably that we the British and the Americans were partially responsible, at least partially responsible for their misfortune. Because we vowed deliberate bombing of the transportation networks, deliberate bombardation, bombarding the German communications, by deliberate destruction of the German pharmaceutical industry, medicine factories. We had deliberately created the conditions of chaos inside Germany. We had deliberately created the epidemics, and the outbreaks of typhus and other diseases, which led to those appalling scenes that were found at their most dramatic in the enclosed areas, the concentration camps, where of course epidemics can ravage and run wild. And so it is symbolic of the hypocrisy that existed at the end of the Second World War that we picked on those awful photographs, which were of course good television one would say nowadays, they were good newsprint, they were good photos, they were very photogenic those scenes, those piles of corpses. We picked on them as being evidence that the war was a just war and that our journey had not been in vain.”

However Irving was not prepared, yet, to deny the Holocaust as such, or in any case not the fact that many Jews had died. He did, however, reject the notion that the genocide of the Jews was a centrally managed, state-approved enterprise, and even began to become silent about the role of the men like Himmler who, in his earlier writings, he had still blamed for the Holocaust. Obviously Himmler was too close to Hitler, and it was not very probable that Himmler would have exterminated a good part of European Jewry without Hitler’s knowledge. Irving began to shift the responsibility to the actions of “nameless criminals” of various nationalities. In a radio interview, given during the same Australian trip, he stated that between hundreds of thousands, or even millions of Jews, had been liquidated, “by the Germans, or the Latvians, or the Ukrainians, or all the rest who carried out li-

liquidations.” “They were the victims of a large number of nameless criminals into whose hands they fell on the eastern front. Mostly around Eastern Europe the liquidations occurred. And these men acted on their own impulse, their own initiative, within the general atmosphere of brutality created by the Second World War, in which of course the Allied bombings played a part.” When his interviewer Terry Lane asked him if his remark about the “hundreds of thousands or millions” of Jews implied that he rejected the figure of six million Jewish victims, Irving replied tergiversantly that “when you are a statistician as I am, and you’ve studied statistics, you know that figures don’t compact, they don’t come rounded up to six figures like that, with zeroes at the end. There is one school of thought that says 4 million. Another school of thought may say 6,500,000. Another school of thought, right out at the fringe, says it was only 100,000.” Irving was not yet willing to come down on one or the other side.

In 1986 Irving visited Toronto on a world-encompassing lecture tour. He had arranged for a driver to pick him up at the airport, but instead Zündel showed up to greet him. According to Zündel, “David Irving was visibly shocked.” “He wanted nothing to do with me, even then, because of the bad reputation that I had in conservative circles in England and Europe. He thought I was some “Revisionist-Neo-Nazi-Rambo-Kook!” In order not to give the wrong impression to his audience, Irving asked Zündel not to show up at his lecture. Zündel complied, and so did his supporters. As a result, attendance of Irving’s lecture was very poor. Worst of all, no journalists had shown up.

After Irving left, Zündel sent him a long letter in which he reviewed the disappointing results of the trip, and sought to draw some lessons from it. “You were frank with me in your fears about being linked with me and I made every effort, as you will recall, not to embarrass you with my presence. Unfortunately, this lack on my part did lead to the dismal showing of “no press” at your meeting, because few people seem able to handle the press well. I have usually had success in my

arrangements for press attendance and coverage, before, during, and after my trial. Please make sure that you have someone competent handle your next appearance. You deserve the best! I have been thinking long and hard how I could be of help to you, despite my “gag order” which does not permit me to say much on topics such as you tackle in your books. It struck me, after having enjoyed your televised presentation, that you would be able to reach more of the public, which is increasingly illiterate, and at a profit, by making some videotaped presentations which you could market through whomsoever you wished, perhaps even setting up your own distributing network. I have no idea if you have a list of bookbuyers--that is, of individuals, rather than publishers. If you do, you would have the “grassroots” support which could allow you to establish an independent business --one which you yourself would control and of course, make most of the editorial decisions and, in the end, retain most of the profit yourself.” The German-Canadian Mephistopheles had found his English Faust. And in the remainder of the letter Zündel persuasively laid out more schemes that would enrich Irving, whom he characterized as a “promoter’s dream.” “You are handsome and witty, but not superficial, and thus have a wonderful combination of presentability and credibility. You speak beautifully, with a well-modulated voice. You can be combative and abrasive when necessary and also humble and charming.” All of these talents were, of course, wasted if no-one was to market them properly. Zündel, who identified himself as “an advertising man,” made it clear that he saw all the possibilities. But, after having made the suggestion he wanted, he did not push it any further, for the moment.

In the year that followed, Zündel and Irving began an informal cooperation. Zündel was interested in pursuing legal action against an American soldier said to have killed German guards of Dachau after their surrender to the American army. This soldier had never been brought to trial for war crimes--a fact that clearly illustrated according to

Zündel that the post-war allied war crime trials of German military personnel had been merely instances of victor's justice. He asked Irving if he could help him obtaining relevant documentation. Irving obliged.

In late 1987, after having established a practice of collaboration, Zündel raised once more the issue of a possible appearance by Irving as a witness in his second trial. "Dear Mr.Irving: You have an outstanding memory of persons, places and events, so you will likely remember our conversation on the way to the Toronto International Airport in 1986 in regard to your appearance as a witness in The Second Great Holocaust Trial. You will no doubt recall that I won my appeals on the provincial and Supreme Court levels in regard to my conviction for "the dissemination of false news" following the First Great Holocaust Trial and that both appellate courts directed that there be a retrial under the same thoughtcrime charge, in view of the many irregularities committed by the Crown and the judge at the first trial....[....]I am therefore alerting you now in order to advise you that I would very much appreciate your appearance as an expert witness in regard to your findings on Churchill and the warmongers who brought about World War II. Undoubtedly, the prosecution will ask you about "mass-gassings" and "Hitler's orders for the extermination of Jews", and I assume that you will give him the same statements you have made in this regard during your various lectures and talks. I think the Defence can live with that! Certainly, no one need gloss over the occurrence of pogroms, just as I do not gloss over the existence of concentration camps and deportations." Zündel proved a master of persuasion. He suggested that Irving could use his stay in Toronto to give lectures and promote his books, offering to provide "frontmen" to organize the book-promotion campaign. "Should you wish to extend your visit in order to go to other parts of Canada, I would recommend that you do so, in order to take advantage of the publicity derived from your courtroom appearances. During the first trial, we received coast-to-

coast coverage virtually every day. The time to plan is now! I need to know from you the best time or time which is most convenient for you to come to Toronto during the trial. That way, we can prepare advance notice to the media and the public so as to avoid any repetition of the mean and outrageous treatment you received during your last Toronto appearance. I think it was shocking that you were received with such little appreciation and that so few knew that you were coming in the first place! The Zionists knew you were coming, so the general public should have known about it, too, and not just a few members of the geriatric kosher-conservative, “anti-communist” clique. In regard to advance publicity, I would recommend that you supply your Toronto “agents “ with ample promotional material for them to mail to the media, not once, but at least twice, so as to remind them to come out in force.”

Zündel repeated his presentation of the trial as a catalyst for a successful book-tour in another letter sent in early January, 1988. After having expressed his dismay for the fact that Irving had to personally deliver his books to London booksellers, and once more offering to organize help with such pedestrian chores so that Irving could concentrate on the important task of revising history, Zündel came to the point. “After several false starts, my thoughtcrime trial is to commence on 18 January 1988. Thus your testimony would occur somewhat later than we had foreseen, which means late March or early April. I reiterate my offer to be of assistance, directly or indirectly, in the promotion of your books, including the organisation of a lecture tour, coupled with your trial appearance, which could get such a promotional tour off with a proverbial “bang”. Your timely appearance at the “Hitler Diary “ debate was excellent in this regard, and the forthcoming trial here in Toronto promises to be a well-covered media event.”

Irving remained cautious. In his reply to Zündel Irving established clear conditions to make the whole thing worth it to him: the whole operation was to be essentially risk-free as far as the authorities were

concerned. “In the interests of serving historical truth I would be prepared to testify on the basis of my own research subject to assurances from the Canadian and American authorities that this would not jeopardise my hitherto unimpeded access to their respective countries. I have contacted their London representatives about this. Your defense attorney should also bear in mind that I wrote on the last occasion, that cross-examination will bring out that there are differences of opinion between your hypotheses and my own. In short, I accept that a great tragedy did happen but do not accept the present versions as to how. I should also require adequate compensation for my time and travel.”

In early March Zündel became suddenly nervous about Irving’s appearance when two of the expert witness he had called--Dr. Russell Barton and Dr. Kuang Fann--agreed during cross-examination with the Crown’s argument that the Nazis had murdered six million Jews, and that *Did Six Million Really Die?* was a repugnant book. He contacted Irving again, writing that he could not afford anymore to have one of his witnesses “in the final analysis agreeing with the Crown prosecutor that ‘It really did happen.’” “I do not know what your state of knowledge concerning the Holocaust is or what your tactical stance on the issue is at this time. But I need your assurance that if you do testify you will state either that you have done no primary research into this area and cannot give an expert opinion or that what research you have done indicated major problems with the Holocaust story. If you feel you cannot in all honesty give either of these answers, then I believe that your testimony would be too damaging for me. I have heard you say that something did happen in the East, but nobody really knows what. I could live with that! But to affirm that mass gassings took place, or that there was an official policy of “Judenausrottung” coming from your lips would be a disaster for me. Please let me know exactly how you feel.”

Then Zündel received Leuchter's report, and with that he acquired the opportunity to force the issue with Irving. The question became now very easy: would Irving be prepared to endorse, in court, Leuchter's findings. In an interview given in 1998, Zündel told the American filmmaker Errol Morris what happened next. "So I called Florida and I said, "Mr Irving." "Oh, Ernst, what's up?" I said, "Well, you know about the trial?" "Yes." "Are you free?" "Well, sort of. When would you need me?" I said, "Well, hear me out. I have sent an American gas chamber expert to Auschwitz. He's come back with samples." There was a long silence at the end of the line and he said, "And?" I said, "The results are in our favor." He said, "Ernst, I'm coming to Toronto. I am coming to Toronto." I said, "Not so fast. First, I'm going to send you down the booklet, *Did Six Million Really Die?* Then I'm going to give you a rough outline of what he found." Because I know that David Irving, although he is willing to help me for a price, that he, next to Fred, would be a pretty expensive witness, you know. So, I mean, I'm a fairly frugal man, so I had to weigh how long and when do I want to have this august Englishman gracing the courtroom in Toronto together with an already very expensive Fred Leuchter and Professor Roth. But anyway, he said he was going to come, he said this was sensational. And then he said, "Why did I not think of that myself?" Why didn't he think of doing that himself? Well, actually that's a very logical question. Right? But he hadn't thought of it himself. So we decided that he was going to come up, he was going to look at the report, he was going to meet Fred Leuchter, who was still in Toronto, and, based on that, he was then going to decide whether or not he was going to be a witness.[....] And so David Irving was in Toronto. He saw the Leuchter report. He met Fred Leuchter, he looked at all the stuff that he had brought, the video footage, and the drawings that Fred had brought with him. And he said, "this is a shattering document. The Leuchter report is a shattering document. It is a stroke of genius by the defense. As a historian," he said, "anybody that will write history, the history of the Second World War that does not take into consideration what Fred Leuchter has found and unearthed, will

henceforth do so at their peril because they will write propaganda. Not history.” For Zündel the chase had ended. Irving was to testify on his behalf, unequivocally endorsing Leuchter’s findings.

Irving testified on Friday 22 April, and Monday and Tuesday, 25 and 26 April, 1988. As an expert witness for the defence, Irving endorsed in general terms the main object of legal contention, Harwood’s *Did Six Million Really Die?* “[Christie]: “If you were to classify the book *Did Six Million Really Die?* as to say its factual content, looking at its alleged facts, what percentage would you [state] to be true, in your opinion?” [Irving]: “I would estimate over ninety percent of the brochure *Did Six Million Really Die?* to be factually accurate on the basis of the facts which I arrived at by an entirely different approach, namely the documentary basis.”

Given Irving’s general endorsement of *Did Six Millions Really Die?*, it is good to repeat once more the book’s central claim that the whole Holocaust was a piece of atrocity propaganda not different from the stories that circulated in the First World War, and that credited the Germans with transfixing Belgian babies on bayonets and operating “corpse factories” where they extracted from the corpses of their own dead glycerine and other useful commodities. Yet the big difference between the First and Second World War was that, after the former, the truth had been re-established, while no such action had happened after the latter. To the contrary, according to Harwood the atrocity propaganda had become more intense. “Gruesome paperback books with lurid covers continue to roll from the presses, adding continuously to a growing mythology of the concentration camps and especially to the story that no less than Six Million Jews were exterminated in them.”

During his testimony, David Irving did not merely give credence to the theory that the stories about gassings were allied atrocity propaganda through his general endorsement of *Did Six Million Really Die?*. He also addressed the issue directly when crown-attorney Pearson confronted

him with a passage from his *Hitler's War*. In this book, Irving described the impact at Hitler's headquarters of the publication of a Soviet report on the camp, which had been liberated in the Summer of 1944. "On October 27th, 1944, news reports reached Hitler that the Russians claimed to have found a former concentration camp, Majdanek, near Lublin, at which 1,500,000 people had been liquidated; according to Heinz Lorenz, his press officer, Hitler angrily dismissed the reports as propaganda--just as German troops had been accused of "hacking off children's hands in Belgium" in 1914. When Ribbentrop pressed him for an answer, the Führer replied more revealingly, "That is Himmler's affair, and his alone." He betrayed no flicker of emotion." Cross-examined by Pearson, Irving now stated that the "gas chamber story" was allied propaganda. "[Pearson]: "You're satisfied that this October 27th, 1944 exchange between Ribbentrop and Hitler took place?" [Irving]: "I would have to check to see what my source was but certainly if I wrote that, I had a very good source for it." Q.: "And you say 'Hitler betrayed no flicker of emotion.' How do you know that?" A.: "Probably from the testimony given by Ribbentrop in the source that I used." Q.: "So, you're saying there that Hitler was not surprised that 1,500,000 people had been liquidated. Isn't that what you're saying?" A.: "If you read the paragraph closely you'll see this is the Allied propaganda saying that 1,500,000 people have been liquidated. This was among a number of very large similar claims put out by the British psychological warfare executive on the instructions of the British Secret Service, the gas chamber story originated in the British Secret Service. The psychological warfare executive and the files on that are now available in the British public records office."

Both his statement in the Toronto court, and Irving's more recent attempts to discredit the evidence about the extermination camps by placing them in the context of "more far-fetched atrocity legends" which accused the Germans of using bodies as the raw material for the production of soap, confronts us once more with the question if, in-

deed, there exists a historical link between the allied atrocity propaganda of the First World War (which wrongly did accuse the Germans of producing soap from corpses) and the revelations about the German extermination camps in the Second World War. As we have seen at the beginning of Chapter Three, there is a link---but not on in which the accounts of the mass-murder of people in gas chambers are simply recycled atrocity stories from the First World war. The historical link is that during the Second World War the general public showed a great reluctance to believe accounts of atrocities because they remembered how they had been fooled by wild stories and outright lies of a quarter-century earlier. Unlike the men and women who opposed the Kaiser, those who fought Hitler were sceptics. Irving's claim that the accounts of the German death camps, and Auschwitz in particular, were the result of allied atrocity propaganda has little claim to truth. The only historical link between the notorious *Kadaververwerkungsanstalt* and the killing machinery in Auschwitz is that, during the Second World War, many refused to believe accounts of the latter because of memories of the former. In 1988, when he endorsed *Did Six Million Really Die?* Irving had ceased to care about history. On the witness stand, testifying for a well-known Holocaust denier, Irving turned into a denier of history.

"[Christie]: "Does--does the conclusion of the booklet *Did Six Million Really Die?* Offend your sensitivities as a historian or not?" [Irving]:

"Will you remind me of what the conclusion is before I testify to that?"

Q.: "Just dealing with the question most pertinent to the extermination legend is, of course, how many of the three million European Jews under German control survived after 1945?" A.: "Right. Let me say at this point I think this conclusion here they are aiming at here is justified. I am delighted that so many Jews survived what they now describe as the Holocaust and I am puzzled at the apparent lack of logic. That the Nazis are supposed to have had a government policy for the deliberate, ruthless, systematic extermination of the Jews in Auschwitz and in other places of murder and yet tens if not hundreds of thousands of Jews passed through these camps and are I am glad to say alive and

well amongst us now to testify to their survival, so either the Nazis or they were an exceedingly sloppy race, which isn't image that we have of them today. It's another of the logical questions which is being asked in this history which the historians hitherto have not asked." As I have demonstrated in Chapter One, the fact that Jews survived for example Auschwitz does not mean that either Auschwitz was not an extermination camp, or the Germans were sloppy. Many Jews who could work were imprisoned in Auschwitz as slave labour, and in the Summer of 1944 tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews were temporarily admitted in Auschwitz as so-called *Durchgangsjuden*, to be transported on as slave labour to other camps. The survivors of Auschwitz belonged almost exclusively to these two categories of prisoners.

When Irving testified that the existence of survivors meant that Auschwitz could not have been an extermination camp (as the Germans were no sloppy executioners), he stated what had become by 1988 a well-known negationist argument. At other moments during his testimony he quoted and affirmed further well-established negationist doctrine. For example, when Pearson confronted him with Karl Bischoff's letter of January 29, 1943, Irving repeated Butz's interpretation of the word *Vergasungskeller* "[Pearson]: 'Now Mr. Irving, before the break you had told us that you had not read Commandant Hoess' account of what was happening at Auschwitz. Is that right?' [Irving]: 'That is correct.' Q.: 'And I show you a document from the National Archives of the United States and ask you if before coming to Toronto, you had seen that document.' A.: 'Yes, sir, this is the document you just asked me a few minutes ago to read through and I am familiar with the document and I was familiar with the document before I came to Toronto.' Q.: 'All right. Now, do you have any reason to question the authenticity of that document?' A.: 'I have no reason to question the authenticity of this document although the providence with the document isn't clear from the staff evidence analysis sheet attached to it.' Q.: 'We have not referred in proceedings to the staff evidence analysis

sheet.” A.: “The staff evidence analysis sheet was a sheet attached to any exhibit at Nuremberg which would inform as to where the document had been found and it is rather imprecise but I have no reason to question its authenticity.” Q.: “All right. Now, there is attached to this a translation that was prepared presumably at the time of the Nuremberg trials. Have you had an opportunity, and I know it was a very brief opportunity, but you did have a brief opportunity to compare the translation with the German document and is it a satisfactory translation in your view?” A.: “It is a satisfactory translation apart from one sentence where--which is quite clearly the operative sentence, which says--I would translate it as ‘This is, however unimportant, as the *Vergasungskeller*’” Q.: “Let’s put it up on the overhead to see what we’re talking about. First of all, is this the original German?” A.: “It is the same document.” Q.: “Document January 29th, 1943?” A.: “It is the same document and I am referring to this sentence here, ‘Die ist jedoch unbedeutend, da der *Vergasungskeller* hierfür benutzt werden kann.’ I translate as ‘This is, however, unimportant as the *Vergasungskeller* can be used for this,’ and the German word *Vergasungskeller* is a known [?] coming from the German verb *Vergas[en]*, and the German verb *Vergas[en]*, like many German words, has different translations, some of them completely different in meaning from each other.” Q.: “All right.” A.: “It can mean gassing, it can mean “carboureshing” (ph), as in the sense of a carburetor on a car and this is the meaning which I don’t find, the alternative meaning in the translation of the document, the possibility that it refers not to gassing but to the “carboureshen” process in some kind of oil fire heater, so when we are looking at a *Vergasungskeller* I think it is tendentious to translate it as gas chamber. I mentioned on Friday that a German-- Q.: “What do you mean by tendentious?” A.: “Tendentious? I think it is trying to arrive at an impression. It is giving possibly a deliberately wrong translation of the word. It is a possible translation but it is an unlikely translation because if a German was going to write the word ‘gas chamber,’ he would not write ‘*Vergasungskeller*’ He would write ‘*Gasungskeller*’.”

Or would he? German documents show that the adjective *Vergasungs-* was commonly used to qualify means or procedures used in the gassing of people. For example, in the notorious letter of October 25, 1941 which Dr. Erhard Wetzel, Advisor for Jewish Affairs in the Ostministerium, drafted for Alfred Rosenberg, Wetzel mentions that “Oberdienstleiter Brack of the Führer’s Chancellery has agreed to assist in the construction of the necessary buildings and gassing apparatus (*Vergasungsapparate*)....In the present situation, there are no objections to getting rid of Jews who are unable to work with the Brack remedy.” The “gassing apparatus” was a gas van. In his memoirs, written after the war, Adolf Eichmann was to call these gas chambers on wheels “gassing cars” (*Vergasungswagen*). And when, also after the war, Erich Bauer testified about the extermination of Jews in Sobibor, he also used the word *Vergasung* as an adjective: “The doors were sealed airtight and immediately the gassing procedure (*Vergasungsvorgang*) commenced. After some 20–30 minutes there was complete silence in the gas chambers; the people were gassed (*vergast*) and dead.” And both Walther Dejaco and Fritz Ertl, testifying during their trial in 1972, used the term gassing spaces--“*Vergasungsräume*”--to denote gas chambers. For example, in his testimony given on January 19, 1972, Dejaco denied that he had transformed the morgue of crematorium 1 into a “gassing space.” “I have certainly not inserted a wall in crematorium 1. With this work I had, as I have already made clear, nothing to do. I did not know anything about the gassing space. I have not inserted any wall..[...] I did not know what went on behind my back. At this time one was of course very much concerned, that no one would know what was happening in Auschwitz. Therefore the Kommandantur will have done such work as the insertion of a wall in the crematorium or the purchase of the incineration ovens and the installation of gassing spaces on its own initiative. After all, no one should know what happened there.” Ertl commented on January 21, 1972 that when he wrote in his

report of August 19, 1942 about the so-called “bathhouses for special actions”--“*Badeanstalten für Sonderaktionen*”--, “I knew at the time, that this concerned gassing spaces.”

Furthermore, I have never found an example of Germans using the adjective *Gasung* in the context of a discussion on the killing of people in gas chambers. Hence Irving’s argument is non-sensical. While indeed the word *Gaskammer* is more common when referring to a (homicidal) gas chamber, the common use of the adjective *Vergasungs*- in conjunction with a noun in the context of discussion on the gassing of people fully explains why Kirschneck, who had drafted the letter for Bischoff, would have formed the composite neologism *Vergasungskeller* when referring to a basement that was to function as a gas chamber.

Pearson did not press Irving on the issue of the *(Ver)Gasungskeller*. He did, however, try to pin Irving down on the precise meaning of words the latter had written more than ten years earlier, in the Introduction to the 1977 edition of his own *Hitler’s War*. “[Pearson]: “Don’t you go on to say what the Final Solution was, sir? Right in your introduction?” [Irving]: “If you can point out the passage concerned.” Q.: “All right. First of all, let’s go to the last sentence. ‘*For thirty years, our knowledge of Hitler’s part in the atrocity has rested on inter-historian incest.*’ What atrocity are you talking about?” A.: “There is no other way to describe what happened. Thousands of civilians being lined up on the side of pits and being machine-gunned to the pits after being robbed of their personal possessions. This kind of thing can only be described as an atrocity whether it happens in German, Yugoslavia or Vietnam.” Q.: “‘*Many people, particularly in Germany and Austria, had an interest in propagating the said version that the order of one madman originated the entire massacre. Precisely when the order was given and in what form has, admittedly, never been established.*’ For the--for what, sir?” A.: “The order for the atrocities. We are talking about the order that these people imagine exist so there was one central order.” Q.: “‘*In 1939?--but the secret extermination camps did not begin operating until December 1941.*’ Sir, aren’t you suggesting

there, stating to the reader that the secret extermination camps did not begin operating until December 1941?" A.: "I think I have to say here that this sentence falls into the category of sentences that I would not repeat in 1988. At the time I wrote that in the 1960's, 1974 thereabouts when I wrote--wrote that introduction, I believed. I believed everything I had heard about the extermination camps. I wasn't investigating the extermination camps. I was investigating Hitler." Q.: "But you told us that you did ten years of extensive research on the National Socialist regime?" A.: "Yes." Q.: "And you had no problem making that statement, did you?" A.: "Because I believed." Q.: "Right." A.: "I believed what I had read up at that point. I hadn't gone to the sites of Auschwitz and Treblinka and Maidanek and brought back samples and carried out analysis. I hadn't done any research into what is called the Holocaust. I researched Hitler and his staff." Q.: "You haven't done that, have you, since?" A.: "I haven't." Q.: "You haven't done those things?" A.: "I have carried out no investigation in-depth in equivalent depth of the Holocaust." Q.: "But your mind changed?" A.: "My mind has now changed." Q.: "You no longer believe it?" A.: "I have now begun to challenge that. I understand it is now a subject open to debate." Q.: "But your belief changed even though you didn't do any research; is that what you're saying?" A.: "My belief has now changed because I understand that the whole of the Holocaust mythology is, after all, open to doubt and certainly in the course of what I have read in the last few days, in fact, in this trial, I am now becoming more and more hardened in this view." Q.: "As a result of what you've read here in the last few days?" A.: "Indeed."

As he explained, the reading matter that had changed his mind was Leuchter's conclusion that "none of the facilities examined were ever utilized for the execution of human beings and that the crematories could never have supported the alleged work load attributed to them." In court, Irving publically embraced Leuchter's conclusions. "I'm very impressed, in fact, by the presentation, by the scientific manner of

presentation, by the expertise that's been shown by it and by the very novel conclusion that he's arrived at," and Irving admitted that "as a historian I 'm rather ashamed it never occurred to me to make this kind of investigation on the particular controversy." In conclusion, Irving endorsed the report wholeheartedly. "I think it is shattering in the significance of its discovery."

It is good to remember that, when Irving offered his wholehearted endorsement of the Leuchter Report, its author had already admitted in court that he had gone to Poland minimally prepared, having read three works by Holocaust deniers, two documents on the use of hydrocyanide, and some pages from Hilberg's *Destruction of the European Jews*. Then, too, Leuchter had admitted that he never tried to cross-reference his own observations by looking at the German blueprints, or by studying the testimonies of eye-witnesses. This attitude should have troubled a historian who took pride in his own research skills and his undisputed tenacity in uncovering new material. Indeed: Irving completely ignored Leuchter's sorry performance on the witness stand which he admitted he had witnessed. Let us, for the record, recall some of the main issues that had come up. Leuchter had stated that ninety percent of his conclusions were based on his engineering opinion, and only ten percent on the analysis of the samples that he had taken. Yet during cross-examination, he had to admit that this engineering opinion was very flawed. For example, Leuchter assumed that hydrogen cyanide was very combustible, and that because the gas chambers were located not too far from the incineration ovens, there ought to have been a danger for explosion. Yet during cross-examination he admitted that while hydrogen cyanide became combustible at 60,000 parts per million, it was lethal at 300 parts per million, that is at 0.5 percent of the combustion point. Irving was in the audience and watched it all. It obviously did not leave an impression. Furthermore Leuchter flatly stated that the build up of hydrogen cyanide in the brick and mortar would make the gas chambers very dangerous to use for the SS, yet un-

der cross-examination he had to admit that hydrogen cyanide had only a very short life, and that it quickly combined with iron present in brick or mortar to make the harmless pigment ferro-ferri cyanide, also known as Prussian blue. Then Leuchter stated that the alleged gas chambers could not have worked because there was no ventilation system to extract the gas from the gas chambers. Without a proper ventilation system, the basement of crematorium II could not have been used as a homicidal gas chamber. During cross-examination, Pearson produced a copy of a German document that stated that the gas chamber was to be equipped with an installation for aeration [*Belüftung*] and ventilation [*Entlüftung*], effectively demolishing Leuchter's argument. Then Leuchter had to admit that his calculations as to the very low capacity of the gas chambers were based on the assumption that the Germans would have followed American practices, which aim to kill the victim very fast in order to spare the victim "unusual and cruel punishment." As the Germans were not very interested in ensuring a quick and painless death of those to be murdered, Leuchter had to admit that his calculations were irrelevant. He also had to admit that his assumption that the only way to understand the gas chambers in Auschwitz was through comparison with American gas chambers, and that if the former did not conform to the principles of the latter, the German gas chambers could not have worked, was fallacious. Particularly embarrassing for Leuchter had been the interchange with Pearson about Leuchter's claim that those who inserted the hydrogen cyanide through the roof vents into the gas chambers of crematoria 2 and 3 would die themselves from exposure to the poison. After some simple questions, Leuchter had to admit that, once again, he had been wrong. He also had to admit during cross-examination that he had no expert knowledge of crematoria.

When Irving publically announced in the Toronto courtroom that he changed his mind about the historicity of the Auschwitz gas chambers, he turned against a consensus held for more than four decades by

scholars, judges, and the general public that Auschwitz had been the site where Germans operated gas chambers for the execution of human beings, and that in these gas chambers very large numbers of people had been killed. At the time of Irving's "conversion," the informed estimate of the number of victims ranged between a little under a million people (Reitlinger) to 2.5 million, with a clear tendency in more recent scholarship to put the number of victims between one and 1.5 million people. Rejecting the various results of careful analyses done by many historians, Irving hastily embraced, on the basis of a document that purported to be a forensic analysis of the remains of the Auschwitz gas chambers, a piece of scientific garbage.

Irving's public conversion had made him the new hero of Holocaust Deniers everywhere. One negationist magazine, *Instauration* celebrated his testimony as "traumatic for world Jewry." Mark Weber wrote Irving that "[w]ith your support of holocaust revisionism, the outcome is no longer in doubt." "It's not everyone who has a chance to be instrumental in a historic turnaround. The practical consequences of destroying the holocaust myth are almost indescribably potent. "

It is clear that Irving did not need Weber's flattery to fully appreciate the impact of his testimony. In August 1988 he returned to Canada for a talk. In it, he stated that since he had been a small boy he had enjoyed to see important people, or people with reputation and prestige, with "egg on their face." With Holocaust denial, he had found a way to act out his boyhood dream. "[J]ust imagine the omelet on their faces if we manage to expose that other six million lie [as opposed the six million marks *Der Stern* paid for the Hitler diaries]. This is the prospect that is now opening up in front of me." Reviewing his own journey towards his endorsement of the Leuchter Report earlier that year, Irving described his thesis that Hitler knew nothing of the Holocaust as "aa kind of half-way house in m conversion." But his full conversion only came when he saw the scientific evidence. In fact, during the lecture he mentioned that the old-style Holocaust deniers had done the revi-

sionist cause harm, “because they have not used the necessary scientific methods in making their claim on Auschwitz.” “But Mr. Zündel has used the scientific method. And taking this as a starting point, I have now begun, over the last few months, going round the archives with a completely open mind, looking for the evidence myself. Because if Auschwitz, just to take that one cardinal tent pole of the case, if Auschwitz itself was not an extermination factory, then what is the evidence that it was? This is one thing we have to look at. How did all the evidence come into existence?” Irving argued that all the evidence had a very narrow basis--”one, or two, or three documents and eyewitness accounts.” Speculating on the origin of the Vrba--Wetzlar report, issued by the War Refugee Board, Irving stated in 1944 some thought it to be Nazi propaganda, because it revealed that “the Jews themselves were the people responsible for the ‘atrocities’ at Auschwitz, that “the people whose job it was to select, and deport, and ship into the gas chambers, and carry out the bodies and so on, were all Jews themselves....The real atrocities were committed by the Jews themselves in the camp at Auschwitz.” A more likely scenario, however, was that the British government “masterminded the gas chamber lie” in order to motivate Allied soldiers “so that they would fight even harder.” Interpreting the Cavendish-Bentinck minute of 27 August 1943, Irving argued that the authors of the lie thought that by 1943 it had served its purpose. And he added, “here we are 44 years later and that hare is still running, bigger and stronger than ever, because nobody dares now stand up and kill it.” “It is got out of control. The Auschwitz propaganda lie that was starting to run in 1944 is now out of control. And it is going to take He-men of the kind of stature of Ernst Zündel to kill that particular hare [applause]. So gradually the whole edifice of contrary evidence is coming together. We are demolishing [the argument] that says that it was, and we are finding the evidence that says that it was not. It is a very, very happy task for myself and it is exactly the kind of thing I like doing.”

Irving predicted that soon the whole exterminationist edifice was going to come down, and people would realize that while Jews may have suffered, “along with a lot of other minorities and ethnic groupings,” the Jews did not suffer proportionally more than other groups. “I don’t think that their suffering can be said to be worse than the sufferings suffered by the Germans after the war, in the great mass expulsions, the great population movements.” All of this was to become the subject of a new book--to be published in five years. “It has to be my final book probably, on Auschwitz. This is why I hope that people will recognize that I managed to pull off a coup even more spectacular than exposing the Hitler diaries as a fake. From one six million lie to another. That I will see then that some of the world’s most famous historians and politicians have the biggest omelet of all times all over their face.”

Irving did not (yet) keep his promise to enlighten the world with a study of Auschwitz. Instead he bought from Zündel the right to publish through his own publishing venture “Focal Point” the British edition of the Leuchter Report. In the spring of 1989 everything was ready for the book-launch. The spirit of the day suggested that revisionism was on the rise. In April a storm broke loose in the United States about the a book published half a year earlier by the respected Princeton historian Arno Mayer. Entitled *Why did the heavens not darken? The Final Solution in history*. Mayer argued that the Holocaust, which he termed “Judeocide,” was not the result of antisemitism, but of antibolshevism. It did not arise from the National Socialist phantasy concerning the so-called “Jewish Question,” but resulted from German frustration when the Wehrmacht failed to defeat the Soviet Union in the Summer and Fall of 1941. “The Jewish catastrophe was forged in the crucible of this irreversible but failing Glaubenskrieg. This secular crusade provided the mastery of space, the corridor of time, and the climate of violence the Nazis needed to perpetrate the Judeocide.”

While this thesis could perhaps be accepted for the operations of the *Einsatzgruppen* Mayer went farther: Operation Barbarossa also provided the cause and context for the death camps, including Auschwitz. “The very origins of the centers of mass killing reflect the existence of an iron nexus between absolute war and large-scale political murder in eastern Europe. Of the six such centers--Auschwitz, Majdanek, Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibór, and Treblinka--Auschwitz and Majdanek were started as stalags for prisoners of war and concentration camps for political prisoners. At the outset Auschwitz and Majdanek were also meant to serve as outposts for the implantation of the Thousand-Year Reich in occupied Poland and Russia. The nexus of absolute war and deliberate mass murder remained all-pervasive. At Auschwitz and Majdenek, which were at one and the same time concentration camps and annihilation centers, the hyper-exploitation of inmates for war production was anything but spurious. Of course, at both camps, in the face of irreversible military setbacks and shortages, the line between egregious exploitation and outright exterminism kept wearing thin. Indeed, ultimately the execrable living, sanitary, and working conditions in the concentration camps and ghettos took a greater toll of life than the willful executions and gassings in the extermination centers.”

Mayer included in his boo a specific chapter devoted to Auschwitz. While Mayer did not deny the presence and importance of the gas chambers, he gave a particular importance to typhus as a cause of death. To be sure, Mayer’s discussion on the selections started conventionally enough. “It is unclear what percentage of the incoming Jews was selected on arrival as “unfit for hard labor “; estimates range between 60 and 80 percent. It is also uncertain how many of these “unfit”--the sick and infirm as well as healthy women, infants, children, and old people--were sent to the gas chambers immediately upon arrival or shortly thereafter, how many were sent sometime later, and how many ultimately dies a natural death.” So far so good. Yet quickly

his account moved beyond legitimate caution about the exact statistics into an irresponsible description of the purpose of and conditions in Birkenau that had no relationship whatsoever to the historical record. “Unlike the main camp, which was and remained an all-male camp for about 15,000 slave workers, Birkenau was to become the major compound not only for forced laborers of both sexes but also for the non-working inmates of the entire complex. Accordingly, upon their arrival after a gruelling and dehumanizing journey in freight cars, all temporarily and permanently “unemployable” Jews were summarily assigned to Birkenau, where housing and sanitation were disastrous, as they were throughout the Auschwitz complex. Half-starved and practically without medical care, the frail and the sick were particularly imperiled, the more so since at the journey’s end the whole of Auschwitz was intermittently in the grip of a devastating typhus epidemic. The result was an unspeakable death rate, partly because the ailing and the dying were brought to Birkenau from both the main camp and from Monowitz. In addition to being the wretched and miasmic habitat for the least fit, Birkenau was the site of Auschwitz’s main medical facility and quarantine center, as well as of most of its crematoriums and gas chambers.” And, without discussing the purpose of those gas chambers, Mayer immediately proceeded to a well-meant but ill-considered reflection on the causes of death in Auschwitz--a reflection that ended with a sentence that, introduced with the oddly chosen adverb “besides,” ceased to make any sense whatsoever. “There is a distinction between dying from “natural” or “normal” causes and being killed by shooting, hanging, phenol injection, or gassing. But quite apart from the vital importance of not allowing this distinction to be used to extenuate and normalize the mass murder at Auschwitz, it should not be pressed too far. The Nazis leaders decided to transport frail and sick Jews, and Gypsies, to Auschwitz in full awareness of the perils they would face, and they continued to do so once there was no ignoring and denying the deadly conditions there, including the endemic

danger of epidemics. Besides, from 1942 to 1945, certainly at Auschwitz, but probably overall, more Jews were killed by so-called “natural” causes than by “unnatural” ones.”

Mayer’s book did not include any annotation that provided an insight into his sources. Neither did he refer to the work of other scholars in his text. The book did contain a bibliography. It included both Butz and Rassinier.

Of all books published on the Holocaust, essential passages of *Why did the heavens not darken?* approached some of the core arguments of the negationists. For example Mayer’s thesis that typhus had been one of the main causes of death in Birkenau could only bring happiness to negationists like Faurisson, who had always maintained that all the Zyklon-B shipped to Auschwitz could be easily explained because of the in his opinion endemic prevalence of typhusbearing lice in the camp. Indeed: many passages could provide Holocaust deniers with useful quotations. Yet none of those connected with the Institute of Historical Review noticed Mayer’s book. This changed when in April 1989 *The New Republic* published an angry and devastating six-page review entitled “False Witness,” written by Daniel Goldhagen. He summarized Mayer’s book as “an artful construction of half-truths” that was “riddled with extraordinary factual errors, which amount to a pattern of falsification and distortion.” Goldhagen observed that Mayer’s “outrageous” account of Auschwitz showed “the spirit of revisionist apologia.” “Mayer is saying, astoundingly, that the Nazi leaders sent Jews to Auschwitz despite their knowledge that life in the camp was perilous as if epidemics were the main danger for the Jews; not with the intention of killing them.” Goldhagen had no difficulty in demolishing Mayer’s account of Auschwitz.

Goldhagen’s review had unintended consequences: it alerted the negationists to the fact that a major historian had produced a work that, with admittedly considerable distortion, could be presented as an en-

dorsement of the revisionist position. Consequently the May issue of the newsletter published by the Institute of Historical Review carried a review entitled “The Holocaust: A Sinking Ship?” It described Mayer as “one of the leading lights of his profession,” and his book as a justification of “the approach and methodology of Revisionist scholars of the Holocaust like Paul Rassinier, Arthur Butz, Robert Faurisson, Wilhelm Stäglich, Walter Sanning, David Irving, Mark Weber, Fritz Berg, Carlo Mattagno, Henri Roques and a growing cohort of other researchers.” It defined Mayer’s text as a “minefield of hoax-boasting concessions “--a place “where Exterminationist angels fear to tread “but an “intrepid Harvard graduate student” had rushed in. And it ended with the question “What to make of it all?” “Is the crew of the good ship *Holocaust* preparing a rush for the lifeboats (and women and children be damned!), or are damage control teams working feverishly below decks in an effort to keep the stricken hull afloat? Will the (largely Gentile) suckers for what passed not so long ago, even among academics, as “the best documented event in history” stick to their berths in steerage, as the hoax capsizes and begins its last lonely hurdle to the watery graveyard of historical frauds? A prediction from this side: by the turn of the millennium Goldhagen and his friends will need bathyscaphes to travel to their beloved showers.”

In his review of *Why did the heavens not darken?*, published later that year in *The Journal of Historical Review*, Robert Faurisson did not hide his pleasure either. One sentence had given him particular joy: “Sources for the study of the gas chambers are at once rare and unreliable.” Faurisson observed how far revisionism had come. He reminded his readers that in 1979 leading French scholars had publically stated that there could be no debate about the gas chambers. “We had to wait until 1988 for an established historian like Arno Mayer to say, in his chapter on Auschwitz, that sources for the study of the gas chambers, far from being *abundant* and *reliable* as people asserted, are only *rare* and *unreliable*. This is just a single example of the significant progress

that Historical Revisionism has made in the scholarly community.” Of course, using his “Ajax Method,” Faurisson did not feel any need to inform his readers about the rest of the paragraph and the one that followed it--paragraphs in which Mayer clearly stated that, despite the lack of information, he did not doubt that there had been gas chambers.

With the apparently partial “conversion” of a prominent historian to a revisionist position vis-avis the Auschwitz gas chambers, the prospects of the Leuchter Report to attract establishment support looked good indeed. In a letter to the negationist Robert Countess, Irving judged Mayer’s book as “remarkable, though not quite as ‘revisionist’ as the reviews of it (Newsweek etc) suggest. Still, it is a breakthrough.” And he added “[i]f Mayer would address the IHR that would be a sensation!” At the same time, the prominent German historian Ernst Nolte had expressed to Irving his willingness to attend, under certain conditions, the next revisionist conference. With the “breakthrough” of *Why did the heavens not darken?*, Irving acquired the confidence to put his whole reputation on the line: the provocative press statement issued by Focal Point--that is Irving--was not only grandiose in its claims for the historic significance of the Leuchter Report, but also unequivocal as to where Irving stood. Ten years after Faurisson had brought his glad tidings to the world, Irving was to make the “epochal announcement” that the gas chambers of Auschwitz had not been. “Nearly forty years after Soviet troops overran the Nazi slave labour camp at Auschwitz in January 1945, the truth is coming out about it. Scientists, using the same ultra-modern equipment and methods that detected the centuries-old fraud of the Turin Shroud, have established that there is no significant trace of any poison residues in the “gas chambers” of Auschwitz and the other main “death camps” purported by the world’s historians. **British historian DAVID IRVING will present the findings at a press conference in London’s World Trade Centre on 23d June 1989...** Irving, controversial--but always right--is the author of nearly

thirty major books on the Hitler era and the Third Reich. His books are always based on the documents and the archives. He does not just quote other historians. His latest biography of Hitler's "Reichsmarschall" Hermann Göring is to be published by Macmillan Ltd in August, and has been hailed by Time Out as "Book of the Year." By writing the introduction to the U.K. Edition of **The Leuchter Report**, he has placed himself at the head of a growing band of historians, worldwide, who are now sceptical of the claim that at Auschwitz and the other camps there were "factories of death" in which millions of innocent people were systematically gassed to death. Irving has a record of exposing fakes and swindles: he once used City of London fraud laboratories to discredit cleverly-faked "diaries" of Hitler's Intelligence chief Wilhelm Canaris that had been offered to William Collins Ltd., and in April 1983 he was the first to unmask the Adolf Hitler "diaries" as fraudulent, creating a sensation at *Der Stern's* Hamburg press conference until the magazine had him evicted. **Now he is saying the same thing about the infamous "gas chambers" of Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek. They did not exist--ever--except, perhaps, as the brainchild of Britain's brilliant wartime Psychological Warfare Executive (PWE).** The tragic "eye-witnesses" must have been, to use no harsher word, mistaken. The survivors of Auschwitz are themselves testimony to the absence of an extermination programme. So what did happen? Come to our press conference on 23d June. Hear Irving deliver his epochal announcement; obtain your copy of the Focal Point publication *The Leuchter Report*--and ask for yourself: is this indeed the end of the line for Auschwitz? "

The press-release followed more or less Irving's introduction to the Leuchter Report. In it, Irving clearly established his contempt for the historical establishment, and his aim to use the Leuchter Report as a weapon in his battle with main-line historians. "Unlike the writing of history, chemistry is an exact science. Old fashioned historians have always conducted endless learned debates about meanings and inter-

pretations, and the more indolent among them have developed a subsidiary Black Art of “reading between the lines”, as a substitute for wading into the archives of World War II documents which are now available in embarrassing abundance.” Saying that “more daring” historians had begun to use modern technologies to dispel “some of the more tenaciously held myths of the twentieth century,” Irving presented his own record as a debunker of the faked Canaris and Hitler diaries through laboratory analysis of the ink used. Moving effortlessly from two diaries that suddenly appeared on the market without any provenance whatsoever to very complex and long-lasting historical events witnessed by thousands of different people, Irving could not hide his own surprise at having failed to subject “Auschwitz” to laboratory analysis. “And yet I have to admit that it would never have occurred to me to subject the actual fabric of the Auschwitz concentration camp and its “gas chambers”--the holiest shrines of this new Twentieth Century religion--to chemical tests to see if there was any trace of cyanide compounds in the walls. The truly astounding results are set out in this report: while significant quantities of cyanide compounds were found in the small de-lousing facilities of the camp where the proprietary (and lethal) Zyklon B compound was used, as all are agreed, to disinfect the plague-ridden clothing of all persons entering these brutal slave-labour camps, no significant trace whatsoever was found in the buildings which international opinion--for it is not more than that--has always labelled as the camp’s infamous gas chambers. Nor, as the report’s gruesomely expert author makes plain, could the design and construction of those buildings have made their use as mass gas-chambers feasible under any circumstances. For myself, shown this evidence for the first time when called as an expert witness at the Zündel trial in Toronto in April 1988, the laboratory reports were shattering. There could be no doubt as to their integrity. I myself would, admittedly, have preferred to see more rigorous methods used in identifying and certifying the samples taken for analysis, but I accept without reservation the difficulties that the examining team faced

on location in what is now Poland; chiselling out the samples from the hallowed site under the very noses of the new camp guards. The video tapes made simultaneously by the team--which I have studied--provide compelling visual evidence of the scrupulous methods that they have used. Until the end of this tragic century there will always be incorrigible historians, statesmen and publicists who are content to believe, or have no economically viable alternative but to believe, that the Nazis used "gas chambers" at Auschwitz to kill human beings. But it is now up to them to explain to me as an intelligent and critical student of modern history why there is no significant trace of any cyanide compound in the building which they have always identified as the former gas chambers. Forensic chemistry is, I repeat, an exact science. The ball is in their court."

Confident of his contribution to world-history, and seeking maximum publicity, Irving sent copies of the preface to Members of Parliament. It was met with an immediate response. On June 20--three days before the official launch of the Leuchter Report--Hugh Dykes M.P. introduced an "early day motion" with the title "David Irving and Holocaust Denial." "Description: That this House, on the occasion of the reunion of 1,000 refugees from the Holocaust, most of whose families were killed in gas chambers or otherwise by Nazi murderers is appalled by the allegation by the Nazi apologist David Irving that the infamous gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka and Majdanek did not exist ever, except perhaps, as the brainchild of Britain's brilliant wartime Psychological Warfare Executive: draws attention to a new fascist publication, the Leuchter Report, in which this evil calumny appears: and condemns without qualification such pernicious work of Hitler's heirs." Eighty-eight of the members present signed the motion. In a letter, copies of which were sent to the media, Irving reacted angrily. "Dear Dykes, Come clean. Who put you up to it! (I am referring to your privileged act of defamation against me in the House). Is this the best that the gallant but dwindling band of gullible believers in the "gas cham-

bers” can do? Unwilling to debate them seriously in public, they resort to the sledgehammer (literally), fire bomb, and “nazi” smear to protect their moral investment. If you persist in believing in “gas chambers” at Auschwitz you are on a loser. I challenge you to replicate the forensic tests that have been carried out on the internal fabric of the “gas chambers” there and come up with results that will prove that it is I, and not your friends, who lie. Further, I offer myself for this test: I will stand in the Auschwitz “gas chamber” and you or your friends can dump in the Zyklon B in the prescribed manner. I guarantee you will get little satisfaction from the outcome!” Luckily for Irving, Dykes did not take him up on his challenge.

On June 23, the day of the book launch, the *Jewish Chronicle* reported that Irving had told them, in an interview given two days earlier, that “[t]he Jewish community have to examine their consciences. They have been propagating something that isn’t true.”

The press conference itself did not take place exactly as planned. The World Trade Centre cancelled Irving’s booking, and he was forced to move the event to his own house, at 81 Duke Street, Mayfair. Irving took care to have the whole press conference recorded on video-tape. Irving was very straightforward about his assertion that the Leuchter Report proved that the Auschwitz gas chambers were the product of allied propaganda which, after the war, no-one had ever wanted to correct. “I don’t think there’s any specific reason why a lie has been adopted. I think that, as I have said often before, that in wartime governments produce propaganda. The propaganda flywheel starts to spin, [and] nobody at the end of the war has a motive to stop the propaganda flywheel spinning. It should be the job of the historians, but the historians have become themselves part of the propaganda process. Now we find in the British archives a lot of evidence that we willingly propagated the gas chamber story because it was a useful propaganda line for us to take. However it was based on such tenuous evidence, as you can see from the document in the press pack, that the people who them-

selves spread the lie then urged that Her Majesty's Government should not even attach their name because for fear that eventually it should be shown up." Challenged to explain where the Jews who had been transported to Auschwitz had gone, Irving asserted that Jewish underground organizations had shipped most of them, "across Europe in trucks," to Palestine, where "they were given new names and a new existence and a new life.... The Jews that were in Israel didn't come from nowhere." For the disappearance of those who could not be accounted for Irving blamed the allies: the men who flew the bombers that destroyed Dresden, and not the SS, were responsible for the fact that so many who were shipped to Auschwitz never returned home. "Another part of them, when Auschwitz was liberated were set out on the roads to be shipped westward where they ended up in cities like Dresden. I don't have to tell you what happened in Dresden three weeks after Auschwitz was evacuated by the Germans. There were one million refugees in the streets of Dresden at the time that we burned Dresden to the ground, killing anything between 100,000 and 250,000 of them." Irving conducted the press conference in a fighting spirit. When asked if he was a fascist, he responded with saying that he was "on an *intifada* against the, against the established version of writing the Holocaust: a one-man *intifada*."

The *Jewish Chronicle* carried a week later a report of the press conference. "Mr. Irving asserted last week that there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz and said he was waging "a one man *intifada*" against Holocaust history. He was speaking at a press conference at his Mayfair flat to launch "The Leuchter Report," a Holocaust denial pamphlet published by Mr Irving's far Right Focal Point Publications. [...] A PLO representative Ms Karma Nabulski angrily rejected Mr Irving's "attempt to hijack the *intifada*. His theories are obscene," she said. Mr. Irving expanded on his theories at a bizarre press conference last week, standing in front of an aerial photo of Auschwitz and a larger colour picture of himself. Part of his "evidence" played on a video at the far end of the

room. Three fuzzy, anoraked figures, including Mr Fred A. Leuchter, an engineer, who designs gas chambers for American prisons, wandered through Birkenau hacking lumps of masonry from the rubble of the crematoria. Were they trying to complete the work of the SS by destroying the evidence? No. They were “scientists” working “under the noses of the Communist guards” gathering “astounding” forensic evidence Mr Irving said. [...] Tests on Mr. Leuchter’s samples showed no traces of cyanide said Mr Irving. Therefore Zyklon B had not been used in the gas chambers, which were not gas chambers after all. He admitted that there was no independent evidence that Mr Leuchter’s samples were from the gas chambers. And he discounted all documentary evidence on the subject and the eyewitness testimony of thousands of Jewish and Nazi witnesses.”

In his provoking if not incitive 1989 preface to the Leuchter Report Irving felt no hesitation in raking some academic muck, suggesting that those historians who maintain that Auschwitz had been an extermination camp did so because they were either intellectually rigid or economically dependent on the high priests of the new “twentieth century religion” of the Holocaust. Yet, at least formally, he still claimed a willingness to entertain the possibility that Leuchter could be proven wrong. In fact, shortly after the publication of the report he received information from what he considered to be a reliable source that the Leuchter Report was very problematic. A certain David A. Crabtree, an engineer resident in Swaziland, had obtained a copy of the Leuchter Report through his daughter, who had attended a lecture Irving had given in Johannesburg. He wrote Irving that he found it interesting reading, “and its major conclusion to be well founded.” Yet he was troubled by the “elementary errors of fact and reasoning in the text.” “Obviously the report was researched and prepared in some haste, and the errors are peripheral to the main argument. Even so, it is clear that they will be used by the well organised opposition to “prove that the author is incompetent and uninformed” to such an ex-

tent that his whole work should be dismissed, and buried, if not actually publicly burned.” Crabtree had considered writing an article about the problems in the Leuchter Report, but in the end offered his notes to Irving, to be used in a revised edition of the work. He closed his cover letter with a general observation. “At Cambridge, forty years ago, I learned the philosophy that history is what historians write, rather than what actually happened. I thoroughly approve of your success in stripping the wallpaper off the cracks of the edifice of conventional wisdom.”

Attached was Crabtree’s five-page effort entitled “The Leuchter Report--proposals for amendments to be incorporated in the second edition, Together with reasoned substantiation thereof.” For all his sympathy for Leuchter’s point of departure, Crabtree was blunt about the man’s scientific expertise. Leuchter’s observations on carbonmonoxide Crabtree described as “total rubbish, good evidence to brand the author as a scientific ignoramus.” Page after page he corrected Leuchter’s figures, and challenged his reasonings. Crabtree had special trouble with Leuchter’s assumption that the gas chambers could only be packed at a density of one “executtee” per nine square feet. “Mention is made of chambers too small to contain the occupants claimed, or attributed. This statement appears to be based on the assumption that executees were evenly spaced at 3 foot intervals, as per the reference to 9 square feet in col I, this page. An assumption is an assumption, and is not necessarily wrong. However, this one is comparable with a popular cocktail party. Surely the popular conception of the holocaust is more like the Tokyo underground at rush hour, or even the Guinness Book of Record figures for how many people get to fill a telephone kiosk or a Volkswagen beetle. 1,5 square feet per person seems more likely, given the alleged conditions. The number of executees per day should be therefore 6 times those used by the author. He can do this without interfering with his argument. He just makes it more acceptable. Even if the executees were allowed 9 square feet each

to be executed in, they would not use the space, as they would crowd themselves as densely as possible away from any perceived poison source, and towards any possible escape route. Proposal--that the calculated output of corpses be increased accordingly. It is still not enough to support the holocaust figures. And the chemical evidence is in any case overwhelming, that it never happened.” Crabtree was neither convinced by Leuchter’s argument that the cyanide could have reached the ovens and exploded, destroying the crematorium: “the fatal percentage of gas is so far below the flammability or explosive limit that it could not have ignited or exploded.” At the end of his report, Crabtree suggested that if the report was limited to “confirmed evidence”--with which he clearly indicated the chemical analysis of the samples--he would be “more easily defended on the battlefield.”

Crabtree’s observations troubled Irving, as can be surmised from Irving’s fax to Ernst Zündel of July 31, 1989. “I think that the enclosed letter from a reliable South African engineer, Crabtree, needs all our urgent attention. In short, he has detected a number of elementary calculating errors in Fred’s report, and he has a number of general comments to make which I confess echo precisely the feelings I had upon reading the report: that having scored conclusively on the issue of the chemical tests, Fred thoroughly confuses the issue by examining what are the theoretical maximum numbers that these buildings could have exterminated. I appreciate the difficulties that an engineer has in writing plain English; they are the same as the difficulties that trades unionists have in speaking it! But the Report is now accepted worldwide as the breakthrough, and in its mass production version we must not let it shoot itself in the foot. I am therefore recommending to Tony that the text of future editions is modified to take these objections into account. Of course, it will then have to be made plain that this is no longer the affidavit as submitted in evidence.”

Zündel responded immediately. He noted that he agreed that the report can be vastly improved, yet that a court order forbade him to do so. Violation would result in him losing his right to appeal, the forfeiture of the bond that kept him out of prison pending his appeal, his immediate arrest and, on completion of his sentence, automatic deportation. As an alternative of tinkering with the Leuchter Report, Zündel suggested that a new expedition could be mounted to Auschwitz. "Philipp seems to have an eager young German publisher with some money and expert television crews and equipment interested in going back there to Auschwitz, Majdanek etc. You seem to get along well with him. Could you not expend that lead into a full fledged one with you being the narrator on scene both in German and English, on location." Zündel suggested that they would use a professional television crew, and take along a "mobile notary" to notarize the samples. Zündel suggested that this adventure would bring great benefits to Irving: "This would give you "instant expert" status let you talk more forcefully and convincingly with "eyewitness status", I was there etc. It would make the whole thing a serious archaeological history endeavour." Zündel also suggested that if the Poles were to make it impossible to take samples, they would amalgamate the new discoveries with the Leuchter samples. And even if the whole thing were to end in scientific failure, Zündel saw the commercial benefits: Irving would end up with "a very marketable product in the Irving image of media Razzle Dazzle."

Zündel also sent a letter to Crabtree, in which he explained, more guardedly, that the Leuchter Report was a court document, and any change would be exploited by the other side as a proof that he had submitted invalid evidence --a serious issue especially as Zündel was appealing the verdict. "My case will be before the courts till about 1990 and I have no intention of giving my enemies an easier time since you yourself state that the "errors are peripheral to the main arguments." I could already point out some of the reasons why Fred Leuchter's cal-

culations were based on industry standard air flow figures re maximum gas release, etc., but will ask you to be patient. We will come up with an “Addendum of Explanation”, which will not compromise me in the courts by raising nitpicking questions while my case winds itself through the court system. I am of the opinion that this report is to be seen, as has been stated by me and Leuchter in the past, as a seminal piece of work.”

Crabtree’s critique, written from a perspective sympathetic to Leuchter’s effort, was not the only indication that there were profound problems with the Leuchter Report. In early August Irving received from Mark Weber an anonymous 23-page German critique, entitled “A critical comment on the so-called Leuchter document” (“Kritische Stellungnahme zum sogen. Leuchter-Dokument”), accompanied by the following explanation of its provenance. “I received this on the 26th of July from a correspondent in West Germany who is sympathetic to Holocaust revisionism. In an accompanying letter he wrote: “Dieser Text erscheint im Herbst in einem Sammelwerk deutscher Historiker. Ich konnte ihn fuer Sie beschaffen, kann Ihnen aber den Verfasser nicht nennen. Was halten Sie davon?” [“This text will appear this Fall in a multi-author volume of German historians. I could get a copy of it for you, but am unable to name the author. What do you think about it?”] This essay is almost certainly the most detailed “exterminationist” response to date of the Leuchter report. It is gratifying to see that the report has provoked such a response, although I am concerned about the impact it might have when it is published later this year. I’ve sent this essay to Ernst Zuendel, and I plan to send it soon to Robert Faurisson. I have also told Leuchter about it, although I don’t have time to translate it into English.”

Weber’s correspondent was partly right: the manuscript was the rough draft of an essay written by the octogenarian German retired civil servant and amateur historian Werner Wegner, who had dedicated his retirement to the study of the Holocaust in general, and Auschwitz in

particular. It was to be published in 1990 as a chapter in the monumental *Die Schatten der Vergangenheit: Impulse zur Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus* [*The Shadows of the Past: Impulses Towards a Historicization of National Socialism*], published by Propyläen Verlag. Wegner amply demonstrated revealed that Leuchter's science did not pass critical muster. Most of the arguments contained in Wegner's draft parallel those which I introduced in my discussion of the Leuchter Report in Chapter Nine. Point by point Wegner demolished Leuchter's arguments. For example, reviewing Leuchter's argument that in the gas chambers each of the "executees" would have occupied nine square feet (or 0.84 m²), he noted that the German legislation determining the number of people that may occupy the aisle in street cars assumes that one person of 65 kilos occupies 0.125 m², or eight people per square meter. Thus following German standards, Wegner concluded that the gas chamber of crematorium 1 could have given space to 618 people at a time. (He did not calculate the capacity of the gas chambers of crematoria 2 and 3, which were about 200 m² each, but using the same German data, one would arrive at a capacity of $8 \times 200 = 1,600$ people per gas chamber--that is a total number of people that exceeds by ten percent the official incineration rate of these crematoria of 1,440 people per day. The three gas chambers of crematoria 4 and 5 were also more than adequate for the job: the two larger ones were about 95 m² each--allowing for 760 victims each [which comes close to the official incineration capacity of 756 corpses per day--and the smaller of about 40 m² could still accommodate 320 people.) Wegner claimed that his own calculations confirmed the official German figures which assigned crematorium 1 a capacity of 340 corpses per day, crematoria 2 and 3 a capacity of 1,440 corpses per day, and crematoria 4 and 5 a capacity of 756 corpses per day, but sadly enough he did not provide them as evidence. In conclusion, Wegner stated that the Leuchter Report was a worthless investigation.

Mark Weber of the Institute for Historical Review tried to answer the criticism in his “A Preliminary Response to the 23-page Manuscript Essay ‘Kritische Stellungnahme zum sogen. Leuchter-Dokument.’” Weber began his attack with the observation that the criticism was based on a pirated German-language version of the Leuchter Report, and that “[t]he failure of the essay author to refer to the original English-language edition of the Report...Shows a lack of seriousness and scholarly care.” Then he addressed the criticism point by point, invoking however exclusively negationist literature to defuse the critique, quoting for example Arthur Butz’s contention that Auschwitz was established as a camp “for Jews who were not able to work, including the sick and elderly.” Weber ended his comment with the observation that it was in itself proof of the “growing influence of the revisionist view of the Holocaust story, and in particular of the important independent research of a courageous American engineer.”

Irving received a copy of the Wegner’s draft, and Mark Weber’s “Preliminary Response.” He replied as follows: “The critiques of the Leuchter Report are very cogent. They raise several points on the statistical side that had worried me. Leuchter, alas, is an engineer and he writes English with the flair of a trade-unionist. I too feel that having chemically established the truth, he only helps the opposition by looking at the theoretical capacities. And in doing so he needlessly broadens the target area that he presents the enemy. As you know, we had a similar critique from an engineer in Pretoria, Mr Crabtree. I do not know what the answer is, but your response was pretty good.”

Weber responded a month later, informing Irving that Leuchter and Faurisson had assured him that the criticisms were “basically without merit,” even if Weber still considered that they deserved “serious consideration.” One of the reasons was that, in response to the Leuchter Report, the Pole had released the original documents that described the toxicological analysis of the hair and the ventilation covers of the gas chamber of Crematorium 2. As we have seen in Chapter Four, the

forensic laboratory in Cracow had determined that the thin white-coloured and strongly smelling deposit that covered the lids contained hydrocyanide. In a letter to Weber dated October 15, Irving turned and twisted to cast suspicion on those pieces of forensic investigation, done 43 years before Leuchter arrived at Auschwitz. “You will have seen the Polish “December 1945” investigation of hair and zinc remnants from the Auschwitz Leichenkeller 1. My immediate negative feelings were: (a)unlike the Leuchter report, whose lab results are based on purely quantitative analysis, the Polish report is purely qualitative analysis, i.e. Confirming the presence of cyanide compounds, but not putting a figure on them. There is nothing to show that the zinc grids were not taken from the disinfestation chamber site; and nothing to show that the hair was not impregnated en route from the site to the laboratory. Quite apart from anything, the notion that 25.5 kilos (half a hundredweight!) of hair--a huge volume by any estimates--could be contained in a “paper bag “ is very suspect. A general criticism is: How very convenient that this December 1945 document should come to light now (I assume it did not come to light substantially earlier?), and seek to disprove precisely the points made by the April 1988 Leuchter Report! It is as though London Transport had had the foresight, in 1945, to make scrapings of their buses, in case some historian in 1989 should challenge whether their colour really was red!” Having raised the last suggestion, Irving should have realized the insanity of assaulting the well-established record of history. He should also have understood that he had, in the end, made extra-ordinary claims about the uniqueness of Leuchter’s forensic investigation and the importance of Leuchter’s claims without having done his home-work. Yet he chose to ignore the evidence that contradicted the validity of his stance, and instead tried to find support for his views in whatever was on offer. In the same letter he discussed a video of Auschwitz made by Sepp Geiger. “I had not realized before that there is such evidence of downright faking as the “gaschamber” sites--the hole cut through the concrete ceiling,

preparatory to including wooden framework and a lid as on the other chambers, but abandoned by the Poles when they ran into steel reinforcing bars.”

Weber responded in a long letter in which he stated that he did not know about the Polish forensic investigations. He showed once more concern about the Leuchter Report, and Leuchter and Faurisson’s refusal to take the emerging criticism seriously. “I have been pleading with Faurisson, Zuendel and Leuchter to respond to the most plausible and oft-repeated criticisms in a kind of appendix to a new edition, but neither Zuendel nor Leuchter seems to regard this as a priority task.”

The situation was to become worse. In the late fall or early winter Irving received through the good offices of a certain Colin M. Beer another utterly devastating critique of the Leuchter Report. The author noted that the basis of Leuchter’s assumption, the idea that it would be possible to judge the Germans’ use of hydrocyanic gas as a killing agent in Auschwitz with contemporary American practices, was invalid. In American gas chambers, inmates were killed with 3,200 ppm, the effect of which the critique describes as “one-gulp-and-you’re-dead.” A concentration of 300 ppm was to bring about “rapid and immediate death.” Given the fact that there were accounts that it took people up to 30 minutes to expire, concentrations could have been as low as 100 ppm. “A supplementary factor is that in a US judicial execution chamber the victim is strapped, fully dressed, into a chair. Gas ingestion is thus by inhalation. According to literature the victims of the alleged gas chambers were herded bare-arse naked into the facility having been made to run from the undressing rooms to the chambers. The victims were thus gasping for breath while immersed in a toxic atmosphere. Since HCN can access the body by skin absorption as well as by inhalation, this greatly increased the effectiveness of the low concentrations of gas and makes the use of 100 ppm fully credible. The result makes a dramatic difference to the whole report.” Operating with a low (but lethal) hydrocyanide concentration of 100 ppm, there

was no danger for explosion. More importantly, at such a low concentration the for Leuchter (and Faurisson) major issue of ventilation ceased to be a point. The author of the critique did not know that the underground gas chambers of crematoria 2 and 3 were equipped with a ventilation system which, as we have already seen, made Leuchter's opinion as to the impossibility to use these rooms as gas chambers mute. But the smaller above ground gas chambers of crematoria 4 and 5 did not have a separate ventilation system: only doors that opened directly to the outside. It is therefore interesting to note his comments on the issue of ventilation. "Leuchter claims that at least a week would be needed to ventilate the chambers prior to removing the bodies and cleansing. This is based on US industrial safety standards, a complete lack of ventilation and the 3200 ppm concentration. The use of 100 ppm dramatically reduces the time needed to reduce concentration. It is obvious that the German guards would not have applied 1989 US industrial safety standards to the slave labour reputedly used to clear the chambers. The volume of one chamber is quoted as 7657 ft³. A swept volume of 120 ft³/min would be needed to completely change this in one hour equating to a flow rate of 0.5 ft³/sec. A current of this speed is hardly distinguishable from still air. Assuming 1 hour is left for ventilation the result would be a residual gas concentration of 15-25 ppm within the chamber. The symptoms in crews used to clear/clean the chamber would, after prolonged exposure, be headaches, nausea, reddening of eyes, giddiness and weakness. These are exactly the symptoms experienced by survivors of the work teams reputedly used for this purpose and previously assumed to be a psychosomatic result of the horror of the experience. This is a further case of Leuchter's own work actually verifying Holocaust accounts." As a result, it would have been possible to use the gas chambers twice a day, instead of once a week. This immediately increased the possible death rate of the gas chambers from a little over 100,000 to close to 1.5 million people. Added to that was the fact that Leuchter's assumption that the gas chambers were loaded with victims at a density of one per nine square feet

was obviously wrong. The author of the critique assumed at least a density of one person per six square feet, which would have brought the possible death-toll to 2.2 million people.

Then the critique addressed the assumption that had informed Leuchter's sampling technique. "The 100 ppm operating concentration discredits his sample technique. Obviously if the gas concentration was 100 ppm, the residue concentration in the walls cannot be greater. The samples were exposed to a damp, cold environment for 40 years. Leaching and chemical breakdown would be such that even the stablest complexes would be degraded. To find 6 ppm under such circumstances is remarkable. The control sample was from a delouser used several times per day at 3200 ppm and A SMALL, SELF-CONTAINED UNIT COMPLETELY ENCLOSED AND SHELTERED. To consider this a control is exceptionally bad technique and discredits the entire sample programme. I repeat at 100 ppm initial I would expect NO DETECTABLE CONCENTRATION in an exposed sample." Irving scribbled in the margin of this section the word "important."

After dealing with some more issues Leuchter had thrown up, the author of the critique came to eight conclusions--the last of which turned the Leuchter Report into a boomerang returning into the face of the deniers:

- 1) The design of the alleged gas chambers is consistent with the use of HCN at a concentration of 100 ppm.
- 2) That the literature evidence on the Holocaust is consistent with the likely outcome of mass gassing attempts at 100 ppm.
- 3) That the capacity of the Birkenau facilities is consistent with the alleged execution totals as internationally accepted.
- 4) The sampling of the walls and the subsequent analysis for cyanide residues is scientifically invalid due to inadequate controls and the effects of the long period of time between use and study.

5) The facilities are not “highly efficient and well designed” as frequently stated but a hastily-conceived compromise between existing design and the requirements. This is consistent with much of the available records on construction and concept.

6) There does seem to be a problem in relating crematorium capacity to death toll.

7) The Leuchter Report on its own does not conclusively prove that the buildings in question were used as gas chambers. Equally its conclusions that they could not have been do not stand up to rigorous analysis. Contrary to Irving’s assertions forensic science is not exact except in detective fiction. At best it is a matter of balancing probabilities. In all such cases it must be considered in the light of all available evidence. In this context the omission of all other evidence from the Leuchter Report is damning. Leuchter is not, in spite of his undoubted (if gruesome) expertise, a forensic scientist. He is also not a historian. Had he been either his first reaction should have been that his investigation contradicted the mass of available evidence. Where this occurs there are the following probabilities.

a) The mass of evidence is wrong

b) His conclusions are wrong

c) The contradiction is due to a significant factor being wrong or omitted. Leuchter, having correctly analysed the problem in the light of his own experience then simply assumed that this conclusion invalidated all the other evidence available and reported accordingly. A forensic scientist or skilled historian then would have asked what factor would have eliminated the contradiction. The reports of a 30-45 minute death time would have pointed him at 100 ppm gas concentration and lead to a fundamental reassessment of his report. Once the 100 ppm assumption is made, all the Holocaust evidence falls into place and the accurate and detailed evidence of the Leuchter Report confirms them. Which leads to our final conclusion.

8) The evidence of the Leuchter Report, when taken in the context of the times and in full consideration of all other evidence is consistent with that other evidence and together strongly supports both the fact and the scale of the massacres in the gas chambers of Birkenau provided that assumption is made that the gas chambers operated at relatively low toxic concentrations. [Italics mine]

The report was devastating. Irving had to admit so much when he responded to it in a letter to Mr. Beer. As to the general thrust of its argument, he wrote that “I agree, in fact, with many of your friends’s criticisms,” but then preferred to blame Leuchter’s command of English as

one of the sources of confusion. Irving then proceeded to address some of the points raised in greater detail. Remarkably, he seemed to endorse what was one of the most damning paragraphs--the one that begins with the sentence "The 100 ppm operating concentration discredits his sample technique," and which ends with the conclusion that "at 100 ppm initial I would expect NO DETECTABLE CONCENTRATION in an exposed sample." Irving commented that "I accept p.4., para 2: ("The 100 ppm...") if only because that is a fair argument. Yet then he immediately tried to neutralize this admission of the weakness of Leuchter's argument by calling a remark made in 1943 by Victor Cavendish-Bentinck to his aid. "Against that has to be set the obvious argument raised by the British PWE in 1943? Why on earth go to all the trouble of using gas, when the old fashioned bullet was perfectly good enough elsewhere, as used by the Russians at Katyn (so PWE argued 1943!)." I still fail to see how this is of relevance to the question if one would expect to find residual cyanide in the ruins of places used 40 years earlier as gas chambers using a concentration of 100 ppm of cyanide. But as Irving has raised the issue of bullets versus gas, it is useful to remember that, when the Germans adopted a policy of exterminating Jews somewhere in 1941, they initially used rifles and machine-guns as their tools of destruction. Soon, however, it became clear that these public executions could not be kept secret. Even more problematic for the commanders of the troops entrusted with this task, the so-called *Einsatzgruppen*, was the pressure on their men. After the war, the judgement of the Stuttgart court that tried the "inventor" of the gas van, Dr. Albert Widmann, summarized the problems as follows: "After only a brief period, the commandos of the *Einsatzgruppen* got into considerable difficulties. The members of the *Einsatz*- and special commandos, some of whom were themselves fathers, were in the long run not up to the mental strain caused by the mass shootings, particularly when women and children were involved. There were disputes, refusals to obey orders, drunken orgies, but also serious psychological illnesses. Himmler, who was not unaware of the situation, was looking

for a way of reducing the nervous psychological strain on the men involved in the shooting. Thus, in discussion with Heydrich and other leading figures the plan emerged of utilising gas vans for this purpose, which were to be used for the liquidation of women and children in particular.” The gas cans led to the gas chambers which, as Pierre Vidal-Naquet observed, did indeed screen the killing process from the perpetrators. “All the operations from the directing of victims as they left the trains to the undressing and cleaning of bodies to their placement in the crematoria were basically under SS control, of course. But all this was done through the intermediary of members of the *Sonderkommandos* who, in the end, were the only ones placed in direct contact with death.” As a result the Auschwitz SS did not suffer the psychological strain experienced by their colleagues in the *Einsatzgruppen*, and at no point in the camp’s history became did the gassings cause disciplinary problems within the SS.

Irving endorsed conclusion number 4--”The sampling of the walls and the subsequent analysis for cyanide residues is scientifically invalid due to inadequate controls and the effects of the long period of time between use and study”--yet, ignoring the second reason why the sampling was invalid, drew from this the conclusion that “the tests should be repeated under controlled, scientifically acceptable conditions.” In response to conclusion number 7, in which the author of the critique had demolished whatever remained of the Leuchter Report by means of the argument that it had not been a forensic investigation, Irving tepidly responded that “forensic evidence is certainly more exact than eye-witness testimony!”--leaving of course open the question what constituted in this case “forensic evidence” and what it was exact about.

In conclusion: within six months after the publication of the Focal Point edition of the Leuchter Report, it had become clear to Irving that not only the engineering part of the report, which to its author represented the main basis for his conclusion that no gassings had taken

place in Auschwitz, was scientific garbage, but that even the fundamental assumptions that formed the basis of Leuchter's analysis of the samples--the idea that the gas chambers had operated with a high concentration of hydrocyanide--did not hold. Yet Irving did not care to share his knowledge with the rest of the world, and continued to praise the analysis of the samples as a major historical breakthrough that had demolished the myth of the Holocaust.

In the summer of 1989, Zündel's ambitions transcended defending Leuchter's science. Irving had sent him a copy of a German-language booklet he had written on the Nuremberg Trials, and Zündel immediately realized that it could be of great importance in the debate about Auschwitz. "Our revisionist demolitions of the myths and hoaxes of Auschwitz, Majdanek, Treblinka et al. appear to have little effect upon the prosecutors and judges who always fall back upon the "authority" and the "precedent" of the Nuremberg proceedings. This means that as long as the Nuremberg Travesty stands, the Holocaust Hoax is supported by the full weight of Allied complicity. Revisionist scholars should therefore go after the truth about the Nuremberg Trials with as much tenacity and determination as they have gone after the Holocaust Legend." Zündel therefore proposed a full-scale cooperation to create, on the basis of Irving's *Der Nürnburger Prozess: Die Letzte Schlacht*, the very kind of text which would make it clear that the Nuremberg trials had been, in fact, nothing but "a Purimfest with some shabbes-goyim presiding as figureheads" designed to serve the basis of a "Zionist extortion racket." Zündel obviously expected that, after publication of such a book on Nuremberg, it would become impossible for judges to take judicial notice of the Holocaust.

Yet, despite the new cooperation, Zündel found it difficult to cope with Irving on a daily basis. The latter proved not as easy to control as Zündel had hoped. In December 1989 Zündel complained in a long letter about the Nuremberg project that Irving tried to maintain the appearance of having an independent position from the hard-core Holo-

caust deniers by taking swipes at some members of the Nazi leadership, and even suggested that there could have been indeed some isolated instances of German massacres of Jews. Such statements, Zündel wrote, did not help Irving in establishing his authority in Germany.

“The days of the “Knie-beugen Paragraph” are fast disappearing and Germans of the postwar generations are becoming quite disgusted by those who continue to shovel dung, in greater or lesser quantities, into the German nest. I am not demanding that you “change your tune” or “toe the party-line” with me or with anyone, but because I admire you and hope you will continue to succeed as a great revisionist activist, I offer you this friendly warning not to burn your bridges in advance.”

Zündel was particularly offended by the fact that Irving tried, in public, to create the appearance of distance between himself and Zündel by characterizing the latter as a “loud-mouth” and a man who desires “to dance at every wedding.” “Once again, you are welcome to think whatever you wish about me, my work and my goals and you are welcome to say exactly what you think, but how can I, in good conscience, play the “fall guy” and provide a resurgent Germany with the creative leadership contribution my people require? After all, to be any kind of leader, one must be respected. It is music to my ears when our enemies berate us and call us names, but I find it painful when our supposed allies in this struggle for survival and freedom demean us in this fashion. Surely, any mention of my name is unnecessary, if you feel this way about me. Let us be kind to one another, for there are damned few of us on our side in this struggle!” It seems that Zündel got through to Irving: the latter ceased to talk about his Canadian ally.

Irving continued to peddle his version of history to whoever was ready to listen. In a lecture given in Germany in March 1990, Irving declared all gas chambers in Auschwitz to be phony. “I say the following thing: there were no gas chambers in Auschwitz. There have been only mock-

ups built by the Poles in the years after the war, similar to the mock-ups built by the Americans in Dachau and which they had to demolish....But the mock-ups still exist in Auschwitz.”

Irving speculated that, perhaps 30,000 people had been killed in Auschwitz. “Bad enough. No-one of us would like to approve of that. Thirty thousand people in Auschwitz from beginning to end--that is as many as we English killed in Hamburg in one night.” Every single survivor was a testimony to the fact that there had been no program to exterminate the Jews. And then, once more, he explained how the gas chambers had been invented by the Psychological Warfare Executive. He went on at great length about the problems Victor Cavendish-Bentinck had with the proposal to include a reference to the gassings in the declaration made by the allied leaders in Quebec. Irving creatively invented some new historic material when he claimed that the Cavendish-Bentinck minute of August 23 said that “the whole assertion of German extermination measures against Jews with gas chambers and so on have no foundation in fact and are merely a lie that we have spread against the Germans.” Cavendish-Bentinck never wrote such a sentence: Irving made it up.

In the spring of 1990 Irving once more mailed the foreword of the Leuchter Report to members of Parliament--this time to the Lords. The occasion was the War Crimes Bill designed to give British courts greater jurisdiction over certain war crimes committed in Germany and German held territory during the Second World War. During the debate Irving’s introduction had been mentioned, and he in turn mailed a copy of it, accompanied with a letter in which he stated that he did not enclose the whole report, which he described as “costly and scientific, but persuasive.” “It certainly convinced me (and your Lordship may recall that The Economist, reviewing one of my works, was kind enough to call me “the forensic pathologist of modern military history.”) Five years from now even the dourest academic will accept that the “gas chambers “ displayed at Auschwitz are as false as the one removed at

Bonn's insistence from the site at Dachau--a propaganda legend just like the "soap made from victims of the Nazis," which Israeli historians last month finally admitted was also a grotesque wartime untruth."

Most members of the House of Lords thanked politely, some not so. Lord Bonham-Carter responded that he had participated in the last days of the war in the liberation of a concentration camp. "The evidence of my own eyes is better than the delusions you peddle." Irving responded that, while he did not know which camp Bonham-Carter had seen, he did know for certain that "the appalling epidemics and starvation found at Bergen-Belsen, Neuengamme, and Buchenwald were as much a direct consequence of S.H.A.E.F.'s transport interdiction campaign and saturation bombing policies (the entire pharmaceutical industry had been destroyed by March 1945) as of mindless Nazi brutality." In the next paragraph, Irving moved from condescension to rudeness. "Several of their Lordships have, in reply to my letter, suggested that there is need for further inquiry into the "gas chamber" legend, for which we all fell over the last forty years (I may take it that you are not claiming to have seen one in the camp you liberated?) Others have asked for a copy of the full Leuchter Report. As your own inspirational needs appear more elementary, I am sending you a copy of my first book, *The Destruction of Dresden*; the photographs of thousands of victims of the British air raid being piled up for mass cremation in February 1945 may remind you -and I am aware of your reputation for fair mindedness--that there are two sides to every "war crimes story. Alas, there are no equivalent pictures from Auschwitz." Bonham-Carter's reply was swift, short, and to the point: "I find your argument a most curious exercise in logic. You appear to be saying that because the bombing of Dresden could be argued to be a war crime, therefore the evidence of the Holocaust is false. I don't see the connection."

In October 1990, Irving brought his gospel to the institutional center of Holocaust denial: the Institute of Holocaust Review. In his inflammatory, even rabble-rousing speech at the Tenth International Revisionist

Conference held in Washington DC, Irving once again unequivocally endorsed the negationist cause. Introducing Irving, Mark Weber reminded the audience how Irving's testimony had been "the startling climax" in "the second Holocaust trial in 1988 of Ernst Zündel." Irving had "stunned the completely packed courtroom by announcing that he had changed his mind about the Holocaust story." Weber continued his introduction with the conclusion of Irving's Dresden speech earlier that year in commemoration of the city's destruction 45 years earlier. "Ladies and gentleman, survivors and descendants of the holocaust of Dresden, the holocaust of Germans in Dresden really happened. That of the Jews in the gas chambers of Auschwitz is an invention. I am ashamed to be an Englishman."

Initially Irving's talk seemed ordinary. He recounted the various occasions when he had been right and others wrong. After having recalled how he debunked the fake Hitler diaries and the legend of Rommel's involvement with the resistance, Irving turned to the Holocaust. "This is how it was when I was in Toronto a couple of years ago. I was called as an expert witness as a historian to give evidence at the Ernst Zündel case, where Zündel's researchers showed me the *Leuchter Report* the laboratory tests on the crematoria and the gas chambers. As a person who, at the University of London, studied chemistry and physics and the exact sciences, I knew that this was an exact result. There was no way around it. And suddenly all that I'd read in the archives clicked into place. You have to accept that, if there is no evidence anywhere in the archives that there were any gassings going on; that if there's not a single German document that refers to the gassings of human beings--not one wartime German document; and if there is no reference anywhere in the German archives to anybody giving orders for the gassings of people, and if, on the other hand, the forensic tests of the laboratories, of the crematoria, and the gas chambers and Auschwitz and so on, show that there is no trace, no significant residue whatsoever of a cyanide compound, then this can all only mean one thing." Having de-

clared the Holocaust a hoax, Irving asked why he and everyone else had been fooled for so long in thinking that the Holocaust had happened. His answer was simple: “we have been subjected to the biggest propaganda offensive that the human race has ever known.” “It’s been conducted with such finesse, with such refinement, with such financial clout, that we have not been able to recognize it as a propaganda offensive--from start to finish. And yet there are these weapons cruising past us on the horizon--in all their ugliness--and the biggest weapon, of course, of all in this propaganda campaign against the truth since 1945 has been the great battleship Auschwitz! And we have now, at last, the historical profession-- above all, the Revisionist historical profession--have found as our own task, the major task: “Sink the Auschwitz!” Yet, for those who feared a fierce battle, Irving had some encouraging information: in fact, the crew of the battleship was already scuttling the vessel. Informed by recent newspaper articles that, based on detailed studies, the Auschwitz Museum was about to revise the official death toll of the camp to a little over a million, Irving enthusiastically announced that “the Auschwitz has been steering amongst the Icebergs, and finally it has begun to scuttle itself. They’ve begun to haul down the flag of the battleship Auschwitz. They’ve taken down the placard, they’ve taken down the memorial to the four million, and they’ve have replaced it with a rather smaller memorial to one million.” And Irving confidently predicted that this downward revision would continue, and continue.

Irving did not limit himself to simply gloat over the newly revised victim count that had been released by the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. In fact, he could not resist to make then and there his own contribution to the problem. “The Russians have helped us: the Russians released in September last year, September 21, the Auschwitz death books. That was an ugly blow for the battleship Auschwitz and its crew. Because the Russians, by releasing the forty-six death books of Auschwitz, which cover the years 1942 completely, 1943 almost com-

pletely, and 1944 incompletely--the Russians have revealed that the set of Auschwitz death books, which they have released, now shows, a total of 74,000 deaths, 74,000 deaths by all causes.”

Irving was partly right: the Russians had made known earlier that they had in their possession copies of a Auschwitz death books. Contrary to Irving’s assertion, these death books do not cover 1942 completely: the book for the period 12 November to 4 December, and the book for the period 15 December to 28 December are missing, and of the book covering the period 14 to 26 June only one sheet is available. As Irving correctly stated, in 1943 there are also lacunae: some time in early February, the first half of April, mid June, the whole of September and the first half of October. But, contrary to Irving’s claim, there is not one book for 1944. These books record a total of 68,864 deaths.

These discrepancies between claim and fact are however of little importance compared to the issue that Irving did not care to mention in his speech: the 46 volumes only record the deaths of registered inmates. Most of the people who died in Auschwitz were murdered on arrival, without having been admitted to the camp. Irving could not claim ignorance on this point, as he wrote in the original edition of his *Hitler’s War* that “[a]rriving at Auschwitz and Treblinka, four in every ten were pronounced fit for work; the rest were exterminated with a maximum of concealment.” Yet thirteen years later he chose in his discussion of the *Sterbebücher* to pass over the fate of the (in his estimate) 60 per cent of arriving Jews not deemed fit for work. At least, one should think, he should have alluded to a potential problem--especially when later in that same lecture he mentioned the immediate killing of arriving transports once more. “But on the other hand, the great big battleship Auschwitz, this lie that’s been cruising around for the last 45 years, has told us that that’s what Auschwitz was about! That Auschwitz was purely as a kind of *Endstation* or terminus. That the trains arrived in Auschwitz, and disgorged their masses of helpless, pitiful humanity, all of whom were Jews, of course, in the present perception. And they

were then kind of channelled through the extermination procedure, where they were gassed.” Having mentioned “the lie,” he ought have dealt with it when he discussed the Death Books, because “the lie” challenged directly his conclusion. He did not.

In fact, as the lecture continued, misconstruction turned into pure chicanery. “Now the Jewish professor, Arno Mayer, whom I greatly respect,...tells us in his book *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken?* that of those who died in Auschwitz and other concentration camps, probably far more than half died of natural causes--whatever you can call natural causes in wartime. Of course the very phrase is suspect. But that means--whatever it does mean--that less than half was killed. Which means less than half of 74,000 people were killed in Auschwitz. Let’s be generous and say 40,000 may have been killed in Auschwitz over three years--that’s a bad figure! That’s a grave crime, it’s almost as many people as we British killed in one night.” Earlier in that same lecture he had bragged about his exemplary research skills in always relying exclusively on study of the original records. “If you keep your nose glued to the archives--if you keep your nose glued to the documents--then you are going to be that much closer to getting things right.” Yet in order to establish the all important number of murders in Auschwitz--which should be an absolutely central concern for anyone trying to “Sink the Auschwitz”--Irving relied first of all on a book that was notorious amongst scholarly studies of the Holocaust because it has no references to any sources, no footnotes or endnotes whatsoever. Furthermore Irving read Mayer very selectively. Discussing the evidence of the number of deportees to Auschwitz, Mayer had rightly observed that “[t]he camp officials did not keep very accurate records of the inbound deportees.” “Untold thousands were “processed” without being signed in. Because of this, and because so many records were destroyed, there are no close approximations of the numbers and identities of the Jews checked into Auschwitz except for those sent there from western Europe. Their fate can be reconstructed not from

the incomplete registers of inmates checked into the camps, but with the help of the shipping manifests of departing transports, which are reliable and have survived.” Mayer had called attention to those documents, but Irving, the self-proclaimed master-interpreter of the original records, did not choose to consult them. Apart from that, if Mayer’s book was indeed to be invoked as the new Gospel of Holocaust Research, then Irving should have at least considered the fact that one could not make solemn pronouncements on the number of deaths in Auschwitz based on the number of registered inmates only.

Irving did not care about the facts. When he made his statements, it was clear that much was happening in the historiographical field concerning Auschwitz: scholars everywhere eagerly anticipated the full publication of Dr. Franciszek Piper’s conclusions. Irving had already referred to the fact that the museum authorities in Auschwitz had “taken down the memorial to the four million,” to replace it “with a rather smaller memorial to one million.” Yet instead of exercising the scholarly patience appropriate to the historian’s vocation, he rushed in to offer his own quick calculation to arrive at a “generous” estimate of 40,000 people murdered in Auschwitz. In his lecture he characterized this activity as a “cutting down to size.” “When the Germans use that dreaded word, *relativieren* meaning you are trying to compare things, you are trying to belittle things, the answer is: “Yes, I’m trying to cut legends down to size because that is the job of the historian.”

This may be true, but it is also the job of the historian to beware of the universal pyrrhonism that doubts everything and all. In the eighteenth century, the great British historian Lord Bolingbrooke observed that “[c]ommon sense requires that every thing proposed to the understanding, should be accompanied with such proofs as the nature of it can furnish. He who requires more, is guilty of absurdity.” In the early 1940s, Marc Bloch said in his magnificent analysis of the historian’s craft that, contrary to popular opinion, people have generally distrusted historical evidence, and hunted down false relics. Throughout his-

tory, people have been less credulous than we think. And he added that “skepticism on principle is neither a more estimable nor a more productive intellectual attitude than the credulity with which it is frequently blended in the simpler minds.” The historian, in order to be a good historian, must negotiate his way between the extremes of being too ready to doubt and being too ready to believe. Francois Bédarida observed more recently in an essay on the responsibility of the historian that the pure skepticism which became popular in post-modern historiography, ultimately leads to a negation of knowledge. “It is from this point that we come back to the need for truthfulness that the historian, instead of minimizing, must proclaim very clearly to be his lode-star. It is a star that is distant, transient, occasionally veiled by clouds, but without it, what could the notion of responsibility be based on? It is true that at this level one enters the realm of values and that a connection between history and ethics is established.”

Of course, the skepticism Irving shows is only directed to a particular range of source material, and does not apply to the utterings of perpetrators. As such, Irving is, as a historian, a worthy successor of the many men and women who mined the past in order to find the raw material that can be turned into propaganda and mythology. The task of every historian, as Eric Hobsbawm once observed, is to be aware that “bad history is not harmless history. It is dangerous. The sentences typed on apparently innocuous keyboards may be sentences of death.” Which brings us back to Edith Wyschogrod’s understanding that the responsibility of the historian is not to the living, but to the dead. The historian must be the spokesman for those who have been silenced. I believe that no historian can responsibly touch the world of Auschwitz without some way or another becoming what Wyschogrod called a “heterological historian.” Given the way Irving has exercised his talents as a historian, and given the subject matter which has become the object of his attention in 1988, we may conclude that he has steadfastly refused to accept the ethical responsibility that comes with all history,

but especially with the history of Auschwitz. When Irving had the audacity to reduce without having done any relevant research the number of murdered victims of Auschwitz to 40,000 people, he betrayed more than a million dead people. At that moment he did not merely cease to be a responsible or heterological historian--he ceased to be a historian at all.

Yet this did not matter to Zündel, and his Canadian supporters. True to his promise that he would help Irving in organizing lectures, Zündel had arranged for the weeks after the Tenth International Revisionist Conference a Canadian lecture tour for Irving. In Victoria, British Columbia, Irving gave a presentation entitled "The Controversy on Auschwitz and the Dangers of Censorship." It contained many of the elements of the speech given at the conference. Yet now the battleship HM Auschwitz was escorting the cruiseship MS Holocaust. "There's no shortage of crewmembers or applicants for this particular ship. The only requirement to become a crewmember of the cruise ship "Holocaust" is that you should be an Auschwitz survivor. And of course there's an inexhaustible supply of Auschwitz survivors. There are millions of Auschwitz survivors now floating around the world, or people who purport to be Auschwitz survivors. Although I must admit that their number has become somewhat muted in recent years, over the last 18 months, since the government in Moscow on September 21, 1989, in a statement from TASS, announced that all this time they have had a card index of anybody who was ever in Auschwitz. And ever since then the number of new applicants who claim to have been in Auschwitz has somewhat dwindled. Eliah Wiesel no longer claims to have been in Auschwitz for example, the Nobel Prize winner. He now claims to have been in a completely different camp, in the hope that they won't find the card indexes on that one." Like so many of Irving's pronouncements, his allegation about Eli Wiesel's change of story had no relation whatsoever to the facts of the case. Wiesel was deported with his family during the Hungarian Action to Auschwitz, subjected to

selection in Birkenau, and brought afterwards with his father to Auschwitz 3 in Monowitz. From there he was evacuated in a so-called death march to Buchenwald, where he was liberated in April 1945. Wiesel claims that he can be seen in a picture taken within one of the Buchenwald barracks at the liberation of that camp (and, judging by appearances, the claim seems to be justified). Ignoring completely the manner in which the passage of time changes not only men, but also the place of men in space, Irving inferred from Wiesel's claim that, as he was liberated from Buchenwald, he was not liberated from Auschwitz, and that hence he could not have been in Auschwitz. Putting a particularly creative spin on his own inattention as an observer and ignorance as a historian, Irving had no difficulty in explaining the apparent contradiction as produced by Wiesel's apparent desire to create a smokescreen to cover his retreat.

Irving claimed that the death books were authoritative, and that there would have been no killings that were not recorded in them. "It is rather like expecting the Colombian drug barons, who have tens of millions of dollars going through their hands every day from illicit operations, to start nickeling and diming on their housekeeping petty expenses at the same time. "Therefore "if the *Totenbücher* from Auschwitz show that in those three years 76,000 people died, from whatever cause, that is it. That is the bottom line." Irving is able to produce two false analogies in one argument. First of all there is no reason to assume that a Colombian drug baron would use the same administrative procedures when dealing with his income from "illicit operations" and his household expenses. If in the case of his income, the criminal would like to use numbers to conceal facts, while in the case of the way his staff would spend his income, he would like to see financial transparency. Furthermore Irving sets up a false analogy when he suggests a comparison between the private administration (if any) of a Columbian drug baron and the institutional administration of a German institution. In order to allow for a general accountability towards the public,

all documents produced within an institutional context must observe a strict system of rules. In the case of a closed institution such as a hospital, a prison, or even a concentration camp, the books must be balanced in terms of the admission of inmates, the presence of inmates, and the discharge of inmates, either through release or death. The Auschwitz death books only concerned registered and therefore numbered inmates. As no records were kept of people who were selected on their arrival to be killed, there was neither need nor information to create records of their deaths.

In the same lecture Irving also addressed the documentary evidence, and he obviously enjoyed one particular document. “One of these documents was thrown on the wall in the courtroom at Toronto where I was giving evidence. And I have to admit I had not seen the document before, and I was a bit flabbergasted, but I looked at the document and the prosecuting counsel said, “Mr. Irving, how do you explain this?” It is a letter written by the architect’s office in Auschwitz to a firm of construction engineers saying they are having difficulty completing the concrete ceiling, which is going to be put in, the slab over the mortuary, before winter sets in and therefore they could perhaps use another room which they identified as the *Vergasungskeller* a gassing cellar, if you want to translate it that way. And the prosecuting counsel said to me, “Mr. Irving, how do you explain that?” And I said straight away, “Well let me point out to you as a German linguist, and I have known German fluently for the last thirty or forty years, the word ‘*vergasen*’ has various meanings like a lot of words in German have various meanings. ‘*Vergasen*’ can mean to gas somebody. It can also mean to gasify, as in a carburetor.” A carburetor in a motor car in Germany is *Vergaser*. And a crematorium would have a kind of carburating system. Quite definitely, because you need very high temperatures to cremate. And this is quite definitely a document connected with the cremation process. And when the prosecuting counsel appeared a bit fazed by this particular suggestion, I said to him suddenly, I said, “Excuse me, can

we have that document back on the screen again? Because I want to look at something, and point it out to the jury.” And he put it back onto the screen. And I said, “There you are. I will tell you what is most significant in that document is not what it says, but what it does not say. We are being told by you, by the prosecution, this is a document concerning the gassing of millions of Jews, which was the most secret operation in the Third Reich apparently. So secret that almost nothing exists about it. Certainly nothing in the archives. Top secret. And yet here is a document that bears no kind of security classification at all.” In short that was the proof that the document was totally innocuous. In fact it was of janitorial level I would say. Of janitorial level. Broom cupboard level.” Irving’s last remark shows that he is not only ignorant of the manner in which detectives mostly solve crimes by paying attention to what the janitors have say and what the broom cupboards preserve, but also to his own well-documented predilection to use, if convenient, the memories of janitors to refute publically documented facts.

Like so many other statements he has made, Irving’s account of his testimony about Bischoff’s letter of January 29, 1943 is a mixture of fact and fiction. Desiring to show off his assumedly unrivalled hermeneutical skills, Irving stated in the lecture that he had never seen the document before. “One of these documents was thrown on the wall in the courtroom at Toronto where I was giving evidence. And I have to admit I had not seen the document before, and I was a bit flabbergasted, but I looked at the document and the prosecuting council said, ‘Mr. Irving, how do you explain this?’ “Yet the transcript of the court proceedings reveals that Irving admitted to the court that he knew of the document well in advance: “[Pearson]: “And I show you a document from the National Archives of the United States and ask you if before coming to Toronto, you had seen that document.” [Irving]: “Yes, sir, this is the document you just asked me a few minutes ago to read through and I am familiar with the document and I was familiar with the document before I came to Toronto.” His subsequent interpreta-

tion of the word “*Vergasungskeller*” which came straight from Butz’s *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*, also corroborates that Irving had seen the document before. Irving’s account of his discussion of the meaning of the term “*Vergasungskeller*” is tendentious insofar that he suggests that Pearson tried to make a point by invoking the presence of the word in the letter, and challenging Irving to explain it--suggesting of course he would not be able to do so. In fact, the transcript of the proceedings make clear that Person did not raise the issue of the *Vergasungskeller*, but that it was Irving himself. “[Pearson]: “All right. Now, there is attached to this a translation that was prepared presumably at the time of the Nuremberg trials. Have you had an opportunity, and I know it was a very brief opportunity, but you did have a brief opportunity to compare the translation with the German document and is it a satisfactory translation in your view?” [Irving]: “It is a satisfactory translation apart from one sentence where--which is quite clearly the operative sentence, which says--I would translate it as ‘This is, however unimportant, as the *Vergasungskeller*.’” Q.: “Let’s put it up on the overhead to see what we’re talking about. First of all, is this the original German?” A.: “It is the same document.” Q.: “Document January 29th, 1943?” A.: “It is the same document and I am referring to this sentence here, ‘Die ist jedoch unbedeutend, da der *Vergasungskeller* hierfur benutzt werden kann.’ I translate as ‘This is, however, unimportant as the *Vergasungskeller* can be used for this,’ and the German word *Vergasungskeller* is a known coming from the German verb *Vergas[en]*, and the German verb *Vergas[en]*, like many German words, has different translations, some of the completely different in meaning from each other.” Q.: “All right.” A.: “It can mean gassing, it can mean “[carburation]”, as in the sense of a carburetor on a car and this is the meaning which I don’t find, the alternative meaning in the translation of the document, the possibility that it refers not to gassing but to the “carboureshen” process in some kind of oil fire heater, so when we are looking at a *Vergasungskeller*, I think it is tendentious to translate it as gas chamber. I mentioned on Friday that a German-- Q.: “What do you

mean by tendentious?" A.: "Tendentious? I think it is trying to arrive at an impression. It is giving possibly a deliberately wrong translation of the word. It is a possible translation but it is an unlikely translation because if a German was going to write the word 'gas chamber,' he would not write '*Vergasungskeller*.' He would write '*Gasungskeller*.'" This misrepresentation of the exchange between himself and Pearson can be attributed to Irving's desire to dramatize the event in order to depict himself as the champion who defeated another attack by the enemy. The rest of his account is pure fabrication. While Irving indeed asked Pearson to put back the document on the projection screen, he did not perform another hermeneutical feat by pointing out that it did not contain the designation "(top)secret." "[Pearson]: "Right, all right. So you agree that that translation, subject to the proviso that you've entered, is an accurate translation." [Irving]: "Yes. I would draw attention to the translation of the first line. I'm sorry, you've removed the document. Could you possibly return it?" Q.: "In English?" A.: "The German document. I would draw attention to this line here, "*Betr.: Krematorium II. Bauzustand*." That means this document is "Re: Krematorium No.II, construction status." Q.: "Right." A.: "In other words this entire document refers to Krematorium No.2, not to any other building or any other installation. Purely to the crematorium. I think that needs possibly to be underlined. I think this justifies me in suggesting that if we're looking for which of the alternative translations to look for this key word underlined here, *Vergasungskeller*, it is some piece of equipment to do with a crematorium process and not to do with any other process." Q.: "What's the *Leichenkeller*?" A.: "I beg your pardon?" Q.: "What's--" A.: "A *Leichenkeller*, a morgue." Q.: "And that's in the crematorium complex, isn't it?" A.: "It would indeed be." Q.: "Right. And are you familiar with the plan of Crematorium 2 and 3 at Birkenau?" A.: "If I could project one on the screen and we could look at it, that would answer your questions no doubt." Q.: "Are you familiar?" A.: "I'm sure you would have projected one on the screen if it would help us." Q.: "You can't tell us what Crematorium 2 is, can you?" A.: "I know what a crem-

atorium is. And this document concerns a crematorium.” Q.: “And the only reason you say that is because it refers to Crematorium 2.” A.: “It says at the top quite specifically ‘re: Krematorium No.II, construction stage.’” Q.: “And if Crematorium 2 referred to a complex which had within it undressing rooms, a *Leichenkeller* or gas chamber and a crematorium and all those three were referred to as Crematorium 2, it wouldn’t be referring to just the crematorium part, would it?” A.: “I’m sure if you had a plan suggesting that you would show it to the jury and that would save us a lot of time examining alternative translations of words.” It is clear that Irving totally misrepresented the exchange in his lecture. Instead of addressing the issue that the document was not marked “(top) secret,” he raised an altogether different issue: the fact that it referred to the construction of a crematorium, and that hence nothing in this letter could apply to a gas chamber. Pearson, however, was not so easily caught. Cross-examining Irving, he was not only able to make clear that Irving had no idea about the actual lay-out of the crematorium, but was also able to make the simple point that in official correspondence a crematorium equipped with gas chambers would still be referred to as “crematorium.” Thus, while Irving pretended to have brought new light to the issue, he in fact was shown to be totally ignorant of its meaning and context.

Less than two weeks after he had begun his Canadian trip on the west coast, Irving arrived in Toronto. There he added some new statements to his arsenal.: “[Y]ou can sum up my case on the Holocaust in the following nut shell: more people died on the back seat of Senator Edward Kennedy’s motor car in Chappaquiddick than died in the gas chamber in Auschwitz.” Then he turned once more to his favourite maritime metaphors, describing the cruise ship Holocaust as a massive vessel “with luxury wall-to-wall fitted carpets and a crew of thousands” and “marine terminals established in now virtually every capital in the world, disguised as Holocaust memorial museums.” The ship was in for rough seas. “The cruise ship Holocaust, where will this story...what,

where will its crew be ... where will the Auschwitz survivors be, now the fact has come out that the index cards which list all the people who passed through the gates of Auschwitz, "Arbeit macht Frei." Who they were? Suddenly a lot of people are not claiming to be Auschwitz survivors any more. Eliah Wiesel, for one, for example. He was always a bit unsure whether it was Auschwitz he had been in or Dachau or Buchenwald. When I say that, because there is a photograph, a photograph on which he identifies himself as being in a photograph of various prisoners in a bunk house, in a barracks in the concentration camp in Buchenwald. And he says, "Yes that is me." But it turns out that photograph is in Auschwitz and he says "Oh yes I meant Auschwitz." Eliah Wiesel. I mean what can we do about these people? Poor mister Wiesel. I mean it is terribly bad luck that he is called Wiesel, but that is no excuse. I mean these people do have a bad time, they have a very very hard time. And I do want to speak a few words of sympathy for them like, I mean on Halloween night for example, or Saint Wiesenthal's night as we call it. So they have had a very very bad time and it is going to get tougher for them now that people are going to challenge them as to whether they really were in Auschwitz or not because we now know exactly who was and who was not. And they have gone to immense troubles, ladies and gentlemen: even the ones who have got tattoo marks on their arms. Because the experts can look at a tattoo and say, "Oh yes, 181,219 that means you entered Auschwitz in March 1943." So if you want to go and have a tattoo put on your arm, as a lot of them do, I am afraid to say, and claim subsequently that you were in Auschwitz, you have got to make sure a) that it fits in with the month you said you went to Auschwitz, and b) that it is not a number which anyone has used before. So there are actual kind of train-spotter guides of numbers that have been used already. And the whole of that hoax is now going to collapse because the Russians have released the index cards." And so Irving continued with his coarse and insulting talk, descending to levels of baseness which even Zündel had managed to avoid. There is, of course, no factual basis for any of his allegations: the

revelations from the Soviet archives did not cause to a single person to change his or her claim of having been an Auschwitz survivor; there is no scarp of evidence that suggests that anyone ever went to a tattoo parlor to acquire an Auschwitz number for the purpose of proving to have been an Auschwitz survivor. And in my more than ten-year study of Auschwitz, I have never come across or even heard about “trains-spotter guides of numbers.”

At the end of the lecture Irving returned to his usual topic, giving special prominence to the Hinsley’s book on the British codebreakers. “He states “that upon analysis of the daily returns of the Auschwitz concentration camp it becomes completely plain that nearly all of the deaths, nearly all of the deaths, were due to disease. The others were by execution, by hanging, and by firing squad. There is no reference,” and I am quoting this page, “there is no reference whatever to any gassings.” So why has not this extraordinary revelation been headlined in the newspapers around the world? It is not just some cranky, self-appointed British neo-fascist, neo-Nazi, pseudo historian. And you journalists who are present can take those words down. It is not just some pseudo historian from Britain saying this. This is the British official historian, Professor Hinsley, who had unlimited access to the archives of the SIS, the Secret Intelligence Service, and to the archives of the British code-breaking agency, who says that in Auschwitz nearly all the deaths were due to disease. There is no reference whatsoever to gassings.” Irving claimed that he was prevented from speaking because together with the death books his findings “are the two torpedoes which would sink the battleship Auschwitz, if it was not already foundering of its own accord.”

In March 1991 Irving found himself in Munich in the company of Fred Leuchter, Robert Faurisson, Wilhelm Stäglich, Mark Weber--Zündel who should also have been there was arrested on his arrival in Munich, and was in jail. The occasion was the so-called “Leuchter Congress,” organized by Zündel and Ewald Althans. Originally meant to take place

in the conference hall of the Deutsches Museum, the conference changed into a protest rally held in the open after it had been banned by the authorities. The newsletter published by the Institute of Historical Review, recorded that “[s]peaking excellent German, best-selling British historian David Irving addressed the crowd in his typical witty and engaging style.” That same newsletter described a news conference held after the protest rally. “Ewald [Althans] distributed copies of the astonishing document prepared by the Krakow Forensic Institute that essentially confirms Leuchter’s findings about the alleged extermination gas chambers of Auschwitz.(See the April 1991 IHR Newsletter. Irving called this “Polish Leuchter Report” a “disaster” for the defenders of the orthodox extermination story. However, none of the journalists present seemed interested in the Krakow report, or, for that matter, in Leuchter’s 1988 investigation.”

The Leuchter Congress had been a failure, but it had attracted a lot of media attention, and it had given Irving the idea to invite Leuchter to speak later that year in England, on the occasion of the publication of a new, revised edition of his *Hitler’s War* Preparations began in the early summer, and Irving began to inform the press. Some proved less than excited about the prospect of a Leuchter speech in Britain. On July 12 the *Jewish Chronicle* ran the headline “Keep Holocaust ‘apologists’ out of Britain, Home Secretary is told. “The article quoted David Winnick, M.O., that “[r]evisionists and apologists for Nazism are highly offensive to the memory of all those who were murdered. It contaminates British soil to have them here.” Irving was said to be unmoved by the protests. “I won’t be intimidated, I won’t knuckle down.” In the end, anti-Irving activists were able to convince the Government that Leuchter’s presence would not serve public interest, and while still in the United States, Leuchter had been informed by the Immigration and Nationality Department that the Home Secretary had given directions “that you should not be given entry to the United Kingdom on the grounds that your presence here would not be conducive to the public good.” Both

Irving and Leuchter decided to ignore this letter, the former because he needed Leuchter to attract the attention of the media, the latter because he had been convinced by Zündel that a lecture tour to Europe could be profitable: the latter had lined up some “catacomb meetings” in Germany where Leuchter would speak before his appearance with Faurisson in London. The date for Leuchter’s appearance was set for November 15, and to mark the importance of the occasion, Faurisson was to give an introductory lecture, while Irving was to function as the host.

Amidst the preparations for the Leuchter/Faurisson/Irving extravaganza to be held in Chelsea Old Town Hall, Irving left for his by now annual Fall lecture tour through Canada. On October 5, 1991 he spoke in Milton, Ontario. Irving complained that it had become increasingly difficult to speak in Germany, and that he risked arrest doing so. His situation was, in his own words, not unlike that Goebbels faced in Weimar Berlin, when the police chief “Isidore” [Bernhard] Weiss tried to stop the Nazi party rallies. And Irving lamented that the Germans should know better than to stop him, “the Englishman who first revealed to the outside world what we British and Americans did to Dresden, where we killed over 100,000 people, burned them alive in three hours in one night in February 1945.” Yet, he predicted that things would change for the better in the near future. “And gradually the word is getting around Germany. Two years from now too the German historians will accept that we are right. They will accept that for fifty years they have believed a lie. And then there will come about a result, not only in Germany, but around the world, which I deeply regret and abhor. There will be an immense tidal wave of antisemitism. It is an inevitable result. And when people point an accusing finger at me and say, “David Irving you are creating antisemitism,” I have to say, “It is not the man who speaks the truth who creates the antisemitism, it is the man who invented the lie of the legend in the first place.” After announcing how he would publish in the next month the new edition of *Hitler’s War*,

providing ample evidence of the “Allied Holocaust” of the Germans through the publication of a “double-page photograph, in full colour, showing the thousands of air-raid victims after the Dresden air raid being [piled] up on funeral pyres in the center of the town square ready for cremation, on these open fires,” Irving turned once more to that other Holocaust. “[T]he only way to overcome this appalling pseudo-religious atmosphere that surrounds the whole of this immense tragedy called World War II is to treat these little legends with the ridicule and bad taste that they deserve. Ridicule alone is not enough, you have got to be tasteless about it. You have got to say things like, “more women died on the back seat of Senator Edward Kennedy’s car at Chappaquiddick than died in the gas chamber at Auschwitz. “You think that is tasteless, what about this? I am forming an association especially dedicated to all these liars, the ones who try to kid people that they were in these concentration camps. It is called “The Auschwitz Survivors, Survivors of the Holocaust, and Other Liars”--ASSHOLES. Can’t get more tasteless than that. But you’ve got to be tasteless because these people deserve all our contempt, and in fact they deserve the contempt of the real Jewish community and the people, whatever their class and colour, who did suffer.” It seems that the public liked it.

After his Canadian tour, Irving travelled to Germany where he spoke among other places in Pforzheim. There he met with both Zündel and Leuchter. The former was in Germany to face trial in Munich. Irving flew back to London on November 10. Fred and Mrs. Leuchter followed a day later. They had rented an Opel Kadett in Frankfurt, driven to Calais, and on November 11 taken the ferry to Dover where they had been able to enter the country despite the exclusion order. Given the fact that Leuchter was illegally in Britain, it would have made sense not to attract public attention to his speech. But desiring publicity, Irving had continued to advertize the evening, with Leuchter as the great attraction. The flyer Irving had printed to advertize the occasion announced in large type “Leuchter is Coming!” After introducing his credentials, it

announced its major claim: “After examining the construction of the facilities said to be gas chambers and after having had samples taken from their walls forensically examined, Leuchter was able to testify under oath: 1. That the facilities were incapable of functioning as gas chambers; 2. That these rooms had never been used for any such purpose.” All of this triggered off a dramatic chain of events which undoubtedly served Irving’s desire for publicity, but brought Leuchter and his wife some very uncomfortable hours in a London police station and the indignity of immediate deportation.

In his welcoming word, Irving described the “revisionist” project he, Faurisson and Leuchter had undertaken as “;the greatest intellectual adventure of the twentieth century.” In his introduction to Faurisson, Irving praised him as a scholar experienced in “microscopic textual analysis, the analysis of words in enormous detail.” “In 1960 he began to research the word “gas chamber”, at first in a vacuum. It was fourteen years before he saw the light--before he suddenly asked himself, “what is a gas chamber?” That was in 1974. Five years later, in Los Angeles, he heard Ernst Zündel speak for the first time. Six years later still he saw Zündel at the first trial in Canada. That was a real turning point in this entire controversy, he says. At the beginning of 1988, Zündel said to Faurisson, “Dr. Faurisson, you have letters written to you from penitentiaries about gas chambers. Can I see them?” Zündel’s lawyer Barbara Kulaszka wrote to those penitentiaries. One governor replied, Bill Armontrout, and he said: “One man is a real specialist in gas chambers. We can recommend him. He is Fred Leuchter.” Shifting to a short statement about Faurisson’s troubles, Irving concluded his introduction with the statement that “Faurisson is one of the bravest historians I know.”

The French academic talked for some time about the impossibility of the gas chambers, and then vacated the platform for the main speaker of the evening: Leuchter. According to an article in the *Sunday Telegraph* entitled “Death’s salesman cut off before his time,” Irving introduced

Leuchter with “boy have we got a treat for you,” and proceeded to tell the audience how he had smuggled Leuchter into the country. According to the article, Leuchter started in form. “It was like listening to a lesson in how to gas people”--a lesson meant to show that the Germans had not done so. The police were present in case of trouble, but as Irving had publically told the audience that Leuchter ought not be there, had checked if indeed there was an exclusion order. Confirmation came after five minutes. “Mid-speech, a police officer whispered from the wings the appropriate: “Can I have a word with you, sir?” Mr Irving rose to explain: “We’ll have a five-minute pause while Mr. Leuchter speaks to certain gentlemen.” The audience filtered into the foyer ready for action. They chanted: “Freedom of Speech, freedom of speech.” But action never came. The police spirited Mr Leuchter out of a side entrance. The meeting ended. Chief Insp. Philip Selwood explained: “Fred Leuchter has been made subject of an exclusion order to this country and in order to resolve the matter, a gentleman who goes by that name has agreed to come to the police station in order to resolve the matter” The article also recorded Irving’s answer when asked if he was mad: “When you’re working on the edge of intellectual hyper-strain, sometimes you must say: “Have I flipped?” Unfortunately, there’s no intellectual thermometer you can slip in your mouth to find out.”

The same day that the *Sunday Telegraph* ran the sorry story for all the world to read, Leuchter issued his own press release, stating that the United Kingdom had “joined the ranks of terrorist nations of the world.” The Home Secretary had violated international law when he incarcerated Leuchter in a frigid cell “with known felons (a dangerous and potentially lethal place for a maker of execution equipment).” It was defiantly signed by “Fred A. Leuchter Jr., Citizen of the United States of America.”

Later that month *The Independent* ran a long article about the event and its context in an article entitled “David Irving resells Hitler’s War.” It carried a photo of Irving and Leuchter just before the intervention by the police. Interestingly enough, it also provided a telling quotation the *Sunday Telegraph* had not chosen to print: “Mr. Irving told his Chelsea audience that in the new edition of *Hitler’s War* they would “not find one line on the ‘Holocaust’” “Why dignify something with even a footnote that has not happened?” Clearly, the new edition of *Hitler’s War* looked not to the past, but to the future. As the article recorded, Irving had turned prophet not only in Milton, but also in Hamburg. “Two weeks ago Mr Irving told a Hamburg audience that in two years “this myth of mass murders of Jews in the death factories of Auschwitz, Majdanek and Treblinka etc. etc. Which in fact never took place... This horrific ghost of guilt from which the German people have suffered for the last 45 years, will be laid.” History proved Irving wrong.

XI Irving Adrift (1993 -1998)

As the dust generated by the aborted Leuchter lecture began to settle, Irving became again an object of media attention. In the month that preceded the Leuchter lecture debacle, Irving had visited Buenos Aires. A year later, he recalled what had happened then. “Well when I was in Argentina in October, a man came up to me at the end of the meeting, who had written to me vaguely a couple of years before, mentioning papers that he thought I ought to see. And the next day he came back and he gave me two thick brown paper parcels which turned out to contain the writings of Adolf Eichmann when he was in custody, not in custody, when he was in hiding in Argentina in the 1950s. ” The pages were transcripts of a series of taped interviews of Eichmann with the Belgian Nazi Willem Sassen, who had also chosen exile in Argentina over justice in his homeland. The Sassen interviews were well known: some pieces of it had been published as early as 1960, while a more substantial part had been edited for publication by the former

Nuremberg defense attorney Rudolf Aschenauer and published in 1980 under the title *Ich, Adolf Eichmann*. A set of transcripts had come into the hands of a former Flemish Waffen-SS volunteer Hugo Byttebi-er, and he in turn had seen it as his duty to hand them to Irving.

When phoned in January 1992 by a journalist for a comment on Ye-huda Bauer's assessment of the number of victims of Auschwitz, Irving mentioned that he was reading Eichmann's papers. Whatever Irving said, or whatever the journalist heard, is not exactly clear, but within a few days major newspapers carried the story that on the basis of the Eichmann papers Irving had recanted his negationist position. *The Times* had this to say about it. "The most interesting part of the memoirs, Mr Irving said, were these chilling words from late 1941. "Heydrich [Eichmann's superior] said to me: 'I have come from the Reichsführer [Himmler]. Now the Führer has ordered the physical destruction of the Jews.'" Mr Irving said: "That shows that Eichmann believed there was an order from Hitler, though it still does not prove there was one. Eichmann's family did not want Mr Irving to see the memoirs because Eichmann admits total guilt for sending Jews to their death. In the light of this Mr Irving said his view that Hitler did not give the order will be "open to reassessment." Mr. Irving says that the memoirs are "very disorganised." He is using them, however, to write a biography of Eichmann. "I see him as a desiccated bureaucrat. He was an efficient transport officer rather than a mass murderer." Martin Gilbert, author of *The Holocaust: the Jewish Tragedy*, said yesterday: "For many years Mr Irving had denied these facts about the Holocaust and now makes a virtue of finding them." The facts Gilbert referred to were the generally accepted account of the Holocaust. Yet he could also have referred to Irving's "discovery" of Eichmann's account of his conversation with Heydrich. After all, it is to be found on page 177 in the 1980 edition of the papers edited by Dr Rudolf Aschenauer: "Around the end of 1941 or the beginning of 1942 Heydrich. The Chef of the SIPO [Security Police] and SD [Security Service], told me in conversation that the Führer

had ordered the physical destruction of the Jewish opponent.” On the next page, Eichmann mentioned that Heydrich talked about “an order for physical destruction,” and quoted once more the Führer order. “When Heydrich told me, “I come from the Reichsführer; the Führer has henceforth given the order for the physical destruction of the Jews,” were these words that were so far-reaching in their consequences, that one could not even remotely measure their significance at the moment that they were spoken.” And on page 229 one can find Eichmann’s second thoughts about this conversation, when he determines that it was not Heydrich’s idea to kill the Jews, but Hitler’s. “I remember exactly the moment that he told me “The Führer has ordered the physical destruction.” I heard that word for the first time in my life, and therefore it stayed with me: I may have forgotten much, but this moment I will never forget. Neither [Gestapo Chef] Müller nor [RSHA Chef] Heydrich nor Eichmann nor anyone else of the RSHA were responsible for this, but the decision was made by the Führer and the Reichsführer. ” In other words, Irving’s “discovery” was not so much the result of having unearthed new material, but of not having paid attention to a source easily available since 1980.

Faurisson immediately realized that Irving had stirred a tempest in a teacup. On Sunday, January 12--the very day that the *Sunday Telegraph* ran the story of Irving’s conversion--Faurisson faxed an angry note to Irving. “As it happens that I know a little bit about the Eichmann topic, perhaps would you be interested to have my position on “Eichmann and the Gas Chambers” (Höttl, Sassen, Aschenauer and, especially, Servatius). I wrote something about that in my interview of *Storia illustrata* and in my *Response to a Paper Historian*. Eichmann had never seen a “Gas Chamber”, and, as everyone, had not the slightest idea how it could look like. But, being rather naive and gullible, he would have been ready to believe more or less what Poliakov and Co. had written on the topic. If you need some details, please, tell me.” Irving responded that same day, and faxed Faurisson the two newspaper articles, ac-

accompanied by a note in which he not only tried to control the damage in his relation with Faurisson, but also give the whole thing a positive spin. “The suggestion that I have E’s diaries has unleashed a furore. I have made plain they are only E’s “unexpurgated” memoirs and recollections, which were given to me in Buenos Aires. I have also stressed that E’s version of what Heydrich said: “ich komme vom Reichsführer; der Führer hat die physische Vernichtung der Juden angeordnet”, is interesting but only Hörensagen, not zulässig in even an Amtsgericht as evidence. It shows what Eichmann believed, not what was necessarily true. Also, I have stressed that despite his many visits to Auschwitz he never saw a gas chamber, and that he refutes what Höß, Wisliceny, Höttl said as lies. I agree: he swallowed a lot that he read in Reitlinger, Poliakov, etc. But it is useful publicity, because it brings the whole controversy out into the open. Today, ten newspapers, three television stations, BBC radio etc. How else can we “purchase” such publicity for our real arguments?!” In his response, Faurisson stated that he considered “the whole matter as **terrible**,” and challenged Irving to make his reservations public. “Have you sent any fax to those newspapers to say what you are telling me in your fax about Eichmann “only [hearsay]”, “not permitted even in a court as evidence”, “never saw a gas chamber”, “refutes what Höss, Wisliceny, Höttl said as lies”, “swallowed [...]”?”

It was clear that the Faurisson’s original doubts about Irving’s reliability as a hard-core negationist had once more surfaced. Also other Holocaust deniers feared that Irving had changed sides. Tom Marcellus of the Institute of Historical Review and Irving had a telephone conversation on January 16, and in a follow-up letter Irving tried to make light of the whole situation as “an object lesson in the worldwide, global, influence of certain media networks.” And he added: “My position remains unchanged: that there were certain My-Lai-type atrocities by troops in Russia; that the gas chambers and factories of death are Hollywood legends; that there is no wartime evidence of a Hitler Order;

that what Eichmann says in these papers is “hearsay.” One day later the *Jewish Chronicle* ran front-page article about the issue. “Holocaust revisionist David Irving this week strongly denied press reports that he has “recanted.” In an exclusive interview, he reiterated his claim that Hitler knew nothing about the Holocaust, called the gas chambers “a legend”: and predicted a new, more powerful Germany, and the destruction of Israel within 10 years. [...] At his Mayfair flat, surrounded by framed newspapers from Nazi Germany, Mr Irving sat at an antique desk playing with a small swastika flag. Behind him, a figurine proclaimed him to be “the World Greatest Dad.” The Jews are very foolish not to abandon the gas chamber theory while they still have time,” he said. He predicted a new wave of anti-Semitism within 18 months, because the Jews “have exploited people with the gas chamber legend.” He also foresaw the rise of “a greater Germany, including Austria and Slovenia with an economic hegemony over Eastern Europe.” He added: “In 10 years, Israel will have ceased to exist and the Jews will have to return to Europe.” Mr Irving said that he had not visited the sites of the death camps in Europe, describing himself as a “field marshal” who would tour the “battlefield” only once the final victory had been achieved.”

Yet many deniers felt uncomfortable, and in the January 30 issue of his own newsletter *Power* Zündel felt obliged to address the issue as many of his supporters had approached him about it. He recalled the personal problems he had with Irving in the past, and expressed his considerable unease with the way Irving had accepted the Eichmann papers as genuine. He should have known better. “Irving also knew that the uncritical and gullible press would print just about anything, as long as it supported their version of history. He was right. They ate it up! Suddenly, the “outcast,” or “Nazi-historian” or “Parlour-Fascist” as he has been called by the media since he “switched sides” in 1988, became quickly, once again, the darling of the media establishment. What ever motivated Irving to launch this particular “torpedo”, I don’t know.

Maybe he was lonely? Maybe he had not seen his name in the papers for a while? Maybe he was temporarily swayed by some arguments contained in those 100 pages? I don't know! [...] I work with David Irving, because I like his mind and his courage. Sometimes his gruff manner, which can be intolerant of associates, as well as his icy manner, which makes him seem arrogant, infuriate me, like it does others. [...] As far as David Irving is concerned, I will "keep the faith" with him, as long as I feel he serves the cause of truth about my own people, even though he might err sometimes, or disappoint me or my friends in some detail. He has courage, good looks, charisma, an ability to think on his feet and to string words together coherently, like few other people I know. I am asking you, you who have been so very loyal and supportive of me, for so long, to trust my instincts." A week or so later, the Institute of Historical Review also expressed its confidence in Irving, claiming that "Irving remains steadfastly Revisionist," and blaming the media for routinely misrepresenting history and sensationally distorting what "prominent Revisionist scholars have to say about the historical record."

Things calmed down, and slowly confidence between Irving and the North-American deniers returned. By mid-summer Irving and Mark Weber of the Institute for Historical Review agreed that Irving would talk about the Eichmann papers at the Eleventh International Revisionist Conference, to be held that Fall in California. Irving promised a talk that would show the potential of the Eichmann document to support and damage the negationist cause. "Basically: they contain good and bad; gripping accounts of mass shootings he witnessed; a savage attack on the reliability of the Höß memoirs; data on his dealings with the Zionists--which are presumably the reason the published Eichmann were quietly suppressed by the media; descriptions of inspections tours of Auschwitz which describe everything--but omit any reference to the gas chamber; so why does he casually refer to Jews being "gassed"...?" The question remained open, for the time being.

More doubt must have arise about the wisdom of his 1988 conversion when, in the summer of 1992, Irving discovered in the Public Record Office the interrogations of Kurt Aumeier. On June 4, 1992 Irving faxed a letter to Tom Marcellus and Mark Weber of the negationist Institute for Historical Review. Irving reported that “working in the Public Record Office yesterday I came across the 200pp handwritten memoirs, very similar in sequence, to the Gerstein Report versions, of an SS officer Aumeier who was virtually Höß’s deputy.” “He was held in a most brutal British prison camp, the London Cage (the notorious Lt. Colonel A. Scotland). These mss. are going to be a problem for the revisionists, and they need analyzing now, in advance of our enemies, and answering. I attach my transcript of a few pp., and you’ll se why. He becomes more lurid with each subsequent version: first no gassings, then 50, then 15,000 (total).” Irving, of course, tried to suggest that the inflation in the death toll and the increasing lurid descriptions were the result of some coaching by his interrogators. And, clutching to the flimsiest arguments in the face of the new evidence he had found that supported the very understanding of the historical role of Auschwitz he had been fighting since 1988, Irving added, “Brute force by interrogators, perhaps.”

The discovery of the Aumeier material brought Irving in a very difficult position. While publication of it would once more desomnstrate his ability to find interesting new archival, publication would discredit him as an analytical historian. Faced with this dilemma, Irving decided to do nothing. Suppressing his discovery, he buried a reference to it in a footnote of his book on Nuremberg.

In 1992 Irving was not willing to break ranks with the other negationists, and he chose to attend the eleventh revisionist conference organized by the Institute of Historical Review. At that occasion, bygoness were bygoness. In the subsequent chronicle of the event, Faurisson, Butz and Irving were grouped together in a section entitled “The End of the Auschwitz Story.” It claimed that these men dealt directly with

the “historiographical demise of the Auschwitz gas chamber imposture, and referred to the effort now underway to transform a pretended historical fact into a vague, non-historical myth of religious veneration. Faurisson “delivered a kind of funeral oration over the prostrate cadaver of the Holocaust-as-history,” and Butz not only reviewed his own misinterpretation of the word *Vergasungskeller*--offering countless other suggestions--but also explained to the participants why the whole Holocaust edifice stood or fell with the issue of the Auschwitz gas chambers. Finally “headline-making” David Irving talked in a speech entitled “The Worldwide Anti-Irving Lobby and the Eichmann Memoir” about the way his opponents made his life miserable, how he had found in Moscow parts of the Goebbels diary, and came clean on the Eichmann Affair that had caused him so much trouble earlier that year by offering what the IHR Newsletter defined as “a controversial assessment of its importance in understanding Germany’s wartime Jewish policy.”

The controversy was certainly not about Irving’s attempt to put a negationist spin on whatever would bear it. He explained that whenever Eichmann uses the noun “*Endlösung*” (Final Solution) he refers to the plan to deport all the Jews to Madagascar, and Irving added that, as far he was concerned “that would have been an ideal solution. The Madagascar solution.” It earned him a long applause. Furthermore Irving noted that Eichmann is obsessed with the question “who is behind it, and what is behind it?” “What was behind the Holocaust? And he keeps coming back to the appalling thought “Did they manage to use us? Did they use us? Did the Zionists use us Nazis, in order to further their own ends? Was the Holocaust something that they themselves inflicted on their own body in order to bring about their Zionist cause in the long run?” This was Eichmann’s theory at the end, at the end of his life effectively, because a year or two later he was kidnapped, and a year after that he was at the end of a rope in Israel. “Did they manage to use us?” And he keeps on coming back to it, and every time he comes back

to it, it becomes more and more plausible to him. And perhaps this is a reason why the Eichmann papers were not supposed to see the light of day.”

After having conjured the spectre of the Elders of Zion as those who managed to make the Germans do their bidding by killing some Jews to realize the Zionist ideal, he suggested that, after the war was over, the leader of the World Jewish Congress, through an intermediary, had approached Eichmann to have him confirm that Eichmann had overseen the murder of six million Jews. The Zionists needed this in their negotiations for reparation payments. Irving also recounted how Eichmann thought that, compared to the allied bombings of the German cities, the German treatment of the Jews was nothing. “Compared to what they were planning to do with us this was nothing.” Irving quickly admitted that one crime does not justify another crime, “[b]ut this is in the memoirs.” And then he gave an interpretation of Eichmann’s interpretation of Höss’s confessions. “And round about 1958 he then gets hold of the Adolf--of the Rudolf Höss memoirs. The so-called memoirs of Rudolf Höss that were published by the Institute of History in Munich in 1958. Rudolf Höss wrote these memoirs while he was in Krakow in Polish captivity. They have always been a problem, let us be frank about it. They have been a problem to Revisionists, the Rudolf Höss memoirs. Eichmann’s comments on the Rudolf Höss memoirs are annihilating. At the stage where Rudolf Höss is saying that 2.5 million Jews have been liquidated in Auschwitz, the camp at which he was Commandant, Rudolf Höss comments--Adolf Eichmann comments: “Where does Rudolf Höss believe that he got these 2.5 million Jews from? Not from me. Because to have liquidated 2.5 million decrepit, elderly, unworkable Jews, I must have had to feed to him three, four, five, six or seven million Jews in that space of time. And from the transport point of view alone, this would have been totally impossible.” You see the memoirs of Eichmann are very useful in this respect. He was the transport specialist, whose job it was to round up the Jews of

Hungary, Slovakia, and ship them off to Germany for forced labour and for dissipation to the other labour camps. And he knew that shipping off millions of Jews to Germany was not something you do with a snap of your fingers. You had to have meetings and conferences with the railway officials, and the road officials, and with the guards, and the electricity, and everybody else who was going to be involved in all this. You had to provide the food for the transports that were going to be on the roads on the rails for four, or five, or six days. All this had to be prepared and planned with typical German bureaucracy and method and this took meetings and conferences. And Eichmann said if you are going to ship five or six million Jews across Europe at that time to Auschwitz--"Let me tell you how many trains that would have taken." And he worked out how many trains it would have taken because he knew. And he said, "But wait a minute, you are not only going to have trains going that way full of Jews, you are going to have to have empty trains coming back, and you are going to have to have a circulation time, a time where they are unloading at one end, a time where they are loading at another end. You are going to need so many millions of wagons of rolling stock." And he worked out exactly how much rolling stock would have been needed in his memoirs and he said: "This alone proves that Rudolf Höss is talking through his hat. These figures are totally fantastic and what the hell is Höss up to writing this kind of garbage?" So if Leuchter had argued that it would have been "impossible" to gas more than 105,688 and incinerate more than 85,092 people in the crematoria in Auschwitz, Irving (with the help of Eichmann) now added to this the argument that it would have been "impossible" to transport more than a undetermined low number of people to the camp--a suggestion Irving makes whilst he attacks the "straw-man" of 2.5 million deportees to Auschwitz.

The question which must be raised at this point is if Irving provided a reliable account of Eichmann's comment on Höss's testimony. Having checked the published version of Eichmann's memoirs, published in

1980 by Rudolf Aschenauer, I was able to find Eichmann's reaction to Höss's one-time statement that 2.5 million Jews had been brought to Auschwitz. In Aschenauer's edition of the Eichmann memoirs, the passage is as follows: "Like the testimony of Hauptsturmführer Wisliceny, also Höss's Nuremberg testimony, that he killed 2.5 million Jews in Auschwitz, seems to have been made under pressure. I knew Höss as a decent comrade, a good family man, decorated in the First World War with the Iron Cross, a man who, because of his national socialist belief, served many years in prison before the Machstübernahme. Höss told me once that the Reichsführer had inspected the whole process of destruction and that he had said that "the coming generations will not need to fight these battles"--a statement that inspired him to fulfil his difficult duty. The number of 2.5 million Jews liquidated in Auschwitz I always considered to be beyond belief, because the camp did not have such a capacity. Besides which I have never brought so many Jews to Auschwitz. It is true that I was not the only one who deported [Jews to Auschwitz], but also other authorities like the Sipo (Security Police), but even when we add all up, 2.5 million could not have gone to Auschwitz and certainly not could not have been destroyed. After 1945 the so-called "Auschwitzer" emerged like mushrooms after the rain, and still today hundreds of thousands enjoy a good health, just because they were put to work." In a different context in the same memoirs, Eichmann did discuss the train-schedules when he challenged the common assumption that over 430,000 Jews had been deported to Auschwitz during the Hungarian Action. "It is completely impossible that between earliest the middle of May 1944 and July 8, the day that enemy sources call the date that the last railway transport left Hungary, that is in 50 days, it would have been possible to transport 434,000 people (according to the same sources). This would imply that every day, including Saturday and Sunday, 10,000 and more people would have been transported. In addition to that the majority survived. There was a rule that between 25 and 30 men accompanied every deportation train. I only had 250 men available. If the numbers from enemy

sources would be right, I should have had a thousand men at my disposal. This is bloody nonsense! Even the commander of the Order Police in Hungary would have been delighted, if he had had a thousand men at his disposal for such a task. Also it would have been necessary to have many trains in reserve. Because while the first people went on their way, one would have been forced to load the next one. It took two days to go from Hungary to Auschwitz; so two days going and two days returning. I had to struggle constantly to get trains at all, especially in the for the war very important days of the early summer of 1944, when the invasion and the Soviet offensive made it impossible to obtain such a number of trains, even if one calculates that each train would have gone on its way with a maximum of 3,000 people. It is therefore nonsensical what post-war literature had written about the Hungarian evacuation numbers.” I must assume that Irving took these two parts of Eichmann’s memoirs--one dealing with Eichmann’s refusal to accept the 2.5 million figure and another made in order to lower the number of deported Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz from 430,000 to 300,000--cobbling them together into a completely fictive account to prove that “Höss is talking through his hat.” It seems that, at least for Irving, anything goes to solve the “problem” of Höss’s confessions!

Irving also mentioned that Eichmann recalled that he visited Auschwitz several times--a point in his lecture where Irving began to conjure up the worst nightmares of Holocaust deniers in order to put them to rest again, with a less than convincing logic and without any attempt to review important corroborating evidence, such as Eichmann’s account of his trip to Auschwitz given in Israel. “And he describes several grisly scenes. He describes going past an open pit where bodies were being burned. And he says it was an infernal sight the likes of which he would never forget. He describes how the commandant Höss tells him they are doing these things on Himmler’s orders and that it is a sacred task that has been imposed on the SS. He describes many things. But what he does not once mention during this vivid description of the vis-

it to Auschwitz is gas chambers. He does not mention gas chambers. He just mentions the disposal of bodies in open pits by fire, and the comments to him by the commandant, Rudolf Höss. I find that a very significant omission, because Eichmann, let us face it, when you read these papers, he is not exactly being modest about what he has seen. He describes how, in July 1941, if we piece together the actual month and the date, he describes how he is summoned to Berlin, he is summoned to Berlin to visit Reinhard Heydrich, the chief of the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*. And Heydrich utters to him the fatal words, “*Ich komme von Reichsführer SS*” -- “I come from the Reichsführer of the SS, Heinrich Himmler.” “*Der Führer hat den Befehl zur physischen Vernichtung der Juden gegeben*” -- “The Führer has given the order for the physical destruction of the Jews.” And that of course, in quotation marks in the manuscript, is what gave me pause for thought. I have always said that Hitler was not involved, whatever happened. Hitler gave the orders; there is no proof of it. In fact here we have Eichmann writing something very specific. Indeed what is the explanation? Well if I can digress here and look just at that sentence and say, you have only got to change one or two words and you get a completely different meaning. If it was not “the Führer has ordered the “*physische Vernichtung*,” the physical destruction of the Jews, but the “*Ausrottung des Judentums*.” You have only changed the words by a fraction and yet you have got a totally different meaning and you get something that is much more familiar to those who are familiar with Adolf Hitler’s public utterances and speeches. “*Ausrottung des Judentums*,” the destruction of Judaism, is something totally different. You do not do that by gas chambers and the machine gun, anymore than destroying Christianity or destroying usury would be done by the gas chamber and the bullet. It is a different concept. So why should Eichmann have written this and not that?” Obviously it will be superfluous to note the manner in which Irving applies his unique hermeneutical method to inconvenient evidence. Of course, everyone knows that changing one or two words in a sentence often produces a completely different meaning. Everyone knows, too,

that it is the duty of a historian to interpret evidence as it is given, and only when there is no way that one could come a reasonable explanation of the words as they are transmitted, speculate about a possible change that occurred in the transmission. The meaning of the sentence, "The Führer has given the order for the physical destruction of the Jews" is straightforward, and is confirmed by the context. But that does not convince Irving. "So why should Eichmann have written this, and not that? Well by 1958 he is well aware that since Höss's memoirs have been published and Eichmann is mentioned on 20 or 30 pages of Rudolf Höss's memoirs, the hue and cry is up. They are out looking for him. He knows that his days may be numbered. And although I am sure that, given his German, decent, bureaucratic mind he is not doing this consciously, the mind has a wonderful synthetic and analytical function. And the mind has a habit of suppressing, and distorting, and embellishing, in a manner in which the owner of that mind would wish. And I am sure that Adolf Eichmann's mind is already lying awake at night, feverishly looking for extenuating circumstances. And what more extenuating circumstances would there be for an Adolf Eichmann than that the Führer has ordered the physical destruction of the Jews. So his mind may well have adapted the sentence that Rudolf Höss, that Reinhard Heydrich actually uttered to him." Of course, there is absolutely no evidence at all that Heydrich "actually" said anything different from what Eichmann reports. As I have noted above, Eichmann gave in at least three different places in his memoirs a virtually identical version of the content of Heydrich's message: "the Führer had ordered the physical destruction of the Jewish opponent;" "the Führer has henceforth given the order for the physical destruction of the Jews;" "[t]he Führer has ordered the physical destruction." Given the fact that Irving has absolutely no evidence to support his point, and given the point that Eichmann seems to insist on the interpretation Irving so stubbornly rejects, there is at least in my mind no doubt that Irving violates the most basic rule of historical scholarship. It is clear that, whatever his claims to the contrary, he is not a historian.

Perhaps he realized this himself, because as quickly as he had conjured his alternative interpretation, he went on to say that nothing what Eichmann would have said matters, that all evidence is really irrelevant. “It is immaterial one way or the other, because we must never overlook one fact. This is a post-war document. And there is no overlooking the basic fact that any historian can now confirm, that nowhere in all the archives of the world has yet been found one wartime document referring to a Führer’s order to destroy the Jews, or for that matter one wartime document referring to gas chambers, or gassings. All the documents that refer to Führer’s orders and gas chambers are post-war documents. Statements by the people in the dock at Nuremberg, memoirs by commandants at Auschwitz, at Krakow in Poland, and the like. And you can not overlook this basic watershed between wartime and post-war, when you come to look for the documents. If there is no wartime document that says there was a Führer order, no wartime document talks of gas chambers, then there has to be some explanation for that.” The one possible explanation that the Führer order was never committed to paper, and that it was perfectly possible to design a usable gas chamber without writing the word “Gaskammer” or, for that matter, “Vergasungskeller” in the blueprints of the crematoria was, of course, not admissible to Irving.

At his introduction of Irving, Mark Weber had told the audience that “he has also promised to let us in on some of the new ways he has found to make liberal flesh creep.” It is obvious that Irving could neither resist to make negationist flesh creep by mentioning that the Eichmann papers contain a vivid description of a shooting in Minsk which he saw from so close proximity that blood splashed on his coat. “I do not know why he wrote it in his memoirs. It is in the conversations. It is an ugly piece of circumstantial evidence, what a writer calls verisimilitude, it lends credibility and authenticity to the description. It did not surprise me. He also describes, and I have to say this being an honest historian, going to another location a few weeks later and

being driven around in a bus and then being told by the bus driver to look through a peep hole into the back of the bus, where he saw a number of prisoners being gassed by the exhaust fumes. So I accept that this kind of experiment was made on a very limited scale, but that it was rapidly abandoned as a totally inefficient way of killing people. What I do not accept is that the gas chambers existed and this is well known.” Many must have thought that, perhaps after all, the doubts that had been raised in January had not been without justification.

Following the conference, Irving was to make his annual Canadian lecture tour. The Canadian government had told him that he was not welcome, but Zündel (who had not been allowed into the United States to attend the Eleventh IHR Conference) had told Irving that while he was going to be arrested, it was worth it for the publicity. In fact things worked out as predicted: Irving got arrested, and was thrown out of Canada with much publicity. But the indignity of deportation was more than Irving had expected. The long simmering tensions between Irving and Zündel blew up into a nasty row. Both men felt that they had done everything to accommodate the other, without getting much in return. Zündel sent Irving long letters itemizing all the expenses he had incurred on behalf of the historian, and Irving responded in kind. As far as he was concerned, his life had been perfect until he met Zündel, “on that historic day in October 1987.” “I had few enemies, my publishing basis was intact, my books were reviewed with respect tinged with admiration more usually than with malice. It is fortunate that I met you in private, because I at once realized that you had been grossly maligned by the media moguls, and that--like Hitler--your public persona was very different from the true persona. Accordingly, in April 1988 I unhesitatingly agreed to aid your defence as a witness in Toronto. I would not make the same mistake again. As a penalty for having defended you then, and for having continued to aid you since, my life has come under a gradually mounting attack: I find myself the worldwide victim of mass demonstrations, violence, vituperation, and

persecution....” Yet the two men who had condemned each other continued in to remain each other’s company. In the course of 1993, amicable relations were to be restored.

While Irving seemed to regret his 1988 “conversion,” he was not yet ready to make any attempt to undertake the necessary action to reclaim some of his credibility as a historian and appease the people he had enraged. And the negationists did not want to let Irving go. The first issue of the newly formatted *The Journal of Historical Review*, which was published in January 1993, showed Irving on the cover. In Mark Weber’s introduction to the new journal, one read that “[i]n recent years, no historian has provoked greater controversy, or has stimulated more people into reassessing stereotypical notions about contemporary history, than David Irving.” “The best-selling British historian is also a good friend of the Institute who has delighted attendees at four IHR Conferences. We are accordingly pleased to begin this premiere issue of the “new” *Journal* with an essay summarizing Irving’s remarkable career and impact. The British historian himself then provides a fascinating and humorous report on the increasingly desperate and sometimes criminal international campaign to silence him and to suppress openness in history.”

Irving proved himself worthy of the honour, and throughout 1993 he did not disappoint his friends as the Institute of Historical Review, and continued to preach the negationist gospel. When in March 1993 Mark Weber invited him for a revisionist news conference to be held on April 22 concurrent with the dedication of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Irving responded enthusiastically. “I am clearly interested, and you can state that ‘David Irving has been invited.’” Yet all was to depend on the availability of a fee for his attendance. In return, Irving predicted that “my presence might break the conference into the real news media, given the worldwide attack on my International Campaign for Real History.” In the end Weber and Irving agreed on expenses, a fee of \$1,000, and a free notice in *The Journal of Historical Re-*

view appealing for financial contributions to Irving's "Legal Fighting Fund." Sharing the stage with Robert Faurisson and Mar Weber, Irving performed as requested in the event entitled "Saying NO to the US Holocaust Museum."

In a lecture entitled "The Search for Truth in History Banned," Irving complained that the "traditional enemy" were using Nazi methods against him. As to the history of Auschwitz, he now claimed that probably 100,000 Jews had died in Auschwitz--"but not from gas chambers. They died from epidemics." "Even if we say that of those 100,000 people who died a fraction were murdered, hanged, or shot. Suppose we say a quarter were murdered. 25,000 people murdered in Auschwitz in the three years, if we take that generous figure, then I would say that 25,000 people murdered in Auschwitz in three years is still half the number of people that we murdered in Hamburg, burning them alive in one night in 1943. We are looking at crime and crime. They are both crimes. One crime gets all the publicity. One crime is the only one that is referred to in the media today and the other crime you put up a statue to commemorate the man who carried it out. There is something wrong about that." Irving broke new ground in his interpretation of history when he dealt with the question why so many Germans believe, nay even witnessed, that Jews were being exterminated. "There is hardly a German who has not been listening clandestinely to the BBC who has not heard talk about the gas chambers. And they begin mentioning it in rumors to each other. From one washerwoman to the next the rumor goes around Germany, until finally they have actually seen about it and their son is working in a unit and he has heard about it too. And that is how the legend gains credibility from the German side too." As to the "real" fate of the Jews, Irving reached back to the theme that they had all been killed by allied bombs whilst being evacuated. "Many concentration camps, as the Russians approached, were evacuated and set out on the long cold march through the European winter of December 44, January 1945 to the West. The con-

centration camp inmates arrived in Berlin or in Leipzig or in Dresden just in time for the RAF bombers to set fire to those cities. In Dresden a million-and-a-half people camping out in the streets on the night of February 13, 1945. Nobody knows who they were. Refugees, concentration camp prisoners, citizens of Dresden itself. After the bombers retired, 45 minutes later another wave came, and at then at noon on February 14 the American air force joined in. Over 130,000 people died in that particular air raid. The same kind of raids took place on Leipzig, Berlin, Cottbus: refugee centers up and down the center of Germany. Nobody knows how many Jews died in those air raids, nobody knows how many Jews died on the roads of hunger or starvation or just sheer cold. Nobody knows how many Jews then survived World War II in the Displaced Persons Camps. And this is one of the most interesting aspects. It is possible to research it, I suppose, but to my knowledge none of the Holocaust historians have done so. The National Archives in Washington houses a report this thick of the Office of Strategic Services, the American secret service, in which are investigated the activities of the Hagana, the Jewish, Zionist underground organization, in those very Displaced Persons Camps in the first months after World War II. The Hagana went from DP camp to camp scouring them for all the Jews they could find who were still living in these camps, these wretched people, loading them onto trucks and shipping them then with United Nations funds and resources all the way across Europe, through the Middle East to Palestine. So Mr. Goldman, who is found in a camp somewhere in Bavaria, is put aboard a truck with his family, and shipped across the Middle East to Palestine where he is given a new life and a new identity. An Israeli identity with a Hebrew name. Mr. Goldman has vanished and the Hebrew gentleman in the Middle East then starts drawing compensation because Mr. Goldman has vanished. This is the irony, which a lot of the Germans are now beginning to worry about."

Irving did not only add new themes to his lecture offerings. He also looked for new publishing initiatives. Years earlier he had announced that he was to write a book on Auschwitz--his final one--but this project had never materialized. But in 1992 a book entitled *Air Photo Evidence* had appeared in Canada which formed, together with the Leuchter Report, the book-ends of revisionist obsession with the gas chambers. If Leuchter had tried to prove through the chemical analysis of some wall samples that no gassings had taken place, John C. Ball from Delta, British Columbia thought he could do the same through the study of air photos of Auschwitz and Birkenau taken by allied planes on April 4, May 31, June 26, August 25, September 13, 1944. Ball's reasoning was simple: "Nothing is hidden from air photos. Looking at the air photos will be just as if we went back in time to World War II to take a series of airplane flights over the different areas." His alleged aim was equally simple. "My objective was to *analyze* World War II German controlled detention camps in Poland for evidence to confirm the claims that mass murders, burials, and cremations had been conducted there"--a statement that, given the contents of the book, reminds one of Leuchter's often-repeated assertion that he went to Auschwitz to prove that the gas chambers had been efficient killing mass installations. Of course, like Leuchter, Ball came to the opposite conclusion. "[T]here is *no* evidence mass murders and cremations occurred at or near the Birkenau crematoriums, which were visible from both inside and outside the camp, or the Auschwitz I or Majdanek detention camps." In fact, as a 16-page insert that accompanied the Ball book declared, the situation was quite opposite to what all witnesses had said: "Auschwitz inmates enjoyed a wide range of healthy activities."

Unlike the Leuchter Report, Ball's book, published by the author, had not much of an impact. Yet both Zündel and Irving believed that it had potential. It was exceedingly well illustrated with many seemingly informative air photos from the National Archives in Washington. The problem was the text, which was in fact nothing more than a series of

captions to the photos. In 1993 Zündel bought the German rights for the book, but at the same time Irving found a right-wing German publisher who would distribute the book under Irving's "Focal Point" imprint. The deal was that Irving would write a foreword as he had done for the Leuchter Report and, as he explained to Zündel, make the book understandable. "The problem with John Ball's book is, as others than I have also said, that the caption texts are too *opaque*. They needed a good editor to ask Ball questions, which he would then answer. Nobody looking at the book can fail to be impressed by the quality of the job and the layout; but everybody I know has put it down scratching his head and asking, "What was Ball getting at?" Therefore he suggested that he would edit the captions, "so that the reader is in no doubt at all what Ball is getting at on each page."

Zündel predicted that Ball would not agree. "He is very proud of his work and not willing to merely be the supplier of the pictures," and therefore suggested that Irving would write a very long foreword, which would become in some way a replacement for the missing text. But a few days later Zündel informed Irving that Ball was not excited about the prospect of surrendering control to Irving, and beyond that there was of course the issue of Zündel's reward if he was to transfer the rights to Irving. In the end, it seems that the whole project collapsed. Ball was not to be another Leuchter, and *Air Photo Evidence* was not to be another Leuchter Report. As a publisher of path-breaking negationist pamphlets, Irving began to loose his touch.

Irving increasingly began to reap the bitter harvest of the carelessly phrased seeds sown in the years before. He always had taken pride in his prophetic gifts, and in 1991 he had announced that the Holocaust Hoax would have only another two years of life. But in 1994 he had to admit that his prophecy had not been realized, and that "our world-wide Traditional Enemy has pulled every dirty trick he can--short of doing a Tonya Harding to every single revisionist writer--to breathe a

few more years of life into the rotting corpse of his profitable legend.” And then, of course, there was the publication of Deborah Lipstadt’s *Denying the Holocaust*, which is the subject matter of this litigation.

Yet he was still welcome at the annual conference of the Institute of Historical Review. At the twelfth conference, held in September 1994, Irving discussed his forthcoming biography of Goebbels, concentrating on Goebbels involvement with the “Final Solution.” A few months later he published an adapted version of his talk. In it he stated that “I’ve gone through the diary with a special interest in the Jewish issue, and particularly the ‘final solution.’” “There’s no question that whatever tragedy befell the Jews in Germany during the Third Reich, Dr. Goebbels himself was the prime moving force behind it. He wasn’t just the person who created the atmosphere of hatred, he was also the one who pulled the levers and started the trains in motion. What happened at the other end is still a matter of debate, and this issue is one of the moving causes of revisionism at this moment.” Eighteen years after having absolved Hitler from all responsibility for what might have happened to the Jews, Irving presented Dr. Goebbels as his scapegoat, with Albert Speer as his sidekick (both men cooperated in pressing for the deportation of Jews from Berlin in the summer of 1941). There is no need to review Irving’s reasonings as to why Goebbels had such a central role. It will suffice to state that by making Goebbels the central character in whatever happened to the Jews, Irving was able to ignore the whole machinery of destruction embodied by the death camps with their gas chambers and, in the case of Auschwitz and Maidanek, crematoria.

Instead of considering Goebbels antisemitism as described by Irving, let us look at Irving’s assessment of how it shaped the fate of the Jews. Irving described at one moment in the lecture the massacre of German Jews in Riga in order to introduce his theory, introduced in his *Hitler’s War*, that Hitler explicitly forbid the killing of Jews, and then continued with his creed: “Here I want to mention something that I’m very adam-

ant about. Although we revisionists say that gas chambers didn't exist, and that the "factories of death" didn't exist, there is no doubt in my mind that on the Eastern front large numbers of Jews were massacred by criminals with guns--SS men, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, whatever--to get rid of them. They were to line up next to pits or ditches, and then shot. The eyewitness accounts I've seen of this are genuine and reliable." One wonders why those eyewitness accounts may be trusted, and those that described the gassings not....

Whatever may be the case, Irving ended his talk with a consideration of one of the most damning pieces of evidence about the Holocaust in Goebbels' diaries: the entry of March 27, 1942. "On March 27, 1942, Goebbels dictates a lengthy passage about another SS document that had been submitted to him, and which appears to have been much uglier in its content. "Beginning with Lublin," he states, "the Jews are now being deported eastward from the General Government (occupied Poland). The procedure is pretty barbaric and one that beggars description, and there's not much left of the Jews. Broadly speaking one can say that 60 percent of them will have to be liquidated, while only 40 percent can be put to work." It's a very ugly passage, and it's easy to link this diary passage with everything we've seen in the movies and on television since then. He's describing "Schindler's List" here--or is he? I don't know. All he's actually saying here is that the Jews are having a pretty rigorous time. They're being deported, it's happening in a systematic way, and not many of them are going to survive it." It is unclear to me why Goebbels' diary entry should not be taken literally, given massive corroborating evidence. He mentions not merely that deportation will probably result in many people dying, but that deportation is the pre-amble for the liquidation of those who can not work. "The conclusion I draw therefore is that, between them, Speer and Goebbels started a ruthless campaign in 1941 to drive out and deport the Jews from Berlin--Goebbels for political reasons, and out of sheer visceral hatred of the Jews, and Speer for the mundane reasons of real estate

and ambition. They didn't really care what happened to the Jews. Even so, we must put all this in the context of the brutal war being fought on the Eastern front at the time, in which neither side was giving the other any quarter. By this time (March 1942) we British had just begun bombing German towns on a ruthless scale. The devastating aerial bombardment of Lübeck, for example, came just two days after this diary entry. It's not difficult to imagine Dr. Goebbels' attitude: "So what if Jews are being machine-gunned into pits? They had it coming to them. They declared war on us, and this is no time for sympathy and sentiment." That's the way he may well have looked at it." Goebbels may have thought this, or not, but what is clear is that Goebbels referred in his diary entry to a systematic policy which has commenced in areas far from those targeted by the RAF, and there is absolutely no evidence at all to interpret the deportations from Poland "eastward" as a response to the air raids.

Before I will conclude my discussion of Irving's essay, I would like to make the following observation. While a historian has the responsibility to state clearly "I don't know..." when the evidence does not allow him to establish the facts, he also has the responsibility, when engaged in a historical investigation, to say clearly "This is so..." when the evidence clearly converges towards a (admittedly always provisional) conclusion about the facts. If, for whatever reason, the historian refuses to establish a historical fact when there is sufficient evidence to do so, and when he refuses to propose an (admittedly always provisional) interpretation of this fact in the context of other facts, he ceases to be a historian. In politics and poker, ambiguity has its use and justification. In history, it has not.

This brings us to the historian's obligation to provide, in the words of the Australian historian C. Behan McCullagh, a fair representation of the past. McCullagh introduced the useful distinction between "true descriptions" of a fact and "fair representations" through a simple example: "If I say that my dog has an ear, an eye, a leg and a tail, that

statement would be literally true. It has got all of those things. But the statement does not give a fair description of my dog, which has two ears, two eyes, four legs and one tail. As a description of the dog it may be literally true, but it is also misleading for anyone who reads it as providing a fair description of the dog. Normally people do intend their descriptive statements about the world to provide fair descriptions of it, though occasionally that is not their intent.” Fair descriptions of a historical fact must therefore include the predominant feature(s) of that fact. If major features are ignored then a description ceases to be balanced and fair, and becomes misleading. It also ceased to be fair, when the description cease to operate at the same level of generality and with the same degree of detail. For example, in the case of the German attempt to come to a “Final Solution of the Jewish Question,” whatever an important leader like Goebbels writes in his diary on March 27, 1942 probably belongs to the same level of generalization as evidence about a meeting of bureaucrats in a villa in Wannsee two months earlier, or the transformation in Birkenau of a peasant cottage into a gas chamber in mid March, or the negotiations held in Bratislava between German and Slovak officials about the deportation of Jews. But the fact that a piece of a press report is marked “secret” or that half of a report marked “secret” was torn off, or the possible thoughts of a stenographer about the sentences he jotted down belong to a different degree of generalization--one that may possibly provide an illustration of the appropriate generalization of one’s attempt to reconstruct the facts concerning the German attempt to come to the “Final Solution,” but which cannot provide a substitute for those generalizations.

Let us return to the end of Irving’s lecture. We left him with his speculation what Goebbels might have thought about the historical justice of deporting the Jews when Germany’s cities were about to be bombed. “By this time, ugly rumors were already circulating abroad, fuelled by British propaganda. The London *Daily Telegraph* quoted Polish claims that seven thousand of Warsaw’s Jews were being killed each day, often

in what it called “Gas chambers.” One of Goebbels’ worried civil servants responded by telaxing a request for information to Hans Frank’s press office in Krakow and to the propaganda field office in Warsaw. The reassuring reply spoke of the Jews being used to construct defences and roads. Be that as it may, in Goebbels’ files the original press report, which had merely summarized the British newspaper item, was rubberstamped *Geheime Reichssache* “Secret Reich Matter.” How much did Goebbels know? Among his surviving files are papers suggesting a broad general knowledge of atrocities. One is from a large collection of original Goebbels’ papers on file at the Jewish Yivo institute in New York. Reporting to Goebbels on November 11, 1942, his legal expert, Dr. Hans Schmidt-Leonhardt, whom he had sent to inspect conditions in Hans Frank’s Polish dominions, noted that the Warsaw police had deemed it too dangerous to visit the ghetto there; in the Krakow ghetto he had found all the Jews put to work; in Lublin the ghetto had already been cleared away, and there were now bloody disturbances. “As a *Geheime Reichssache*,” reported the legal specialist, “Frank related to us the following characteristic recent instance:...” But whatever this was we cannot know, because a shocked member of Goebbels’ staff cut off the rest of the page. This is something that you have to look for, this “top secret” endorsement. By contrast, the Auschwitz documents found in the Moscow archives by French researcher Jean-Claude Pressac have no “secret” classification whatsoever. But this document, with its missing half page, tells me that Goebbels knew damn well that something ugly was probably happening on the Eastern front, and that he didn’t want members of his staff asking awkward questions, so he had part of the page torn off and locked away in his safe. I sometimes wonder what his stenographer, Richard Otte, must have thought about the man whose words he transcribed day by day for this diary. So there are the facts about Dr. Goebbels and the “final solution.” If we’re looking for a culprit, if we’re looking for a criminal behind the “final solution” or the “Holocaust,” whatever it was, for the man who started it in motion, then it was undoubtedly Dr. Goebbels

first and foremost. Not Julius Streicher, nor Adolf Hitler, nor any of the other Nazis. Goebbels was the moving force, and the brain behind it in every sense of the word. We still don't know if he knew what exactly happened at the other end, but then this isn't surprising, because we ourselves don't know either." Nothing Irving described in these last paragraphs is patently untrue, but as a whole, it does not add up to a fair description of the facts under consideration.

January 1995 brought the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. In order to mark the occasion, the French magazine *L'Express* carried a section with articles about the camp. One of these, written by the journalist and historian Eric Conan, concerned the problems of historic preservation, restoration, and presentation. Conan's article provided a solid account of problems the conservator Witold Smerk faced in controlling the decay of the remaining barracks, which had been erected as temporary structures more than 50 years earlier, and the degradation of the hair, shoes, and other exhibits in barracks not equipped with any climate control. And then there was the great problem the museum authorities faced in removing from the presentation the overly communist interpretation of the murders that had taken place at the site--one that had inflated the number of victims, while simultaneously suppressing the Jewish identity of the vast majority of the those killed. Conan quoted a senior advisor to the museum and the Ministry of Culture who said that there was now a unanimous resolve "to make an end to the nationalist-communist discourse at the place, and find for the genocide of the Jews a central place in the memory of Auschwitz." In the five years since the fall of communism much had been achieved. "The biggest blunders have been rectified but the main discussions are never-ending and far from being settled. I may even say that the essential debates, distressing, and sometimes unexpected, are only beginning."

Conan described the ongoing discussions of the museum with people from all over the world of how to improve the presentation, including a short description of a conference that I attended in 1993. And then he turned to two “delicate” subjects: the issue of the hair, which many Jews would like to see removed from the exhibition and buried, and the problem of ill-considered restorations done shortly after the war. “In the 1950s and 1960s, various buildings that had either disappeared or had changed function were reconstructed with great errors, to be presented as authentic. Certain of those, too “new” have been closed to the public. And we do not have to mention the delousing gas chambers sometimes as homicidal gas chambers. These aberrations have served the negationists well, who have drawn raw material from this for their fabrications. The example of crematorium 1, the only one in Auschwitz 1, illustrates the problem. The first gas chamber was installed in its morgue. It was in operation for some time, in the beginning of 1942. The gassings necessitated the isolation of the zone where it was taking place, and this disturbed the operation of the camp. Therefore it was decided, at the end of April 1942, to move the homicidal gassings to Birkenau, where they were undertaken on an almost industrial scale, with most of its victims being Jews. Crematorium 1 was then transformed into an air-raid shelter, with an operation room. In 1948, when the Museum was created, crematorium 1 was reconstructed in what one supposed to be its original state. Everything there is wrong: the dimensions of the gas chamber, the locations of the doors, the openings for pouring in Zyklon B, the ovens that were rebuilt according to the recollections of some survivors, the height of the chimney. At the end of the 70s, Robert Faurisson exploited those falsifications all the better because at that time the Museum officials refused to admit them. An American revisionist has just shot a video in the gas chamber (still presented as authentic): one may see him questioning the visitors with his “revelations” Jean-Claude Pressac, one of the first to reconstruct the exact history of this gas chamber and its modifications during and after the war, proposes to restore it to its

state in 1942, using the German blueprints which he found in the Soviet archives. Others, like Théo Klein, prefer to leave it in its present state, explaining to the public the misrepresentation. “History is what it is: this is all that needs to be said, even when it is not simple, it is better than replace one artifice with another.” Krystyna Oleksy, who works in the director’s office that is housed in the old SS hospital directly opposite the crematorium, does not want to resolve it. “For the time being we are going to leave it in the present state, and not give any specifics to the visitors. It is too complicated. We will see later on.”

Conan’s observations about the problems of the restoration, conservation and presentation of crematorium 1 were perfectly justified. Yet the second part of the paragraph, which talked about the misrepresentations without the context that clearly established the historic functions and its attendant changes that had occurred in 1942 and 1943, would prove excellent raw material for the Holocaust deniers. Indeed: they immediately hailed Conan’s article as a breakthrough. Faurisson told anyone willing to hear that he had been right all along. “[A]lready in 1976 I demonstrated the falsehood of this entire story by questioning Museum official Jan Machalek, and by finding in the Auschwitz Museum files original plans clearly showing that, in fact, the alleged ‘gas chamber’ was, between October 7, 1941, and August 31, 1943, a room with a single entrance where dead bodies awaiting cremation were stored” And he challenged the museum officials to rebuild the room as it was during the war, which meant that they would have to close the back-entrance adjacent to the place where Höss was executed in 1947. This, Faurisson argued, would provide a problem as the museum officials would not be able anymore to explain how the victims had entered the gas chamber. “I do not think the officials would dare contend that the victims entered by way of the door of the ovens room.” Of course, there would have been no need for that: as a plan preserved in the Osobyi archive clearly indicates, there were two doors that gave access to the gas chamber: one from the incineration

room, and one from a small ante-room that was directly connected to the vestibule. The victims did not have to go along the ovens to reach the gas chambers.

Irving celebrated Conan's article in the May 1995 issue of his *Action Report*. **"L'Express: 'Tout y est faux'--Everything About It Is Fake French Make a Clean Breast: Admit Forty-Seven-Year Auschwitz 'Gas-Chamber' Fraud** Paris--Braving the risk of prosecution under France's draconic new Fabius-Gayssot Law, the mass circulation national weekly magazine L 'Express has admitted that the gas chamber shown to tourists at Auschwitz is a fake--built by the Polish Communists three years after the War. This was the claim which British writer David Irving made in Munich in April 1990: a remark for which the German government fined him DM 30,000 (\$22,000) and banned him from Germany in 1993." Remaining silent about Conan's discussion of the war-time history of crematorium 1, Irving defined the "admission by L'Express that 'everything is fake' about the Auschwitz gas chamber" may be defined as "the fourth great triumph for the world-wide revisionist movement"--the other three were the admissions that "there were never homicidal gas chambers in Dachau," that "the soap story was a propaganda lie," and that not four million, but only between one and 1.5 million people had been murdered in Auschwitz. "Now the Auschwitz gas chamber legend is finally crumbling too. Just as the leading revisionists promised that it would."

As Irving had indicated in the beginning of his article, the issue had practical importance for him because a German court had fined him three years earlier him first DM 10,000 and later DM 30,000 for stating that the gas chambers shown in Auschwitz were fakes. Ignoring the fact that he had made a statement about all the gas chambers, and that Conan's article only concerned the gas chamber in crematorium 1--those of crematoria 2, 3, 4, and 5 were never reconstructed--Irving felt that the time had come to call for a revision of the case. "It is now essential for this revisionist triumph to be consolidated. David Irving has

already written personal letters to the president and Federal Chancellor of Germany, as well as to the two judges who sentenced him after refusing to hear any evidence presented in his defence drawing, their attention to the L'Express article. **Action Report** has launched a world-wide campaign to tell German diplomatic officials and journalists about the article and its findings. Our readers are mailing thousands of postcards and letters drawing attention to the sensational admissions by L'Express."

German officials did not seem to have been impressed. Probably they re-read the statements Irving had made in 1990, and the revisionist distortion of Conan's argument, and realized that Irving had no case.

It is possible that, despite his call to "consolidate this revisionist triumph," Irving also had doubts. Less than two months after he had published his article about the "breakthrough" Irving seemed to begin a retreat from the extremely offensive position he had adopted in 1988. When interviewed in July on Ron Casey's morning radio show in Australia, Irving was prepared to admit that there had been a Holocaust of the Jews through his remark that if Churchill had "taken a different turning in 1940 that the world would have been spared a lot of suffering and would also, incidentally, have been spared what is now called the Holocaust." When Casey pointed out to Irving that he had admitted the Holocaust, Irving tried first some evasive action. "I don't like talking about The Holocaust as though there was only one Holocaust, it's just that I get a bit unhappy about the fact that the Jewish community have tried to make a monopoly of their own suffering." Casey did not give up. "Casey: "What is your estimate of the number of Jews who died at the hands of Hitler's regime in the war years? What number--and I don't like using this word--what number would you concede were killed in concentration camps?" Irving: "I think, like any scientist, I'd have to give you a range of figures and I'd have to say a minimum of one million, which is a monstrous crime, and a maximum of about four million, depending on what you mean by killed. If putting people into a

concentration camp where they die of barbarity and typhus and epidemics is killing then I would say the four million figure because, undoubtedly, huge numbers did die in the camps in the conditions that were very evident at the end of the war.” Casey: “I’m finding this interview more and more surprising as we go along, Mr. Irving.” Irving: “Yes.” Thus, by the middle of 1995, Irving seemed to abandon the extreme negationist position he had taken in the Tenth International Revisionist Conference, and in fact seemed to suggest that four million Jews had been killed in concentration camps, a number that actually exceeds Raul Hilberg’s estimate that up to three million Jews had been killed in the camps. (Of course, the great difference between the two assessments was that Hilberg’s was based on careful study of the evidence, and Irving’s was just another wild guess.) The only point where Irving’s new position still related to the one he had adopted in Toronto in 1988 was the fact that he credited the causes of death to be “barbarity and typhus and epidemics,” carefully avoiding mentioning the gas chambers.

Irving’s remarks generated much anxiety in negationist circles, especially after it had been picked up by the anti-fascist monthly *Searchlight*, and published in their September issue. In response, Faurisson wrote Irving on September 29, 1995. “May I also take the opportunity of this fax to ask you whether it is true or not that, on July 27, on an Australian radio show you said to Ron Casey: “If putting people into a concentration camp where they die of barbarity and typhus and epidemics is killing, then I would say the four million [Jews] figure because, undoubtedly, huge numbers did die in the camps in the conditions that were very evident at the end of the war”? This I found in *Searchlight*, “The International Anti-Fascist Monthly” (September 1995, p. 2). The front page has your photograph and the words “David Irving’s Holocaust Admission”.” And, without probably realizing the irony, Faurisson added plaintively the sentence “If it is not true, did you send them a denial?”

Irving did not respond--claiming later that he had not received the letter. He only engaged Faurisson's complaint when the latter published his letter in the newsletter of the negationist Adelaide Institute. In response, Irving wrote a letter to Faurisson in which suggested the possibility that the interview had been edited "to fake what I actually said," and repeated that while the number of victims could have been as high as four million, the causes of death would have been "air raids, forced marches, starvation, disease, epidemics, old age." And, to fully answer Faurisson's concern, Irving quoted his own diary record of the interview: "July 27, 1995 (Thursday) London 00:25 a.m. 2GB interview (Ron Casey) with me; straightened him out that I am not a "denier", but challenge figures and facts. He was very reasonable, sounded amazed that I am not a "denier" as claimed. What a blessing live interviews are. He asked if I would undertake to debate with leading Jews on television about the Holocaust when I come; I said, "you have my word for it." (But not to bank on the other side accepting)." Faurisson was not impressed. He waited for three days, and then responded curtly: "According to your November 28 letter, it appears that Searchlight said the truth when they reported your "admission" that the figure of Jews who might have died during WW II was about 4 million. They did not "edit" and they did not "fake" *that*. Such an admission or statement is a very serious one. May I ask you what is your evidence for saying that perhaps 4 million Jews died in WW II? Why not 5,100,000 as Hilberg says? Or any other figure? Quite another question. You insist on the fact that you are not a "denier". It happens that I, for one, always insist on the fact that revisionists are not "deniers" since Galileo Galilei did not deny anything but *affirmed*, after researches, that the sun was *not* revolving around the earth; the same for us: we *affirm* that there was *no* German policy of exterminating the Jews, especially with execution gas chambers. But I am afraid that what you mean by not being a "denier" is that Faurisson and Co. are "deniers" whereas you are definitely not a "denier". Am I wrong?"

He was not. Irving had begun to shift ground to a new position which offered a more ambiguous and at times even apparent equivocal stance on the issue of the death camps. Instead of the blatant depreciatory declarations of the early 1990s he now preferred to address the issue by the more cunning and in a fundamental sense disingenuous means of innuendo and insinuation, whilst at the same time putting some distance between himself and Faurisson. The gas chamber issue, which Irving had so enthusiastically embraced in 1988, had proved a hot potato. Unbendable as ever, Faurisson was very disappointed, and was prepared to share his feelings with the world. On July 7, 1996, he sent a letter to the Adelaide Institute, which published it as their lead-article in August. The gist of Faurisson's argument was simple: Irving was a spineless opportunist. "Irving is good at historical research in the matter of World War II, but, like thousands of other historians, he had not even suspected the essential: the "Holocaust" which--like it or not--has become the central feature of that war, was nothing but a hoax! (Let's say, in passing, that I agree with Arthur R. Butz that the proper word here is not "lie" or "myth" but "hoax".) The big problem for Irving is that most of his work on the Third Reich rests on the theory that there was a "Holocaust" (defined as the planned extermination of the Jews especially with execution gas chambers), but Hitler ignored it! In 1983-4, I warned Irving that this resembled too much the story of the "half-pregnant woman". I developed my arguments in a long article entitled "A Challenge to David Irving", most of which appeared in *The Journal of Historical Review* (Winter 1984, pp.289-305). Unfortunately, Willis Carto, without warning me, had cut some parts of my text because he wanted to "spare D. Irving". After my protest, he published "Dr. Faurisson's Comments" (Spring 1985, p. 8 and...122) but the sorry fact is that my article was still partly cut. Perhaps with the total text, Irving would have better understood my warnings. In April 1988, benefiting from the enormous work I had done for years and under the worst circumstances for my family and myself, and benefiting also from the fact I had won F. Leuchter to both E. Zündel's and

my revisionist views, I saw Irving suddenly jump, as I said, onto the revisionist band-wagon in Toronto. He declared the *Leuchter Report* to be “shattering”. His face was shining with optimism. The next day, on the witness stand in that city’s Zündel trial, he began to have serious difficulties in answering the prosecutor’s questions for whom it was child’s play to quote what Irving himself had written in his books about the so-called planned extermination of the Jews which he had believed up to that time. We needed Irving and his prestige then. I, for one, did my best to support him against the criticism of several revisionists. In March 1991, at the Leuchter Congress in Munich, I felt that something was wrong with Irving. He was afraid of being arrested. I remember telling him that we should calmly consider it “as normal” to be sent to jail, to be seriously wounded, to lose all of our status or money, and even, to be killed. I also told him, “You should know that a real revisionist must be ready for one lot of bad news each day, and one humiliation each week.” He did not say a word. Some time later, in Los Angeles, seeing that he was more and more worried, and especially about money and publicity matters, I repeated, “You should know ...” And explained to him why it could not be otherwise and, consequently, why we had to stick to our guns and appear as remaining steadfast in adversity. He kept silent. I could also add something about my stay at his house in London, and about the conference he organised for Leuchter and me (Leuchter, together with his wife, was arrested and sent back to Boston), but this will wait for another day. In recent years I have watched Irving become more and more upset, and trying to distance himself from the revisionists. He began by saying strange things about German atrocities, about Eichmann, about Goebbels, about the different figures of Jewish deaths--now he has opted for four million, but, as I see it, in Peter Ellingsen’s article, it could have been “some 3 million”! We are, in this way, getting back to the “half pregnant woman”! Nearly every man or woman, especially when he/she is getting to their 60s, knows or has known personal dramas. That, tragically, is Irving’s case. The question is how to resist. I have no answer. But when

it comes to problems involving other people, I wonder if the solution is not simply to be clear. Clarity is what people expect from us. Thanks to the efforts of real revisionists in propagating true, total and clear revisionism, especially through the Internet, I believe that perhaps some governments (but probably not the German or the Austrian ones) will realize that to forbid revisionism or revisionists in their country no longer makes sense. I hope the day will come soon enough for Irving so that he will again be permitted to access archives in those countries and to make anew a good living from his books. If he stops changing and shifting, if he decides to repeat clearly what he first said about the “shattering” *Leuchter Report* and the “sinking battleship, Auschwitz”, without desperately trying to regain the favour of the “Establishment”, he will be respected and feared by everybody, including his worst enemies: It is the best tactic.” Faurisson’s comments did not cause a total break. The two men remained in correspondence, and on January 29, 1997, Irving sent Faurisson a letter wishing him a happy New Year, assuring Faurisson that “you have few greater admirers of your courage than me,” describing the action against Penguin and Lipstadt, and his continued enjoyment in the revisionist battle. “Apart from the occasional sniping from you, Robert, the fight is very rewarding, in the spiritual sense: an intellectual crusade against powerful, wealthy, and evil forces trying to crush Real History.” The letter accompanied a personal gift. “I am happy to enclose my latest book on Nuremberg--I would very much have liked to use a colour photograph of Höss, but it appears that you are holding these close to your chest!--but you may be particularly interested in page 246; I am not *all* that bad!” For the record, page 246 concludes the chapter on “The Final Solution.” It follows the description of Höss’s execution in April 1947. “Höss had attempted to smuggle out of Nuremberg prison a letter to his wife in which he apologised to her and his family for “confessing” to the atrocities in Auschwitz; he claimed that he had been tortured into making spurious admissions. Seized by prison officers and never delivered, the letter is still in private hands in the United States; the owner

offered it in 1996 to Ben Swearingen, one of the country's foremost autograph experts. He refused to touch it, fearing that it was "political dynamite." Irving failed to reveal his source for this remarkable allegation. Like so many of his statements, it can only be taken seriously when he will be able to provide evidence for the existence of the letter. Until now, he has not done so. Whatever may be the case, Faurisson did not seem very impressed with either the book, or the "political dynamite" contained in page 246. He politely thanked Irving for the book, but he never commented on its content--which then remains my own task.

As we have seen, Zündel had been one Irving's supporters when he had decided to write a definitive revisionist account of the Nuremberg Trials. Zündel believed that, in discrediting the allied judges and prosecutors and the proceedings, the book would also discredit the evidence presented, levelling so to speak the playing field between "revisionists" and "exterminationists." Irving's *Nuremberg: The Last Battle* (1996) became indeed a highly partisan description of the trial. Remarkably enough, Irving went further than Zündel had originally suggested: he did not limit himself to the task of discrediting the trial as such, but even went as far to include a whole chapter on the way the alleged Holocaust of the Jews figured in the proceedings.

This chapter is one of the most remarkable examples of an academic smokescreen I have ever encountered. From the very outset, Irving tried to sow doubt and generate confusion, manipulating the evidence to the point of falsification. Ignoring a whole literature on the subject of the systematic and planned Nazi extermination of Jews, gypsies, and others, Irving flatly stated that "[t]he whole of the Nazi drive to liquidate their enemies had proceeded in such a ramshackle, haphazard, and disorganized manner that it is difficult even now to state with certainty precisely what happened and what did not." It may be true that there is still work to be done, but the Holocaust is probably one of the most researched aspects of modern history, and the level of scholarship has been, in general, excellent.

Throughout the chapter, which claims to present an account of the way the Holocaust figured in the Nuremberg proceedings, Irving is engaged in misconstruction and misrepresentation. At no point does his account meet McCullagh's standard of fairness. Twisting his sources, remaining silent about important testimonies given at Nuremberg, and unwilling to maintain one level of generality and one degree of detail, his only interest seems to have been produce an extremely biased, partisan vindication of the accused. Like a lawyer for the defendants before the International Military Tribunal, Irving sees it as his major task not to create a fair representation of the trial, but to apply the old technique of "poisoning the wells" by discrediting the witnesses who testified about the death camps.

In fact, he had already begun this task earlier on, when he wrote about the preparations for the trial. "Naturally there were many among the prosecution team who continued, or wanted, to believe the more far-fetched atrocity legends. One American lawyer on Kempner's team wrote home at this time from Nuremberg: "Imagine making dentists pull out all the gold dental work from the teeth of victims before they were killed and while still conscious! We have pictures of a soap factory where they hit victims, mostly Poles, with a blunt instrument, and the heads are cut off and boiled in one vat and the bodies in other vats. Three hundred heads were found in one vat at the time of discovery." All of this was fiction. So was much else that was sworn at Nuremberg. The Polish member of the United Nations War Crimes Commission had sworn an affidavit that human beings had been killed by steam in the Treblinka and Belzec extermination camps. Three members of Jackson's own staff had provided a sworn affidavit testifying to the existence of lethal gas chambers at Dachau concentration camp--James B. Donovan, Lieutenant-Colonel Calvin A. Behle, of the judge-advocate general's department, and Lieutenant Hugh Daly, of the 32nd U.S. Rainbow Division. The Czech prisoner Dr. Franz Blaha had sworn to the same chamber's existence. (The German government has long

since certified that no lethal gas chamber was ever operated at Dachau.” The suggestion is clear: no eye-witness testimony about the Holocaust could be trusted.

Indeed, throughout his description of the evidence of the Holocaust presented in Nuremberg, Irving chose to ignore the (for the defendants) embarrassing bulk of each witness’ testimony. Irving chose to mention only the pieces of evidence which, for some reason or another, provides him with an occasion to sow doubt and confusion. His first victim was Dr. Wilhelm Höttl, who had worked in the Gestapo, and who had had in his home in Budapest in 1944 a conversation with Eichmann. As it had become clear that the Germans were going to lose the war, and Eichmann had told Höttl that he was doomed as he had been instrumental in the killing of millions of Jews. When Höttl had asked him if he could provide a more precise figure, Eichmann responded that Himmler had earlier asked him the same, and that he had drawn up a report for him. Eichmann had determined that four million had died in the camps, while another two million had been killed by the *Einsatzgruppen* and other mobile units. Irving dismissed Höttl’s testimony. “It is necessary to see Höttl’s testimony in the light of his attempt to secure an early release from American confinement. In this he was remarkably successful, despite his background in the murkier and more murderous reaches of the S.S, operations in the Balkans.” Irving concluded with the statement that Höttl was successful in getting released, and felt no need to offer any other comment. The suggestion that remains is, of course, that Höttl said whatever he said in order to please his captors.

Irving did not mention that, fifteen years later, on June 21, 1961, and a free man, Höttl repeated his account of that meeting with Eichmann under oath. Examined as a witness for the Eichmann trial in the Court of Instance at Bad Aussee, Austria, Höttl made the following statement: “I was alone in the room with Eichmann and, as far as I know, there was no one from my or Eichmann’s staff around. The conversation on

which I testified in 1945 before the Nuremberg Tribunal developed as follows, as I remember it: Eichmann stood up and said farewell with the following words: "We shall probably never see each other again," or something similar. Then apparently he felt obliged to explain his pessimistic attitude and indicated that he was convinced that, with the German defeat, which was now to be expected, he stood no chance any more. When I asked him why he thought this, Eichmann said that, in view of his role in the programme to exterminate the Jews, he was considered by the Allies to be a top war criminal. When he made this comment, I immediately grasped the opportunity to say that I always wanted to hear reliable information about the extermination programme, and particularly about the number of Jews exterminated. To my surprise Eichmann responded to that, and said something along the following lines (in 1945, when I testified before the Nuremberg court, I obviously remembered the details more clearly than today, seventeen years later. I therefore apologize for any minor deviations): He said that the number of murdered Jews was a very great Reich secret, but with the situation in which he, Eichmann, found himself today, he still could tell me something about it, particularly since I was a historian. Eichmann then told me that, according to his information, some 6,000,000 (six million) Jews had perished until then--4,000,000 (four million) in extermination camps and the remaining 2,000,000 (two million) through shooting by the Operation Units and other causes, such as disease, etc. I presumably reacted in a very shocked fashion to this figure, because Eichmann immediately commented that Himmler believed that the figure of six million Jews killed could not be correct, and that the overall figure must be higher. I do not remember Eichmann making any form of personal statement or excuse. Eichmann also did not say that he felt himself guilty of the deaths of these six million Jews; as I have said, he simply answered my question as to how many Jews had actually been exterminated." If, as Irving suggests,

Höttl lied under oath in Nuremberg in order to obtain a release from captivity, why would he have lied again, in 1961, when he could have changed his story without any penalty whatsoever?

Perhaps more importantly, Irving suppressed the fact that, during his interrogations by the Israeli Police Captain Avner Less, Eichmann did admit to having given an estimate that five million Jews had been killed. Less had asked Eichmann about the way he had kept track of the number of Jews deported, and he had answered that he did not.” “Less: “What figure did he arrive at?” Eichmann: “He covered the whole extermination process in the East. It came roughly--taking account of emigration, and including the figure of natural diminution, as he called it--to 4.5 or 5 million. That figure stuck in my memory. Thus--the report concluded--thus the Jewish problem in Europe was to all intents and purposes solved.” After the report had been completed, Himmler had asked Eichmann to keep him posted with the progress of the Final Solution on a monthly basis. Eichmann was only to send information about the number of Jews killed. Eichmann speculated that Himmler probably thought that the monthly reports had become too long. “Less: “Then your reports had previously contained more?” Eichmann: “Yes, they covered the whole situation, all the difficulties encountered in the various countries. An overall, how should I put it?--comprehensive work report, naturally in appropriate, hmm...Appropriate telegraphic style. But about how many were killed I had no figures. When the statistician was with me, a week or maybe two, in my office, day after day, making his inquiries, he sent telegrams et cetera all over the place...So I believe ... The following may be possible...Yes, now, it’s plain to me, why the letter says “for purposes of camouflage.” Most likely I supplied the statistician with the figures shipped, but not the figures killed.” Less: “Since when had you known Dr. Wilhelm Höttl?” Eichmann: “I met Höttl in Berlin, I don’t remember the circumstances, I believe he, too, was with the SD.” Less: “Was he with the SD the whole time? Was he in Hungary, too?” Eichmann: “I

can't say at the present moment whether Höttl was in Hungary. But if he was, I must have spoken with him there." Less: "Did you tell Höttl that you supervised and organized the deportation of the Jews in Hungary to the death camps?" Eichmann: "Supervise and organize--I would never have told Höttl anything like that." Less: "What would you have told him?" Eichmann: "I'd have told Höttl the truth, because at that time--I think--Höttl had long been a department head in Section VI of Reich Security Headquarters. He knew as much about the business as I did. Section VI was an intelligence outfit. So naturally they knew all about the activities of their--well, of their own organization." Less: "Did you tell Höttl how many Jews had been exterminated?" Eichmann: "My estimation? If he asked me, I may have given him an estimated figure--yes, I may have." " Less proceeded with reading Höttl's full statement, and while Eichmann had problems with some parts of it, he admitted, in the end that "I must have told him the contents of the statistician's report. I must have told him that. I think the comprehensive report ended with a total of five million. That's what I seem to remember." Irving chose not to mention the fact that Eichmann confirmed the substance of Höttl's affidavit.

Irving also misrepresented the testimony of one of Eichmann's aides, Dieter Wisliceny. In his long testimony, given on January 3, 1946 Wisliceny provided substantial and detailed evidence about the deportation of the Slovak, Greek and Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. I will give here some samples of Wisliceny's examination by deputy prosecutor Lieutenant Colonel Smith W. Brookhart. "Lt. Col. Brookhart: "Altogether, how many Jews were collected and deported from Greece?" Wisliceny: "There were over 50,000 Jews. I believe that about 54,000 were evacuated from Saloniki and Macedonia." Q.: "What is the basis for your figure?" A.: "I myself read a comprehensive report from Brunner to Eichmann on completion of the evacuation. Brunner left Saloniki at the end of May 1943. I personally was not in Saloniki from the beginning of April until the end of May, so that the action was carried out by Brun-

ner alone.” Q.: “How many transports were used for shipping Jews from Saloniki?” A.: “From 20 to 25 transport trains.” Q.: “And how many were shipped in each train?” A.: “There were at least 2,000, and in many cases 2,500.” After some further questions about the transports, Brookhart asked Wisliceny about the fate of the Saloniki Jews. “Q.: “What was the destination of these transports of Jews from Greece?” A.: “In every case Auschwitz.” Q.: “And what was the ultimate disposition of the Jews sent to Auschwitz from Greece?” A.: “They were without exception destined for the so-called final solution.” Earlier on in his testimony, Wisliceny had testified that Eichmann had shown him a letter signed by Himmler which stated that “The Führer had ordered the final solution of the Jewish question.” Brookhart had questioned Wisliceny as to the meaning of the term “final solution.” “Q.: “Was any question asked by you as to the meaning of the words “final solution” as used in the order?” A.: “Eichmann went on to explain to me what was meant by this. He said that the planned biological annihilation of the Jewish race in the Eastern territories was disguised by the concept and wording ‘final solution.’ In later discussions on this subject the same words ‘final solution’ appeared over and over again.” Wisliceny also testified that he had participated in the deportation of some 450,000 Jews from Hungary. “Q.: “What became of the Jews to whom you have already referred--approximately 450,000?” A.: “They were, without exception, taken to Auschwitz and brought to the final solution.” Q.: “Do you mean they were killed?” A.: “Yes, with the exception of perhaps 25 to 30 percent who were used for labor purposes. I here refer to a previously mentioned conversation on this matter between Hoess and Eichmann in Budapest.”

Irving suppressed Wisliceny’s examination. Instead he mentioned only one sentence--the last one of the following exchange. “Q.: “In connection with the Jews about who you have personal knowledge, how many were subjected to the final solution, that is, to being killed?” A.: “The exact number is extremely hard for me to determine. I have only

one basis for a possible estimate, that is a conversation between Eichmann and Hoess in Vienna, in which he said that only a very few of those sent from Greece to Auschwitz had been fit for work. Of the Slovakian and Hungarian Jews about 20 to 30 percent had been able to work. It is therefore very hard for me to give a reliable total.” Q.: “In your meetings with the other specialists on the Jewish problem and Eichmann did you gain any knowledge or information as to the total number of Jews killed under this program?” A: “Eichmann personally always talked about at least 4 million Jews. Sometimes he even mentioned 5 million. According to my own estimate I should say that at least 4 million must have been destined for the so-called final solution. How many of those actually survived, I am not in a position to say.” Q.: “When did you last see Eichmann?” A.: “I saw Eichmann towards the end of February 1945 in Berlin. At that time he said that if the war were lost he would commit suicide.” Q.: “Did he say anything at that time as to the number of Jews that had been killed?” A.: “Yes, he expressed this in a particularly cynical manner. He said he would leap laughing into the grave because the feeling that he had 5 million people on his conscience would be for him a source of extraordinary satisfaction.”

Irving quickly engaged in damage control, quoting Eichmann’s initial response to Wisliceny’s remark--“*Blödsinn* (rubbish)”--and Eichmann’s subsequent admission that he probably had something of the sort, but that he had spoken of “enemies of the Reich” and not of “Jews.” Let us look at Eichmann’s testimony given during his interrogation by Avner Less. Twice he referred to his exchange with Wisliceny, in which he had mentioned the figure of five million Jews. The first occasion for his remark was a question about his own relation to Auschwitz. Eichmann did acknowledge that Auschwitz was a major killing center, and that all those sent there for “Special Treatment” were murdered, yet that his own responsibility only involved transport. “Less: “How many Jews were killed and gassed at Auschwitz?” Eichmann: “Herr Hauptmann, I’ve read, and Höss is supposed to have said, that he killed four million

Jews. Up to now, I've thought that figure exaggerated. But if we're going to talk about figures, whether it's one million or four million or a hundred amount to the same thing in principle. In these last fifteen years, I've done some figuring myself. At the end of the war, I spoke to my officers of five million. I saw that figure as a kind of cloud in my mind's eye. In that brief--hmmm, how shall I put it?--apocalyptic speech, or whatever you may choose to call it, I wasn't looking for exact figures. I don't remember whether the Jewish Year Book published at that time gave the figure of ten million Jews for Europe, or whether that figure covered the German-occupied Russian territories. In any case, I tried to work out a basis to figure on. I've read that a few months after the war the Allies reckoned that 2.4 million Jew were still in existence. I read that somewhere. Emigration from Austria, Germany, the U.S.S.R.--I said to myself, let' say that 1.2 million Jews emigrated. Then comes natural diminution. I am no statistician. I just figured that out for myself. So on that basis I said to myself: Yes, one way or another, about six million Jews must have been killed. Whether I was right or not, I don't know, Herr Hauptmann."

Later in the interrogations Less confronted Eichmann directly with Wisliceny's recollection. "Less: "Wisliceny was asked: 'How many Jews, concerning whose fate you personally are informed, were subjected to the final solution, that is, killed?' He replied: 'I am very badly placed to give you an exact figure. All I have to go by is a conversation between Eichmann and Höss in Vienna, in which he said that only a very few of the Jews who came to Auschwitz from Greece had been fit for labor. Twenty-five to thirty percent of the Jews from Slovakia and Hungary had been fit for labor. It is very hard for me to give a total. Eichmann himself always spoke of at least four million Jews; sometimes he went as high as five million. In my personal estimate, there must have been at least four million Jews.' Have you any comment?" Eichmann: "I...I believe I did say that...In substance, Herr Hauptmann." Less: "And it checks with what you said at an earlier date." Eichmann:

“Approximately. That must have been in February 1945; what I said in the presence of several of my subordinate officers. It must be true in the main. Except that I absolutely can’t remember that conversation with Höss in Hungary or Vienna, or the percentages.” Less: “Wisliceny was further asked whether at the time you had said anything more about the number of Jews killed. He answered: ‘Eichmann put it in a particularly cynical way. He said that the knowledge of having five million Jews on his conscience gave him such extraordinary satisfaction that he would jump into his grave laughing.’ Eichmann: ‘That is...theater, theater! That is...I can’t think of anything else to call it but theater. All that is...it’s...it’s...This business here, Herr Hauptmann...this, this...this last passage...about suicide and so on...and so on...That was my...my, my, my last speech, my last speech to my men, as I’ve already told you. I may not have got the wording exactly right, but the meaning and substance, yes...exactly. Because that was my...my...Summation in the...in the...how shall I put it...in the apocalyptic situation...which, which for a few days threw me into a state of shock...not nervous shock, but...moral shock: the Reich is kaput, it’s all been a waste, it’s all been for nothing, the whole war has been for nothing. That’s what I said, that’s what I told you. But this is theater! I never said it, never said it, Herr Hauptmann. The grave, yes, that’s the only part that’s right. The grave is right, I did say that...’ Less: ‘Not in this context?’ Eichmann: ‘...but not in this context. No, it wasn’t cynical at all. On the contrary. I was...I was in a state of mind that left no room at all for cynicism; I felt...all I felt was deep sorrow, because of the millions of victims on our side...And the millions in the enemy camp...and there again I mentioned the roughly five million...that’s right, and I said it was...all for nothing...And then I...I said only one thing: For five years they had to batter the Reich. That was the one thing I said. But cynicism? Not a trace!’ Less: ‘On the one hand, when Wisliceny says here: ‘The knowledge of having five million Jews on his conscience gave him such extraordinary satisfaction that...’ Eichmann: ‘No, no, Herr Hauptmann, that I must reject, that I must really reject. That sen-

tence is not at all my style. And besides, it wouldn't have been true. My men would have taken me for a megalomaniac, because they knew I hadn't killed five million Jews. Wisliceny knew as well as I that killing wasn't in our department." Less: "In all your statements you keep hiding behind 'That wasn't in my province, that wasn't my department, those were the orders I was given, the management of the German railways decided that,' and so on." Eichmann: "But you see, Herr Hauptmann, I have to say these things, because as head of Bureau IV B 4 I really wasn't responsible for everything, only for a rather narrowly circumscribed field. And that narrowly circumscribed field can be checked at any time. I wasn't free to do as I pleased." Reading the transcript, it is clear that Eichmann did admit twice of having mentioned a figure of four, even five million Jews. The particular element in Wisliceny's testimony that he found objectionable was the fact that he would have shown glee about that number of victims, or that he would have shown pride in having had a central role in the Final Solution. It is important to remember here that also Höttl remembered that, when Eichmann had mentioned the figure of six million murdered Jews, he was careful to state that he did not feel personal responsibility for this result. In the end Eichmann did state, in his interrogation, that: "Yes, I did mention that five million Jews were killed, but I did not joke about it in front of my subordinates, and furthermore I had no responsibility for the actual killings, since I merely ran the transportation department." What is important is that Eichmann did confirm the one central issue in Wisliceny's recollection of that last meeting: the fact that, in his own estimate four to five million Jews had been killed.

Irving's presentation of the testimony given on January 28, 1946 by Marie-Claude Vaillant Couturier, a gentile inmate of the women's camp in Birkenau, seems at first sight to do a little more justice to the evidence. Irving begins with paraphrasing in a few lines some of the elements of her statement about the impossible conditions of life in Birkenau. Yet, he never quotes her testimony directly. Perversely, he

chooses to present her testimony through the tendentious perspective of Judge Francis Biddle's notes--a gross violation of the principle that any historical account that claims to offer a fair representation of the past should offer a constant level of generality and a constant degree of detail. The result is a rather surrealistic interpretation of conditions in Birkenau. This is how Irving presents the evidence. "She described vividly how they had been forced to stand for a roll call throughout one freezing day in February, and then struck to make them run. "Those who could not were taken to Block 25, the ante-room of the gas chamber, where they were killed. Corpses in the courtyard," noted Biddle, "a hand or head would now and then stir in the corpses, seeking to free itself." The moaning, in all languages, continued from morning to night: "Water! Water!" They "sang Marseillaise when the gas truck [*sic*] started to move." Reading Irving's transcript of Biddle's notes, one starts indeed to doubt the veracity of Vaillant-Couturier's testimony: gas trucks, in which the Germans loaded Jews to be gassed by exhaust fumes, were never used in Auschwitz. Hence Irving happily interjects his *sic*! in Biddle's account. Yet let us look at the official transcript of Vaillant-Couturier's testimony. It concerns the after-effects of a particularly violent selection that took place on February 5, 1943, when the women were sent at 3.30 A.M. into the fields, and forced to run back to the barracks. Those who could not run were brought to Block 25, the "waiting block" for the gas chamber. "When all the internees were back in the camp, a party to which I belonged was organised to go and pick the bodies of the dead which were scattered over the plain as on a battlefield. We carried to the yard of Block 25 the dead and the dying without distinction, and they remained there stacked up in a pile. This Block 25, which was the anteroom of the gas chamber, if one may express it so, is well known to me because at that time we had been transferred to Block 26 and our windows opened on the yard of Block 25. One saw stacks of corpses piled up in the courtyard, and from time to time a hand or a head would stir among the bodies, trying to free itself. It was a dying woman attempting to get free and live. The rate of

mortality in that block was even more terrible than elsewhere because, having been condemned to death, they received food or drink only if there was something left in the cans in the kitchen; which means that very often they went for several days without a drop of water. One of our companions, Annette Époux, a fine young woman of 30, passing the block one day, was overcome with pity for those women who moaned from morning till night in all languages, "Drink, Drink. Water!" She came back to our block to get a little herbal tea, but as she was passing it through the bars of the window she was seen by the Aufseherin, who took her by the neck and threw her into Block 25. All my life I will remember Annette Époux. Two days later I saw her on the truck which was taking the internees to the gas chamber. She had her arms around another French woman, old Line Porcher, and when the truck started moving she cried, "Think of my little boy, if you ever get back to France." Then they started singing "The Marseillaise." Reading the transcript, the compressed surrealism of Biddle's account dissolves to reveal a clear narrative that allows us to understand cause and effect. It also shows that Biddle wrongly interpreted the testimony when he understood the truck or lorry taking the women from Block 25 to the gas chambers as a gas truck --a mistake Irving was all too happy to exploit for his own purposes.

Let's continue with Irving's account. "As the judges jotted this all down their minds became too numbed by the horror of it all to ask pertinent questions or to analyse: "The sick would often die of exposure in front of the hospital." (Why was a hospital needed at an "extermination camp"? Neither Biddle nor his colleagues made any comment.) "The women often preferred to die at work." Irving uses here Biddle's notes to insinuate that the testimony should have been examined more closely because there is a logical inconsistency between the presence of a hospital--the word Vaillant-Couturier used was "*Revier*," which means more properly sick--ward, and not hospital--and the function of Birkenau as an extermination camp. He implies that either Birkenau

had a hospital, or it was an extermination camp, but it could not be an extermination camp with a hospital, and as Vaillant-Couturier testified that there was a hospital, Birkenau could not have been an extermination camp. As we have seen in the first part of this report, Irving falls here in the fallacy of composition, in assuming that conditions all over Birkenau were the same, and in the fallacy of bifurcation, in which he sets up a contrast between “hospital” (healing) and “extermination camp” (killing), ignoring the middle ground in which part of an extermination camp was a slave labour pool where sick-wards were useful within the context of keeping those inmates suffering from relatively minor ailments in proper working condition.

Irving continues to present the evidence from the perspective of Judge Biddle. Irving presents Biddle’s notes on Vaillant-Couturier’s testimony on the gassings in a paragraph that begins with the words “Some of her story was evidently based on hearsay,” and immediately after having noted that “[o]nce, finally articulating his feelings about this woman’s testimony, Biddle noted his own scepticism, and wrote: ‘This I doubt,’ but he continued to write down what the witness told the court.” Having cleverly insinuated (by the use of the adverb “finally” and the conjunction “but”) that Biddle did not trust any of the following testimony, Irving proceeds to give Biddle’s account of what Vaillant-Couturier had to say about the selections. “Selected, out of convoys of Jewish women, the old and sick and children, who were gassed at once, not even taken to the camp. Orchestra with internee personnel played cheerful tunes like the “Merry Widow” when they arrived to be gassed, so they would not know their fate. Went to red brick building, undressed, given towel, gassed. Died in agony. Gold teeth extracted from ashes of burned bodies. One night there was not enough gas and the children were hurled alive into the furnaces.” Again, in the compressed form of Biddle’s notes, Vaillant-Couturier’s account becomes surreal, and unbelievable. Yet when reading the transcript of the statement as a whole; with all its pertinent details, the logic is restored, and

a profound sense of veracity achieved. “[Deputy Prosecutor Charles] Dubost: “What do you know about the convoy of Jews which arrived from Romainville about the same time as yourself?” Vaillant-Couturier: “When we left Romainville the Jewesses who were there at the same time as ourselves were left behind. They were sent to Drancy and subsequently arrived at Auschwitz, where we found them again 3 weeks later, 3 weeks after our arrival. Of the original 3,000 only 125 actually came to the camp; the others were immediately sent to the gas chambers. Of these 125 not one was left alive at the end of 1 month. The transports operated as follows: When we first arrived, whenever a convoy of Jews came, a selection was made; first the old men and women, then the mothers and the children were put into the trucks together with the sick or those whose constitution appeared to be delicate. They took in only the young women and girls as well as the young men who were sent to the men’s camp. Generally speaking, of a convoy of about 1,000 to 1,500, seldom more than 250--and this figure really was the maximum--actually reached the camp. The rest were immediately sent to the gas chamber. At this selection also, they picked out women in good health between the ages of 20 and 30, who were sent to the experimental block; and young girls and slightly older women, or those who had not been selected for that purpose, were sent to the camp where, like ourselves, they were tattooed and shaved. There was also, in the spring of 1944, a special block for twins. It was during the time when large convoys of Hungarian Jews--about 700,000--arrived. Dr. Mengele, who was carrying out the experiments, kept back from each convoy twin children and twins in general, regardless of their age, so long as both were present. So we had both babies and adults on the floor at that block. Apart from blood tests and measuring I do not know what was done to them.” Q.: “Were you an eye witness of the selections on the arrival of the convoys?” A.: “Yes, because when we worked at the sewing block in 1944, the block where we lived directly faced the stopping place of the trains. The system had been improved. Instead of making the selection at the place where they arrived, a side line now

took the train practically right up to the gas chamber; and the stopping place, about 100 meters from the gas chamber, was right opposite our block though, of course, separated from us by two rows of barbed wire. Consequently, we saw the unsealing of the cars and the soldiers letting men, women, and children out of them. We then witnessed heart-rending scenes; old couples forced to part from each other, mothers made to abandon their young daughters, since the latter were sent to the camp, whereas mothers and children were sent to the gas chambers. All these people were unaware of the fate awaiting them. They were merely upset at being separated, but they did not know that they were going to their death. To render their welcome more pleasant at this time--June-July 1944--an orchestra composed of internees, all young and pretty girls dressed in little white blouses and navy blue skirts, played during the selection, at the arrival of the trains, gay tunes such as "The Merry Widow," the "Barcarolle" from "The Tales of Hoffman," and so forth. They were then informed that this was a labor camp and since they were not brought into the camp they saw only the small platform surrounded by flowering plants. Naturally, they could not realize what was in store for them. Those selected for the gas chamber, that is, the old people, mothers, and children, were escorted to a red-brick building." Q.: "These were not given an identification number?" A.: "No." Q.: "They were not tattooed?" A.: "No. They were not even counted." Q.: "You were tattooed?" A.: "Yes, look. [*The witness showed her arm.*] They were taken to a red brick building, which bore the letters 'Baden,' that is to say 'Baths.' There, to begin with, they were made to undress and given a towel before they went into the so-called shower room. Later on, at the time of the large convoys from Hungary, they had no more time left to play-act or pretend; they were brutally undressed, and I know these details as I knew a little Jewess from France who lived with her family at the 'Republique' district." Q.: "In Paris?" A.: "In Paris. She was called 'little Marie' and was the only one, the sole survivor of a family of nine. Her mother and her seven brothers and sisters had been gassed on arrival. When I met her she was employed to

undress the babies before they were taken into the gas chamber. Once the people were undressed they took them into a room which was somewhat like a shower room, and gas capsules were thrown through an opening in the ceiling. An SS man would watch the effect produced through a porthole. At the end of 5 or 7 minutes, when the gas had completed its work, he gave the signal to open the doors; and men with gas masks --they were too interneers--went into the room and removed the corpses. They told us that the interneers must have suffered before dying, because they were closely clinging to one another and it was very difficult to separate them. After that a special squad would come to pull out gold teeth and dentures; and again, when the bodies had been reduced to ashes, they would sift them in an attempt to recover the gold....”

Irving ends his discussion of Biddle’s understanding of Vaillant-Couturier’s testimony as follows: “Cross-examined, this female witness admitted “curtly (in German!)” as Biddle noted with surprise, that she had been arrested for resistance activity, as a communist. Streicher’s defence attorney Marx asked her: “How do you explain you came through so well?” Says she’s been out a year.” Judge Biddle jotted down, recording her answer. “Most of her statements based on personal experience,” noted Biddle in quotation mark--which implied that he assessed that quite a lot were not.” Let us look again at the official transcript. First Irving’s remark about the reasons for Vaillant-Couturier’s arrest. “Dr. Marx: “For what reason were you arrested?” Mme. Vaillant-Couturier: “Resistance. I belonged to the resistance movement.” Neither Vaillant-Couturier, nor Streicher’s lawyer Dr. Hanns Marx, nor anyone else mentioned the word communist during her testimony. Marx tried to undermine her credibility as an witness by suggesting, in asking the loaded question why she had been able to survive Auschwitz as well as she did, that she had been a privileged inmate functionary. Irving quotes the insinuating question, but does not give the utterly convincing rebuttal, except through once more Biddle’s per-

spective. “Dr. Marx: “How do you explain that you yourself came through these experiences so well and are now in such a good state of health?” Mme. Vaillant-Couturier: “First of all, I was liberated a year ago; and in a year one has time to recover. Secondly, I was 10 months in quarantine for typhus and I had the great luck not to die of exanthematic typhus, although I had it and was ill for 3 1/2 months. Also, in the last months at Ravensbrück, as I knew German, I worked on the Revier roll call, which explains why I did not have to work quite so hard or to suffer from the inclemencies of the weather. On the other hand, out of 230 of us only 49 from my convoy returned alive; and we were only 52 at the end of 4 months. I had the great fortune to return.” Dr, Marx: “Yes. Does your statement contain what you yourself observed or is it concerned with information from other sources as well?” Mme. Vaillant-Couturier: “Whenever such was the case I mentioned it in my declaration. I have never quoted anything which has not previously been verified at the sources and by several persons, but the major part of my evidence is based on personal experience.” All in all, Irving shows himself to be an unscrupulous falsifier of evidence. Largely suppressing and otherwise skewing genuine evidence given under oath in court, he chooses to manipulate a private diary until he has achieved an utter misrepresentation of the event.

After having finished with Vaillant-Couturier, Irving continues to apply his method of discrediting prosecution witnesses in his description of the testimony of another Auschwitz inmate, Dr. Severina Shmaglevskaya. “On February 27 Biddle paraphrased in his notebooks the evidence of a Polish woman who had been at Auschwitz. “Selection for death made by doctors and S.S.,” recorded Biddle. “Youngest and strongest entered camp. Women with small children were sent to the crematory where the children were separated and taken separately into the gas chamber. In 1940 it was ordered that the children should be thrown living into the furnace without being first gassed.” (Neither the Auschwitz camp nor its Birkenau offshoot existed in 1940.) “You

could often hear the cries. Whether this was to save gas or because there was no space in the gas chamber is hard to say....Often they worked in the gas chamber 'from dawn to dusk.'" So far Judge Biddle's notes. Irving uses them to sow, once again, doubt about the witness, who would have claimed that there was a 1940 order to burn children alive.

But what if Biddle's notes were wrong? Let's look at the official transcript of Soviet deputy prosecutor L.N. Smirnov's examination of Dr. Severina Shmaglevskaya. "Mr. Counsellor Smirnov: "Tell me, Witness, did you yourself see the children being taken to gas chambers?" Shmaglevskaya: "I worked very close to the railway which led to the crematory. Sometimes in the morning I passed near the building the Germans used as a latrine, and from there I could secretly watch the transport. I saw many children among the Jews brought to the concentration camp. Sometimes a family had several children. The Tribunal is probably aware of the fact that in front of the crematory they were all sorted out." Mr. Counsellor Smirnov: "Selection was made by the doctors?" Shmaglevskaya: "Not always by doctors: sometimes by SS men." Mr. Counsellor Smirnov: "And doctors with them?" Shmaglevskaya: "Yes, sometimes, by doctors too. During such a sorting, the youngest and healthiest Jewish women in very small numbers entered the camp. Women carrying children in their arms or in carriages, or those who had larger children, were sent into the crematory with their children. The children were separated from their parents in front of the crematory and were led separately into gas chambers. At that time, when the greatest number of Jews were exterminated in the gas chambers, an order was issued that the children were to be thrown into the crematory ovens or the crematory ditches without previous asphyxiation with gas." Mr. Counsellor Smirnov: ""How should we understand that? Were they thrown into the ovens alive or were they killed by other means before they were burned?" Shmaglevskaya: "The children were thrown in alive. Their cries could be heard all over the camp. It is hard

to say how many they were.” Mr. Counsellor Smirnov: “Nevertheless, there was some reason why this was done. Was it because the gas chambers were overworked?” Shmaglevskaya: “It is very difficult to answer this question. We don’t know whether they wanted to economize on the gas or whether there was no room in the gas chambers. I should also add that it is impossible to determine the number of these children--like that of the Jews--because they were driven directly to the crematory, were not registered, were not tattooed, and very often were not even counted. We, the internees, often tried to ascertain the number of people who perished in gas chambers; but our estimates of the number of children executed could only be based on the number of children’s prams which were brought to the storerooms. Sometimes there were hundreds of these carriages, but sometimes they sent thousands.” Mr. Counsellor Smirnov: “In one day?” Shmaglevskaya: “Not always the same. There were days when the gas chambers worked from early morning until late at night.” It is clear that Biddle wrongly noted down that the decision to burn the children alive had been taken in 1940. The official transcript records that Shmaglevskaya said that the decision was taken “at that time, when the greatest number of Jews were exterminated in the gas chambers.” That time, is commonly known, was the late spring of 1944, during the height of the Hungarian action.

It is clear that, as a historical account of the way evidence of the Holocaust was presented in Nuremberg, Irving’s chapter “Final Solution” is quite worthless at best, and completely distorted at worst. To make matters worse, he completely suppresses in his account the proceedings of the afternoon session of February 27, 1946, when Samuel Rajzman testified. Rajzman was a survivor from the Treblinka extermination camp, where he was interned from August 1942 to August 1943. His testimony about the operation of Treblinka as an extermination camp occupies five pages in the official transcript. I will quote just one, very small part of it. “Mr. Counsellor Smirnov: “I beg you to describe

this camp to the Tribunal.” Rajzman: “Transports arrived there every day; their number depended on the number of trains arriving; sometimes three, four, or five trains filled exclusively with Jews--from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Greece, and Poland. Immediately after their arrival, the people had to leave the trains in 5 minutes and line up on the platform. All those who were driven from the cars were divided into groups--men, children, and women, all separate. They were all forced to strip immediately, and this procedure continued under the lashes of the Germans guards’ whips. Workers who were employed in this operation immediately picked up all the clothes and carried them away to the barracks. Then the people were obliged to walk naked through the street to the gas chambers.” Q.: “I would like you to tell the Tribunal what the Germans called the street to the gas chambers.” A.: “It was called Himmelfahrt Street.” At the end of Rajzman’s testimony there was general silence. Even Hanns Marx did not find the courage to challenge the witness. Yet the silence in the court after the testimony does not mean that Irving represents the proceedings justly by burying the evidence about Treblinka in silence.

We have now dealt with the first half of Irving’s chapter “Final Solution.” It is clear that it does not stand up to close and critical scrutiny. The second half is not much better. It has only one single purpose: to scrupulously destroy the credibility of the testimony given by Auschwitz Kommandant Rudolf Höss. In hiding since the end of the war, the British had arrested him on March 11, 1946. By his own account the British treated Höss roughly. During his later trial in Poland, Höss recalled these interrogations as follows. “When I was interrogated for the first time in the British Zone, those examining me said to me, all the time, that five--six--seven million people must have died in the gas chambers; all the time they bombarded me with huge numbers such as these, and I was obliged to provide some data, in order to establish how many were put to death in the gas chambers, and the interrogators told me that there must have been at least three million. Under the

suggestive influence of these large figures, I arrived at a total of three million. But I was relying on the fact that I could not mention any other number--I always said this--namely that I was unable to mention any other than the one which I have now arrived at, and that is two and a half." Irving makes a lot about the fact that Höss first confession was given in a situation of duress. "This confession, which subsequently came to be submitted to the Nuremberg tribunal as document NO-1210, had taken three days of torture, as his captor, Sergeant Bernard Clarke himself would describe, to obtain. It contained numerous perhaps deliberate errors, for instance the identification by Höss of an extermination camp at "Wolzek near Lublin," in addition to those at "Belzek" and "Tublinka," all spelt thus. Wolzek has never existed, and the two other camps, Belzec and Treblinka, were not in existence at the time that Höss testified to." Irving is right in that Höss's first confession was obtained when the witness was denied sleep for three days, but he does not mention that while this confession was submitted to the Tribunal, it was never used in court. Instead, the Tribunal heard on April 15, 1946 extracts from the affidavit which he signed on April 5, 1946, after a few days of in this case civilised interrogation in the witness wing of the Nuremberg prison. The interrogation took place with the help of an interpreter. During this interrogation Höss was asked if he could confirm that Jews started to arrive in great numbers in 1942. Höss did, and then gave a detailed list of the numbers: 250,000 from Poland, 65,000 from Greece, 100,000 from Germany, 90,000 from Holland, 110,000 from France, 90,000 from Slovakia, 20,000 from Belgium and 400,000 from Hungary. The conversation continued as follows: "Q.: "Now you just told us that you had facilities for 130,000. If you add all those figures they amount to a much greater number than 130,000. How could you accommodate all those people?" A.: "They were not supposed to be employed in work there, but they were supposed to be exterminated."

On 5 April Höss was given an English language version of the affidavit, which he read through. A few days later he received the German version, which he corrected and ultimately signed. In the affidavit, which was to be partially read in court on April 15, 1946, Höss admitted that he was appointed commandant of Auschwitz on May 1, 1940. "I commanded Auschwitz until 1 December, 1943, and estimate that at least 2,500,000 victims were executed and exterminated there by gassing and burning, and at least another half million succumbed to starvation and disease, making a total dead of about 3,000,000.... 4. Mass executions by gassing commenced during the summer 1941 and continued until fall 1944. I personally supervised executions at Auschwitz until the first of december 1943 and know by reason of my continued duties in the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps WVHA that these mass executions continued as stated above.... 6. The "final solution" of the Jewish question meant the complete extermination of all Jews in Europe. I was ordered to establish extermination facilities at Auschwitz in June 1941. At that time there were already in the general government three other extermination camps; BELZEK, TREBLINKA and WOLZEK. These camps were under the Einsatzkommando of the Security Police and SD. I visited Treblinka to find out how they carried out their exterminations. The Camp Commandant at Treblinka told me that he had liquidated 80,000 in the course of one-half year. He was principally concerned with liquidating all the Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto. He used monoxide gas and I did not think his method were very efficient. So when I set up the extermination building at Auschwitz I, I used Cyclon B, which was crystallized Prussic Acid we dropped into the death chamber from a small opening. It took from 3 to 15 minutes to kill the people in the death chamber depending upon climatic conditions. We knew when the people were dead because their screaming stopped. We usually waited about one-half hour before we opened the doors and removed the bodies. After the bodies were removed our special commandos took off the rings and extracted the gold from the teeth of the corpses. 7. Another improvement we made over Treblinka

was that we built our gas chambers to accommodate 2,000 people at one time, whereas at Treblinka their 10 gas chambers only accommodated 200 people each. The way we selected our victims was as follows: we had two SS doctors on duty at Auschwitz to examine the incoming transport of prisoners. The prisoners would be marched by one of the doctors who would make spot decisions as they walked by. Those who were fit for work were sent into the Camp. Others were sent immediately to the extermination plants. Children of tender years were invariably exterminated since by reason of their youth they were unable to work. Still another improvement we made over Treblinka was that at Treblinka the victims almost always knew that they were to be exterminated and at Auschwitz we endeavoured to fool the victims into thinking that they were to go through a delousing process. Of course, frequently they realized our true intentions and we sometimes had riots and difficulties due to that fact. Very frequently women would hide their children under the clothes but of course when we found them we would send the children in to be exterminated. We were required to carry out these exterminations in secrecy but of course the foul and nauseating stench from the continuous burning of bodies permeated the entire area and all of the people living in the surrounding communities knew that exterminations were going on at Auschwitz.” On Monday, 15 April Höss was called to the witness stand. There he confirmed, during crossexamination by American prosecutor Colonel John Harlan Amen, that the affidavit was true. “Col. Amen: “I ask that the witness be shown Document 3868-PS, which will become Exhibit USA-819.” [*The document was submitted to the witness.*] Q.: “You signed that affidavit voluntarily, Witness?” Höss: “Yes.” Q.: “And the affidavit is true in all respects?” A.: “Yes.” Amen read then the most salient passages of Höss’ affidavit in court, and asked Höss three times: “Is that all true and correct, Witness?” Each times Höss answered “Yes.” Finally, at the end of the affidavit Amen read Höss’ final declaration, in which Höss declared that he understood “English as it is written above,” that “the above statements are true,” and that “this declaration is made by

me voluntarily and without compulsion.” After having read this, Amen turned one last time to Höss. “Col. Amen: “Now I ask you, Witness, is everything which I have read to you true to your own knowledge?” Höss: “Yes.”

Irving chose not to quote this affidavit, which was probably the most important piece of evidence about the Holocaust to be presented during the Nuremberg proceedings, and which was publically confirmed by Höss in court, but spent much energy to discredit it. “On April 5 the Americans placed before him a three-page affidavit, which they themselves had drafted and typed, for his signature. Written in English throughout, it contained the admission by Höss that he had “gassed” 2.5 million people in Auschwitz in addition to the half million who had died there of diseases. “We have prepared an affidavit written in English--,” they began by informing their prisoner; whereupon, according to the verbatim transcript, the witness (Höss) “read through” the statement that followed and replied that he had read it and understood it. “Yes,” continues the transcript, “I understand everything that I read.” In reality Höss could not understand English. It merits passing comment that this English affidavit by Höss was *not* in fact signed at any point by him, although the Nuremberg interrogating officers and interpreter all pre-signed the document as witnesses to his “signature.” Not for three days was Höss shown a German translation of the English affidavit (“which you signed”); the transcript of this new conversation on April 8 shows Höss belatedly insisting on changes to the text. An anonymous hand interpolated entire lines, while other lines were deleted by a stroke of the pen; there are no initials in the margin to endorse such changes, but Höss signed this entire German document in its new form on each page (“after reading over the statement”). It included the following curiously worded statement typed in English at its foot: “I understand English as it is written above. The above statements are true; this declaration is made by me voluntarily and without compulsion.” The fundamental premise that guides Irving’s attack on the

credibility of the affidavit is the assumption that Höss could not read English. He also uses this argument when he writes, a little further, that Höss confirmed in court the passages of his affidavit that had been read in English. Yet Höss did know English. In his autobiography, written a year later in a Polish jail, Höss recalled how he learned English during his imprisonment in the 1920s for his participation in Parchimer Vehme murder. "After this low, this breakdown, my life in prison passed without particular incident. I became more and more calm and clear-thinking. In my free time I eagerly studied English. I even had textbooks sent to me. Later I had them regularly send me books and magazines in English, so that in about a year I learned this language without anyone helping me. This was a terrific discipline for my mind." If Irving had been right on the issue of Höss's lack of foreign language abilities, one could have made the case that there were real problems with the affidavit he endorsed in court. Now all that remains are a few small quibbles about the lack of initials to confirm some insertions--objections that are of no significance in the context of the repeated willingness of Höss to confirm the affidavit as his own.

Irving, who was throughout this chapter so ready to quote Biddle's notes when it suited him, and who invokes the diary of Dr Gustave Gilbert, the Nuremberg prison psychologist, whenever it suits his exculpatory cause, found no reason to quote Gilbert's record of his conversations with Höss. This diary is a historically important and reliable source, a fact that was well established during the Eichmann Trial, when the court questioned Gilbert on the manner by which he had compiled the diary. The reason for Gilbert's appearance in Jerusalem was that Höss had made a number of observations on Eichmann's role in the Final Solution, and as he could not be cross-examined having been executed fourteen years earlier, Gilbert's account of Höss's testimony became quite important. On 29 and 30 May, 1961, in the 55th and 57th sessions of that trial, Gilbert testified. He was asked when and how he made his notes. "[Witness Gilbert]: "I made very extensive

notes after every conversation--but not in their presence. I recorded the summary of our conversations with extensive verbatim quotations, and compiled this in my own diary; and the defendants were unaware of this until the end of the trial." The next day, in cross examination by Eichmann's lawyer Robert Servatius, the issue was revisited. "Dr. Servatius: "The value of a diary assuredly depends on whether the entries were recorded immediately or at a later time. Were these entries recorded the same days as the date they bear?" Witness Gilbert: [*replies in German*] "They were always taken down on the same day and then dictated to my secretary." Q.: "Did you supplement or revise them later, or has everything remained as it was originally recorded?" A.: "I would rather carry on in English." Presiding Judge: "Please do." Witness Gilbert: [*in English*] "In dictating the notes to my secretary, I took advantage of the trial manuscripts and any additional facts that I recalled in the meantime. But this dictation usually took place the next day. There was no long time between the conversation and the actual dictation of notes for the diary." Dr. Servatius: "Do you want your diary to be regarded as an authoritative and scientific account?" Witness Gilbert: "The diary comprises the original raw data for later scientific evaluation. So, to answer your question about expert evaluation, that really takes place in the second book, in which I evaluate all of the factual data which I collected, and on that basis make my expert evaluation of the Nazi system and its leaders, including Hitler." Q.: "For evaluating material, it is assuredly important whether a report has been written *sine ira et studio* (without wrath and excessive eagerness)--the concept will surely be known to you--in other words, without preconceptions, without bias. Was that how this diary was written?" A.: "Yes, I had the advantage of American ignorance of the Nazi system, except for a little briefing as a military intelligence officer; I also had the advantage of being completely uninformed and incredulous about the events that we are discussing today, and I had to be convinced, more and more, about what actually took place. It took me a year to get the whole picture."

The Israeli court accepted the evidentiary value of the Gilbert diary--the same diary that Irving was happy to quote whenever it suited him. Irving found no use for the following extraordinary account of Gilbert's conversation with Höss on April 9, 1946. "He readily confirmed that approximately 2 1/2 million Jews has been exterminated under his direction. The exterminations began in the summer of 1941. In compliance with Goering's scepticism, I asked Hoes how it was technically possible to exterminate 2 1/2 million people. "Technically?" he asked. "That wasn't so hard--it would not have been hard to exterminate even greater numbers." In answer to my rather naive questions as to how many people could be done away with in an hour, etc., he explained that one must figure it on a daily 24-hour basis, and it was possible to exterminate up to 10,000 in one 24-hour period. He explained that there were actually 6 extermination chambers. The 2 big ones could accommodate as many as 2,000 in each and the 4 smaller ones up to 1500, making a total capacity of 10,000 a day. I tried to figure out how this was done, but he corrected me. "No, you don't figure it right. The killing itself took the least time. You could dispose of 2,000 in a half hour, but it was the burning that took all the time. The killing was easy; you didn't even need guards to drive them into the chambers; they just went in expecting to take showers and, instead of water, we turned on poison gas. The whole thing went very quickly." He related all of this in a quiet, apathetic, matter-of-fact tone of voice."

Another important piece of evidence, which Irving chose to ignore when he wrote his *Nuremberg*, was the autobiographical essay Höss wrote on request of Gilbert in the Nuremberg jail. In Jerusalem, Gilbert told the court that throughout his Nuremberg tenure he had sought to substantiate his conversations by getting additional documentary evidence--"first, for psychological evidence, and secondly, because some of it was so incredible that I felt I had to have a record of these people, because my colleagues would never believe me." "Presiding Judge: "What was the material that you recorded?" Witness Gilbert:

“There were essays written by the defendants in their own handwriting which further substantiated what we talked about.” Attorney General: “These essays are still in your possession to this day and have not been published--is that correct?” Witness Gilbert: “That is right. These essays are in my possession, and most of it has not been published--hardly any of it, in fact.” Gilbert told the court that he also asked Höss for such an autobiographical essay. This was a different document than the autobiography he later wrote in Polish captivity. “Q.: “You have kept it in your possession until now, and it has not been published so far?” A.: “That’s right--that is one of the original written documents I had to confirm my conversations, and it hasn’t been published except for excerpts which I used in analyzing the case of Rudolf Höss in my second book, *The Psychology of Dictatorship*.” Q.: “Did Höss write it before he wrote his autobiography in Poland?” A.: “Oh,yes--definitely; he had not yet been brought to Poland to stand trial, and I was the first one, I believe, to ask him for his case history.” Q.: “I notice there is a date at the top--10 April 1946. And Höss ended it on 12 April. It took him two days to write--would that be correct?” A.: “Yes, that would be about right.”

Gilbert explained that Höss also wrote another piece for him, in response to a very specific challenge. After Höss had testified, most of the defendants had shown various guilt reactions when Gilbert engaged them in conversation. Göring, however, reacted differently. “A.: “Well, in connection with getting these guilt reactions, I would have to present the reaction of Göring, which leads to the next document which I received from Colonel Höss. Göring’s reaction was to try to brush it all aside, to tell everybody that this was all exaggerated propaganda. ‘Oh they are a bunch of SS *Schweinehunde* doing some dirty things, but it is all exaggerated, it’s all propaganda.’ So, I would engage Göring in conversation in front of the others and say: ‘Well, now,you can’t just brush off the murder of two and a half million people. The German people themselves will demand to know how this did happen.

The conscience of the world demands to know how this did happen. Do you want to go down in history as a man who just laughed it off?...’ And we would argue along this line. You see, the only way of appealing to Göring was not through conscience, but through his egotistical role in history. And I knew that he was trying to brush aside the crimes, so that he would not lose his chance to get his picture in the German history books, because he knew that even the German people would be horrified by it, particularly because women and children had been murdered. The killing of the men would not damage his picture in the German history books, he told me. Now then, realizing that he was determined to try to blot out the memory of this horrible crime from history, I felt that, psychologically, historically and humanly, it was absolutely necessary to see to it that this was properly documented--both from the historical and the psychological point of view.” Q.: “And then, what did you do?” A.: “I therefore told him...I’m sorry. No, the next step was *his* clinching argument, namely, that it was technically impossible to exterminate two and a half million people inside of the three or three and a half years that Colonel Höss was Commandant of Auschwitz, This seemed to be very convincing to some of the other Nazi leaders.” Q.: “What did you do, then?” A.: “I told him that there was an expert in the witness wing, and I could get the details from him. I was, of course, referring to Colonel Höss.” Asked by Gilbert to provide more detail, Höss wrote later that month a short memorandum which Gilbert presented to the Jerusalem court. It gave a detailed description of the arrival, selection and killing of the deportees. “The freight trains with the Jews destined for extermination moved along a special railroad installation which had been laid down especially for this purpose right up to the extermination installations. Notification of these trains was given in advance by Obersturmbannführer Eichmann of the RSHA, and they were allocated consecutive numbers, together with letters of the alphabet, in order to prevent a mix-up with transports of other prisoners. Each cable relating to these transports bore the reference: “In accordance with the specified directives, and are to be sub-

jected to special treatment.” These trains consisted of closed freight cars and contained, on the average, about 2,000 persons. When the trains arrived at the aforementioned ramp, the accompanying railway personnel and the accompanying guard--members of the Security or Order Police--had to leave the area. Only the transport commander who had delivered it remained until it had been completely handed over, and the numbers checked, to the duty officer of the camp. After the trains were off-loaded and the numbers determined (lists by names were not drawn up), all the people had to file past two SS duty doctors, and in the course of this, those who were fit for work were separated from those who were unfit. On the average about twenty-five per cent were found to be fit for work. These were marched off immediately into the camp, in order to change their clothes and be received there. All the luggage remained on the ramp and, after those unfit for work had also been sent off, it was brought to the store of personal effects, to be sorted out. Those unfit for work were classified according to sex--men, women, and children--and marched off to the nearest available extermination installation. Those unable to walk and women with small children were transported there on trucks. When they arrived, all of them had to strip naked in rooms which gave the impression of being delousing installations. The permanent labour unit of prisoners who worked in these installations--and who were also housed there and did not come into contact with other inmates of the camp--helped with the undressing and coaxed the hesitant to hurry up, so that the others would not have to wait so long. They were also told to take note where they put away their clothes, so that they would be able to find them again immediately after taking their bath. All this was done on purpose, in order to dispel any fears which might arise. After they had taken off their clothes, they were taken into a nearby room--the gas chamber itself. It had been prepared to look like a washroom--that is to say, showers and pipes were installed throughout, water drainage channels, etc. The moment the entire transport had entered the chamber, the door was closed, and simultaneously the gas was forced in

from above through a special aperture. It was Zyklon "B" gas, cyanide acid in the form of crystals, which vaporized immediately, that is to say, it took effect immediately upon coming into contact with oxygen. The people were dazed already on taking their first breath, and the process of killing took from thirteen to fifteen minutes, depending upon the weather conditions and the number of people locked up within. Thereafter, nothing moved any more. Thirty minutes after the gas had been released and had entered the chambers, they would be opened, and the transfer of the bodies to the crematoria would commence. Throughout all these years, I never came across a single case of a person coming out of the gas chambers while still alive. While the bodies were taken out, the women's hair was cut, and gold teeth and rings removed by prisoner dentists who were employed in this unit. In Birkenau there were five installations--two large crematoria, each of which had a capacity for receiving 2,000 persons in the course of 24 hours. That is to say, it was possible in one gas chamber to put to death up to 2,500 persons; in five double ovens heated with coke, it was possible to burn at most 2,000 bodies within 24 hours; two smaller installations could eliminate about 1,500 people, with four bigger double ovens to each of them. Furthermore, there was also an open-air installation--that is, an old farmhouse was sealed and turned into a gas chamber, which could also contain 1,500 persons at one and the same time. The incineration was carried out there in an open pit on wood, and this was practically limitless. In my estimation, it was possible to burn there, in 24 hours, up to 8,000 persons in this way. Hence it was possible to exterminate and eliminate up to 10,000 people within 24 hours in the installations described above. As far as I am aware, this number was attained only once in 1944, when delays occurred in the arrival of trains, and consequently five transports arrived together on one day. The ashes of the burnt bodies were ground into dust, which was poured into the Vistula in remote places and swept away with the current. On the basis of the figure of 2.5 million, which is the number of people who--according to Eichmann--were brought to Auschwitz for

extermination, it may be said that on average, two transports arrived daily, with a combined total of 4,000 persons, of whom twenty-five per cent were fit for work, the balance of 3,000 were to be exterminated. The intervals in the various operations can be computed together at nine months. Thus there remain 27 months, with 90,000 people each month--a total of 2,430,000 people. This is a calculation of the technical potential. I have to keep to the figure mentioned by Eichmann, for he was the only SS officer who was allowed to keep records concerning these liquidation operations, according to the orders of the Reichsführer-SS. All other units which took part in any way had to destroy all records immediately. Eichmann mentioned this number in my presence when he was called upon, in April 1945, to present a report to the Reichsführer-SS. I had no records whatsoever. But, to the best of my knowledge, this number appears to me much too high. If I calculate the total of the mass operations which I still remember, and still make allowance for a certain percentage of error, I arrive, in my calculation, at a total of 1.5 million at the most for the period from the beginning of 1941 to the end of 1944. But these are my computations which I cannot verify. Nuremberg, 24 April 1946 (Signed) Rudolf Höss (At the bottom of the document): Hungary – 400,000; Slovakia – 90,000; Greece – 65,000; Holland – 90,000; France – 110,000; Belgium – 20,000; the region of the Generalgouvernement and Upper Silesia – 250,000; Germany and Terezin – 100,000. Total – 1,125,000.”

Already in Nuremberg Gilbert asked the question if Höss's statements could be trusted. In his diary he noted that, during one of his visits to Höss, the latter remarked that, as a psychologist Gilbert, undoubtedly would want to know if he was normal. Höss declared that he was normal. “Even while I was doing this extermination work, I led a normal family life, and so on.” When Gilbert asked him if the Jews who were killed deserved such a fate, Höss replied that this was an unrealistic question as it showed a great ignorance of the world of the SS. “Don't you see, we SS men were not supposed to think about these things; it

never even occurred to us.--And besides, it was something already taken for granted that the Jews were to blame for everything.” Höss admitted that the work was unpleasant. “But Himmler had ordered it and had even explained the necessity and I really never gave much thought to whether it was wrong. It just seemed a necessity.” “In all of the discussions Höss is quite matter-of-fact and apathetic, shows some belated interest in the enormity of his crime, but gives the impression that it never would have occurred to him if somebody hadn’t asked him. There is too much apathy to leave any suggestion of remorse and even the prospect of hanging does not unduly distress him. One gets the general impression of a man who is intellectually normal but with schizoid apathy, insensitivity and lack of empathy that could hardly be more extreme in a frank psychotic.”

In Jerusalem the court revisited the issue because, having admitted Höss’s statement that indicted Eichmann as evidence, Attorney-General Gideon Hausner could not examine and Eichmann’s lawyer Robert Servatius could not cross-examine him. Remarkably the latter, who had served in Nuremberg as counsel to Fritz Sauckel, did confirm that the accused willingly and without coercion cooperated with Gilbert. He noted also that “subsequently the accused men held conversations amongst themselves, in which they made sarcastic references to their discussions with the witness, and they even voiced a kind of mocking comment on the ‘soul examiner.’” Servatius therefore accepted that the documents could be accepted in evidence, but that Gilbert should limit his comments to those. The court agreed, and therefore it asked Gilbert to comment on Höss’s mental state when he gave his public and private testimony. “Q.: “I take it that, as a psychologist, you certainly understand that sometimes there is a state of mind of the accused which tends to drag down other people, as it were, and to incriminate them?” A.: “Yes, I certainly understand that. It’s one of the common guilt defences.” Q.: “Would you say that Rudolf Höss was in that particular state of mind when you were speaking to him?” A.: “No, definitely

not. As I said before, he was a man who was just automatically telling the facts as he knew them. It apparently meant nothing to him that he had murdered millions of people, he had no hesitation in describing everything in detail, and without any attempt to share blame, or to prepare a defence or anything, quite spontaneously--certainly not with any urging on my part--the name of Eichmann came into his statements again and again and again, and finally I realized that this man was a key figure in the extermination programme. May I amplify a little further? By contrast, I saw that Kaltenbrunner was a liar. When he tried to disclaim knowledge of the atrocities and shove the blame onto someone else, I could see--and got corroboration from actual statements from the others--that this was outright perjury, false testimony, outright lies. So I was aware at all times that it is possible that any of these men might be lying, but Höss definitely was not."

Considering Irving's description of the way the Holocaust in general, and Auschwitz in particular figured in the Nuremberg Trial, it is clear that it has no value. A historian would have considered all the evidence at hand, Irving only chose to (mis)quote whatever suited his preconceived notions.

Nuremberg: The Last Battle offers Irving's last more or less "comprehensive"; statement on the Holocaust in general and Auschwitz in particular. It shows that, perhaps under the pressure of events, he has chosen to distance himself from the explicit negationist rhetoric he adopted in the wake of the Second Zündel Trial, but beyond the ambiguous smokescreen one still discerns a negationist agenda. Using the more cunning and in a fundamental sense disingenuous means of innuendo and insinuation, Irving has abandoned the depreciatory declarations of the early 1990 to adopt the posture of an experienced trial lawyer, who tries to undermine the credibility of the most important witnesses. And it was so recognized by *The Journal of Historical Review*. A

lengthy review of the book that appeared in early 1998 ended with the conclusion that “[r]eading this book, one can dismiss fears that Irving has somehow ‘given up.’”

To understand the origin of Irving’s latest venture into Holocaust denial, it is necessary to consider the way he rewrote certain parts of his *Hitler’s War* after his 1988 conversion. The original edition included references to the use of Auschwitz as an extermination camp, and these Irving suppressed and reworked for the 1991 edition. Using a technique he was to perfect in his book on Nuremberg, Irving described Himmler’s July 1942 visit to Auschwitz selectively using Höss’s memoirs whenever it suited him, neutralizing the more damaging parts of Höss’s account--which mention Himmler witnessing a gassing, and the latter’s conversation with Höss about the expansion of the role of Auschwitz in the Holocaust--and introducing the exculpatory, skewed perspective of one his aides, Albert Hoffmann. The latter had stated after the war that he “totally disbelieves the accounts of atrocities as published in the press.” Hoffmann’s skepticism gave Irving the opportunity to add that, “[b]y late 1945 the world’s newspapers were full of unsubstantiated, lurid rumors about ‘Factories of death’ complete with lethal ‘gas chambers.’”

Having redefined historical facts as lurid rumors, Irving introduced a new version of the idea that the reports about the extermination camps were versions of the atrocity propaganda. By defining these reports as “rumors,” Irving did suggest that they were untrue, but did not imply that these “rumors” were necessarily concocted by some allied secret--service officials. The sentence allowed for the possibility that the “rumors” about Auschwitz had arisen spontaneously. This then, seems to be Irving’s current position. It is reflected in the contents of his internet website, <http://www.cpp.co.uk/Auschwitz/Auschw.html>--most particularly in the argument of a seemingly scholarly piece written by a person who identifies him/herself by the nom-de-plume of “Samuel Crowell.” Entitled “The Gas Chamber of Sherlock Holmes: An

Attempt at a Literary Analysis of the Holocaust Gassing Claim,” Crowell’s article encompasses, in printed form, 71 pages of text annotated with 449 endnotes.

As the (electronic) publisher of “The Gas Chamber of Sherlock Holmes,” Irving seems to repeat his 1989 attempt to join the avant-garde of Holocaust denial. Then he jumped on the Faurisson-Leuchter bandwagon, now he sponsors a new approach that seeks “to deliberately review the gassing claim, with the object, not to prove that gassings did or did not take place, but rather investigate whether a plausible basis for revisionist doubt exists.” Nothing could be more reasonable, at least not to the uninformed visitor of <http://www.tpp.co.uk/Auschwitz/Auschw.html>. And indeed, at first sight, even the academically trained visitor is surprised to find not the obviously insane rants of the Holocaust deniers of the old school (Rassinier, Butz, Faurisson), but what seems some interesting literary analysis. Crowell’s model is Elaine Showalter’s study *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media* (1997), which explains claims of alien abduction, chronic fatigue syndrome, recovered memory, the Gulf War syndrome, and multiple personality disorder as psychogenic epidemics in which the narrative similarity between independent accounts of, for example, instances of alien abduction, does not mean that these actually took place. “Literary critics...realize that similarities between two stories do not mean that they mirror a common reality, or even that the writers have read each other’s texts. Like all narratives, hystories have their own conventions, stereotypes, and structures. Writers inherit common themes, structures, characters, and images; critics call these common elements *intertextuality*. We need not assume that patients are either describing an organic disorder or else lying when they present similar narratives of symptoms. Instead, patients learn about diseases from the media, unconsciously develop the symptoms, and then attract

media attention in an endless cycle. The human imagination is not infinite, and we are all bombarded by these plot lines every day. Inevitably, we all live out the social stories of our time.”

In one of his notes Crowell referred to this paragraph as his source of inspiration--but only to the first half of it. It is clear that the second half, in which Showalter stresses the importance of the media in the process of intertextuality, effectively challenges any attempt to apply the thesis about the origin and growth of hystories to the war-time situation in 1940s Europe, when people were starved of information, and when the media that were still operating were not only completely silent on the issue, but also unavailable to those very eastern European Jews whom Crowell credits with having created the hystory of mass extermination through gassing.

Be that as it may, let us forget for the moment the fundamental inappropriateness of Showalter’s understanding of the nature of “hystories” as an explanation of any story--true or not--that developed during the Second World War in occupied Europe, and follow Crowell’s seemingly open-minded approach to the history of the Holocaust. “[W]hile sceptical of the gassing claim, we are not setting as our primary objective to prove either that gassings did, or did not, take place. Rather what we want to do is simply narrate the emergence of the gassings claims, from the Spring of 1942 through the end of the Nuremberg and Auschwitz Trials in 1947. We call the analysis “literary” because what we will be concerned with above all are the themes, motifs, tropes, or story elements that comprise the gassing claims. To put it another way, we want to take the gassing claims and view them as narratives or as “texts”, arrange them in order, and analyze them separately and in combination.” Identifying the story elements of “the gassing claim story,” and revealing their “textual links” to other texts, Crowell argues that this allows us to explain how the gassing claim would have arisen spontaneously without having to resort to the well-worn conspiracy theory, embraced by Holocaust deniers until recently, that the Holo-

caust with its attendant claims was a deliberately created hoax made up in some secret service headquarters or some hidden council of Jewish elders. The gassing claim, Crowell asserts, comprised elements of specific concern to East European Jews since the early 19th Century. “We will also find that the traditional extermination scenario, featuring a shower-gasburning sequence, is rooted in profound European and American concerns over disease and disease prevention, the use of poison gas and other mysterious weapons of mass destruction, and finally anxiety and fear over the recent reappearance of cremation as a means of disposal of the dead. In short, we will find that the generation of a delusion of mass gas extermination did not require a conspiracy, or a hoax, nor much conscious effort at all, but only a social and cultural climate that would facilitate the generation of such rumors, at a time of war, hatred, and social anomie. We will find that such rumors, facilitated here and there by a little solicitous fraud, and above all a willingness to believe the worst about one’s enemies, would allow them to be stated as fact and to become themselves part of that social and cultural landscape of which we are only half-consciously aware.”

Crowell reports on various reports on gassings that emerged in 1942, and notes some claims that, in the end, were not substantiated. The main motif is what Crowell calls the shower-gas-burning sequence, “[t]he idea that victims would be led into a bathing facility of some kind, and then be executed (the claimed method focussing on gas more and more as time went by), and then burned so that no trace would remain.” These claims, Crowell notes, all originated in Poland. This legitimate observation does not lead him to the obvious, that is an investigation of the specifics of German occupation policies in Poland, but to the in the whole constellation of events rather peripheral issue of eastern Jewish anxieties about delousing procedures. Ironically, Crowell’s point of departure is a text Debrah Dwork and I introduced in our *Auschwitz: 1270 to the Present* (1996). It describes the procedures the Germans used at the end of the nineteenth century to delouse lice-rid-

den east European immigrants at their borders as witnessed by Mary-ashe Antin, a young girl from Polotzk. Antin recorded that the train stopped, and that the passengers were told to get out. They were led into a large yard where many men and women dressed in white awaited them. "This was...a scene of bewildering confusion, parents losing their children, and little ones crying; baggage being thrown together in one corner of the yard, heedless of contents, which suffered in consequence; those white-clad Germans shouting commands, always accompanied with 'Quick!Quick!'-the confused passengers obeying all orders like meek children, only questioning now and then what was going to be done with them....Our things were taken away, our friends separated from us; a man came to inspect us, as if to ascertain our full value; strange-looking people driving us about like dumb animals, helpless and unresisting; children we could not see crying in a way that suggested terrible things; ourselves driven into a little room where a great kettle was boiling on a little stove; our clothes taken off, our bodies rubbed with a slippery substance that might be any bad thing; a shower of warm water let down on us without warning; again driven to another room where we sit, wrapped in woollen blankets till large, coarse bags are brought in, their contents turned out, and we see only a cloud of steam, and hear the women's orders to dress ourselves--'Quick! Quick!' or else we'll miss--something we cannot hear. We are forced to pick up our clothes from among all the others, with the steam blinding us; we choke, cough, entreat the women to give us time; they persist, 'Quick! Quick!--or we'll miss the train!--Oh, so we really won't be murdered! They are only making us ready for the continuing of our journey, cleaning us of all suspicions of dangerous sickness. Thank God!" The deloused transmigrants were herded back to the railway cars, and sent straight to the ports.

Taking this text as his point of departure, Crowell asserts that eastern European Jews must have faced a culture shock when faced with such delousing procedures. During the Second World War Germans simply

continued earlier practices: they “aggressively pursued the containment of disease using all these methods.” Crowell attaches special significance to the fact that the initiation procedures in the concentration camps, in which people were stripped, shaved, and showered, also served a hygienic purpose. “There seems little reason to doubt,” he observes, “that the level of disorientation and fear had changed little since the time of Mary Antin 50 years before.” On this basis, Crowell has little difficulty explaining that the stories about gassings in Sobibor and Treblinka, which were circulating in Europe by the end of 1942, were merely a reflection of the profound psychological impact of “the application of delousing measures on the populations of Eastern Europe, and particularly on Jewish people who were being resettled to the east or dragooned into the Labor Service.”

Having neutralized the claim that the Operation Reinhard camps had been the centers of extermination, Crowell turned to the tougher assignment to explain the war-time rumors about gassings in Auschwitz as the result of Jewish anxiety about delousing procedures. One of the problems he faces is that, in the summer of 1944, two escapees from Auschwitz, Rudi Vrba and Alfred Wetzlar, wrote a report that described the gassings in great detail. “[T]he witnesses who wrote the report were repeating rumor, and, even if the witnesses believed it, the existence of a rumor is certainly not proof of the facts which the rumor alleges,” Crowell writes. And he adds that “[t]he only thing the report really shows is that gassing rumors were current in Auschwitz at the time.” Yet, according to Crowell, even Vrba and Wetzlar had made no attempt at fabricate a hoax. In the confused and confusing reality of war-time Auschwitz, rumors continued to arise spontaneously, until they were backed up by partly fabricated official reports, creating a kind of mutually reinforcing, infernal information feedback loop.

Positive fabrication of evidence began, Crowell asserts, only with the Soviet liberation of Maidanek. Until then rumors had just arisen spontaneously. “The reverberations of the Majdanek Special Commission

were extremely broad, many of the symbols of the Holocaust have their beginning here. Among these one may note the huge piles of clothes, shoes, and hair, which were taken as *prima facie* evidence of exterminations of a million and a half human beings, although we now know that these piles of belongings indicate no such thing, and the current evaluation holds that less than 100,000 perished at Majdanek. But the most notorious element of the Majdanek report was the gas tight door with peephole, whereby the Germans supposedly witnessed the death throes of their victims.” Crowell offered a very simple explanation for the gas tight door with peephole: the Vrba-Wetzlar Report included a statement that visiting Germans were present at the first gassing in crematorium 2, and that “the special peephole fitted into the door of the gas chamber was in constant use.” The conclusion was obvious: it had to come from the Majdanek report. The problem of Crowell’s assertion is, of course, the fact that at the time of publication of the Maidanek Report the Vrba-Wetzlar Report had not yet been published, and that there is no evidence of any kind that the Soviets were in possession of the unpublished manuscript. Crowell certainly does not provide any evidence to support his suggestion.

According to Crowell, in the three weeks that separated the liberation of Bergen-Belsen (April 15, 1945) and the publication of the Soviet Report on Auschwitz (May 6, 1945) the “Canonical Holocaust” came into being. The awful scenes that confronted the English and American soldiers seemed to provide proof of the gassing claims. Crowell did not consider the detailed eye-witness accounts that were recorded in those weeks. The Soviet Report was, as Crowell was concerned, a worthless document. “The Soviet Special Commission on Auschwitz is probably the most important document ever issued on the gas extermination claim. Indeed, it is somewhat shocking to see the extent to which the claim is traced back to this slim and insubstantial brochure. But at the time it established not only the fact of the gas extermination claim but also the implementation of that alleged policy at the largest of all the

concentration camps. On the other hand, the report offers no proof of the claims which it makes, only two documents in circumstantial support, and assertion of the number of victims based merely on arbitrary multiplication of cremation rates, and is buttressed only with large amounts of eyewitness testimony that fail to even come close to providing details of the gassing procedures.” Crowell ignored the detailed statements made in April and May 1945 by Jankowski, Dragon and Tauber, or the forensic investigations done by Dawidowski. While in fact a mass of evidence had become available in the spring and summer of 1945, Crowell maintains that there was nothing but the “slim and insubstantial brochure” published by the Soviets.

This then leads him to engage the evidence he could not ignore, as it was and remained widely known in the West: the confessions by Kramer and others in the Lüneburg Trial. In his attempt to neutralize these independent corroborations of the eye-witness testimony of survivors, Crowell made most of the fact that the Soviets had come to the conclusion that four million people had been killed in Auschwitz. “The fact that the eyewitness testimonies and confessions in the postwar period correspond to the Soviet Special Commission could be taken as simple corroboration of the Soviet report, except that it has now been recognized that the Soviet report was wrong, in particular on its totally arbitrary calculation of four million victims (current estimates hold one million or less.) That figure derived from the Soviet calculation of cremation capacities. It did not derive from testimony. On the other hand, we have several testimonies and confessions which support it. But since the figure is wrong, it follows that the testimonies and confessions which support the calculation were influenced by the report. If a witness or a confessor makes statements that corroborate statements in an official and widely publicized report, that witness may be viewed as independently verifying the truth, although the absence of material and documentary support would still leave the matter in doubt. But when the witness or confessor corroborates statements and

the statements are false, then one can presume that the witness and confessor statements were simple derivative of the reports. To put it another way, several testimonies may converge on a truth, but several testimonies cannot converge on a falsehood: in such a case one is dealing either with statements derived from a common erroneous source or a kind of mass hysteria determined by the authority of an erroneous source. Such is the problem with all witness testimonies and confessions for the gas extermination claim, particularly for this initial period, but even more subsequently. The allegations of mass gassings had been widely disseminated since 1942, and had assumed official status by the Fall of 1944. Under these circumstances it would have been impossible to obtain “blind” testimony or an untainted confession. Only statements that provided high levels of corroborative detail would be really probative, yet that is precisely what was never offered. Eyewitness testimonies and confessions made the gravest errors, whenever they strayed into details....” If the central issue at stake had been if four million people had died in Auschwitz, and if Kramer and his colleagues had all maintained that the victim total had been indeed four million, then Crowell would have had a point. But in the Lüneburg Trial the issue of the number of victims never arose. As we have seen, the essential elements of both the eyewitness testimonies of Bimko and others, and the confessions of Kramer and others, concerned the fact that gassings took place, and its attendant procedures. In other words, the Lüneburg Trial generated new evidence that went into the greatest possible detail about events that the Soviet report did not touch upon.

In order to make plausible that a text, and not a historic event, was the cause for all the “gas chamber stories,” Crowell was forced to assign to the Soviet report a weight it never had. It had authority, he claimed, because it had been issued by the Soviet Government. Therefore it became a point of departure for all, serving witnesses as a means to refresh their memory, and interrogators to determine if captured Auschwitz personnel spoke the truth. “As soon as a witness or confessor

made statements corroborating the Soviet Special Commission, then those statements themselves acquired the Soviet report's weight of authority because they matched its claims. Over time the proof of the mass gas exterminations at Auschwitz would not be traced in the popular mind back to the Soviet Auschwitz report itself, but rather to testimonies and confessions that were clearly produced under its influence. Thus a version of the gassing claim, what we would call the Canonical Holocaust, evolved almost entirely through oral testimonies that built upon the basis of a report that had no substance. Meanwhile, the damning newsreels of Belsen would be manipulated and juxtaposed from camp to camp according to the whim of the prevailing culture, and provide the unanswerable ground to the claim." It is an interesting theory, but sadly for Crowell, there is absolutely no evidence, even not a scrap of it, that the Soviet Report played any part in the Lüneburg proceedings.

In his account of the Nuremberg Trials, Crowell first makes the erroneous claim that the presentation for the mass gassing and extermination claims was conducted by the Soviets, who drowned the courtroom in a "hysterical atmosphere of endlessly ramifying atrocity." He ignored the fact that the major presentation of the Auschwitz testimonies was done by the French prosecutors, who did not quote the Soviet Report, but allowed witnesses to speak for themselves. Yet, without engaging the contents of these testimonies and affidavits, Crowell dismisses them out of hand. While he admitted that the Höss affidavit seems "impressive and authoritative," Crowell judges that it "contributes absolutely nothing to what was already known as a 'fact of common knowledge' at the time." After flagging each of the possible sources for each of the statements, Crowell concludes that "[i]t is ultimately an extension and confirmation of the Canonical Holocaust as represented by the Soviet report." And therefore "it is practically valueless from a historiographical point of view." By why, one would ask, would Höss so emphatically have rejected the Soviet claim that

four million people had been killed in Auschwitz? As to the very extensive notes Höss made in Poland, Crowell limited himself to a short paragraph in which he remarked that there is no documentary support for the claims he makes, and that it is also a “model of incoherence and contradiction.” In fact, the situation is exactly the opposite. There is ample evidence that corroborates Höss’s detailed descriptions of the camp and its operations.

Engaging Dr. Kremer’s diary, Crowell repeats, without attribution, Faurisson’s shoddy hermeneutical analysis.

Crowell thus asserted as fact that, by the Spring of 1946, the myth of the crematoria with its gas chambers had been fully formed. “So far we have seen that through the Spring of 1946 the gassing claim continued to develop, acquiring weight from authoritative reports and the judicial notice of the court, and acquiring immediacy and broad acceptance through the medium of popular paperbacks and graphic photos and newsreel footage. After two years, the claim has fastened on the new-familiar shower-gas-burning sequence, and beginning in the Summer of 1944 that claim was imposed upon the physical facts of the camps. By the Summer of 1946, the mass gassing claim, as a “fact of common knowledge” had been saturating popular consciousness for four years, even though up to this point, as we have seen, no direct material or documentary evidence had been offered in its support.” Yet he faced a problem: why was the myth of the gas chambers with their dummy showers, which had according to him originated in response to delousing procedures, so insistent on the fact that the gas chambers were located in crematoria? Crowell had a simple explanation. While the *Ostjuden* had feared delousing, Germans did not trust cremation. In 1934 the German government had introduced legislation to support cremation, and this was the cause of great anxiety. “Probably as a result of these anxieties about cremation, the procedure became the focus of a number of strange ideas. One of these was that cremation was suspicious, because, by burning a body a post mortem on the cause of death

would be next to impossible to carry out. Under such conditions, all manner of murder, poisoning, and other activities could be carried out secretly.” Thus the institution of a crematorium, which made it so much more difficult to detect foul play, came to suggest the presence of foul play. A rational procedure of corpse disposal became of necessity the terminus of a sinister chain of events. Crowell does not, however, offer any evidence of such a wide-spread anxiety about incineration.

The Germans did not merely fear cremation. They also suffered from a deep anxiety about poison gas--a direct result of the gas attacks of the First World War and the Italian use of gas in the Abyssinian War. After giving a couple of literary references, Crowell concluded that “the culture was primed for accusations of poison gas usage.” In response, the Germans “invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the preparation of air raid shelters.” “From the beginning, all German air raid shelters were designed to protect against poison gas as well as against bombs. As a result, special air raid shelter doors were developed, usually made of steel. The doors would feature a round peephole covered with a perforated steel plate to prevent breakage, the peephole meant to facilitate visual inspection without having to break the gas-tight seal by opening the door.”

Crowell assumed that these civil defense measures were also applied to concentration camps: “[E]ach of the Birkenau crematoria was equipped with a gas-tight bomb shelter, and that these shelters also included decontamination facilities in the form of showers and baths. In this respect it is important to note that the Crematorium at the base camp was known to have been used as an air raid shelter, although its poison gas protection features have rarely been commented on. We should emphasize that all of the material and documentary evidence, when placed in a larger context, points to gas tight air raid and anti-gas shelters, although it is likely that at least two of the traces--the gas detectors, and possibly the term “*Vergasungskeller*”--are rooted in other benign procedures, including disinfection. There is no material or doc-

umentary support for the claim that these spaces were designed, let alone used, as extermination gas chambers.” In a footnote to this section, Crowell refers to one of his earlier postings on the web and the internet articles of Arthur Butz. He also offers the following observation. “Both Dr. Butz and myself have construed “*Vergasungskeller*” in a civil defense context; however, if anything “*vergasen*” type words are even more firmly rooted in disinfection and delousing procedures. While convinced that we are correct in identifying several civil defense and gas protection features to Leichenkeller 1 of Krematorium II (i.e., the “*Vergasungskeller*”) it is conceivable that part of it was intended for the disinfecting or delousing of clothing of the dead or the corpse handlers, but in that case it is doubtful that the entire *Keller* would have been set aside for that purpose: then the use of the word would be an example of metonymy, and the facility itself could well have been used for a variety of purposes: disinfecting corpse handlers, *ad hoc* disinfection and delousing of camp arrivals, and decontamination. Such multi-purpose use harmonizes with German civil defense procedures in the cities.”

Crowell’s argument, made both in the main body of his text and in the footnote, does not make any sense. As we have seen above, the architectural lay-out of the basement of crematoria 2 and 3 do not follow the strict division between an unclean and clean side characteristic of delousing facilities, and there is absolutely no indication anywhere in either the plans of these spaces nor in the correspondence that these spaces were designed to support “disinfecting corpse handlers, *ad hoc* disinfection and delousing of camp arrivals, and decontamination.” Of course, in theory anything is possible, but only few things are probable, and historians take the probable and not the possible as the point of departure of their musings. Furthermore the design of the two morgues does not support the claim that these were meant as air-raid shelters. As we have seen in our discussion of Wilhelm Stäglich’s claim that these spaces had been air-raid shelters, when the Germans desig-

nated crematorium 1 as a shelter for those working and recovering in the SS hospital in Auschwitz I, they subdivided the space in small inter-connected cells, separated by sturdy walls that gave extra support to the roof. There is absolutely no evidence that such a structural modification was ever contemplated or executed for the basement spaces of crematoria 2 and 3. Furthermore the location of the alleged air-raid shelters in the crematoria, at more than a mile distance from the SS camp, does not make any sense. Finally: sufficient mutually corroborating evidence of different origin converges on the conclusion that the morgue 1 of both crematorium 2 and 3 were used as gas chambers.

It is important to observe that even if Crowell would have been able to make a plausible case that the basement spaces of crematoria 2 and 3 would have been used as air-raid shelters, he would still have faced the problem of explaining the above ground gas chambers of crematoria 4 and 5. Both the plans, elevations and sections of these spaces have been preserved, and none shows any indication that these spaces could have offered any protection during an air-raid. Apart from that, these spaces in no way follow the standard lay-out for delousing facilities.

Finally Crowell ventured in a contorted argument in which he argued that because all the “non intentional” evidence of gas chambers in Auschwitz can be explained in terms of civil air defense and disinfection literature, one may safely infer that “there is no longer any documentary or material evidence that mass gassings took place at all.” This argument is an obvious example of a *non sequitur*, as is Crowell’s assertion that because Dawidowski and Sehn misinterpreted these documents that attested to the presence of air-raid shelters in the crematoria as proof for the use of the crematoria as killing installations, one may infer that “there was never any merit to the extermination gassing claim in the first place.” “In other words, civil air defense literature, along with disinfection literature, does more than explain all

of the alleged documentary and material for mass gas exterminations. Shown in their proper context, these documents, now clearly seen as having been misused, bring us face to face with the possibility of a deliberate Polish and Soviet communist fraud.” In the footnote to this passage, Crowell once more refers to another of his articles, and adds the following thought. “This conclusion is, we believe, inescapable. At the beginning of our research we explored the possibility that the Soviets and other communists misconstrued the air raid shelter evidence, and it is certainly at least possible that many individuals did, and probably most Westerners. However, at no point in the historical record, or in the elaboration of these materials since then, has there ever been a recognition of the air-raid shelter origins of these gas-tight features. It is beyond belief that the association never occurred to an establishment historian on this subject, particularly in Eastern Europe, where the only extant “gas chamber” facilities are located. Therefore we are forced to conclude that establishment historians in Poland and the Soviet Union failed to point out the implications to their thesis, namely that the Germans had constructed air raid shelters but had used them for exterminations. This failure can only be understood as a desire to suppress the issue of air raid shelters *per se*, because otherwise it most certainly would have been (and would be!) a valuable addition to our knowledge of the Holocaust. Hence we conclude that the air raid shelter origin of gas-tight features was suppressed because of the questions it would raise, namely, the questions it would raise about the validity of the extermination hypothesis overall.” The problem, of course, with Crowell’s theorizing is that the “establishment historians” in Poland had no reason to consider the possibility that the gas-tight features pointed at air raid shelters because there was no reason to do so. Information derived from many different sources--both intentional and non-intentional evidence--pointed clearly at the use of *Leichenkeller 1* in crematoria 2 and 3 as gas chambers, and before Stäglich raised the possibility in the late 1970s, not one source suggested that these spaces would have been used as air raid shelters. Crowell may

continue to accuse Auschwitz scholars of suppressing (non-existent) evidence relevant to the understanding of the gas chambers, but his own argument will easily stand as one of the most remarkable cases of special pleading I have ever encountered.

In his conclusion Crowell responds to the observation that many eyewitness accounts could not be lying. This he calls a worthless “sally” because, due to the fact that the shower-gas-burning model was widely disseminated during the war--a claim he does not support--anyone could have devised the story. Crowell compared it to the claims of many who claim to have been abducted by UFO's, and quoted Elaine Showalter to prove that narrative similarity does not mean much. “Literary critics, however, realize that similarities between two stories do not mean that they mirror a common reality, or even that the writers have read each other's texts. Like all narratives, hystories have their own conventions, stereotypes, and structures. Writers inherit common themes, structures, characters, and images; critics call these common elements intertextuality.” This, then, led Crowell to treat the gassing claim as a story that arose out of intertextuality to become a massive “hystorie.” “The gassing claim of the Holocaust derives from a complex of delusion and censorship. We are now in a position to encapsulate how both tendencies reinforced each the other. The gassing legend seemed to have been endemic in Europe for several years before the outbreak of World War Two. At that time, and in conjunction with the National Socialist euthanasia program, conducted in secret, the rumor of gassing developed more widely. Once the Germans began large-scale deportations in the Spring of 1942, the typical disinfection rumors arose, as they had in previous decades, but this time they tended to focus on the gassing claim. These rumors passed through the BBC, which gave the rumors authority, and in turn created the feedback loop for their further development. In this respect the growth of the gassing rumors should be distinguished from such phenomena as the *War of the Worlds* panic, because in the latter case official denunciation

of the claim was immediate. But in this case there were no official pronouncements about the extermination rumors at all, but simply the repetition of these claims. The combination of frightful epidemic scenes in the Western camps combined with a series of Soviet Special Commissions, including the Auschwitz report, set the seal on the story, providing the canonical Holocaust, which, in its function was scarcely distinguishable from one of the manuals of interrogation from the days of the great witch hunts or the Inquisition. The evolution of the Canon continued at the postwar trials, where the presentation on the alleged mass gassings and exterminations was in the hands of a state which had already demonstrated its schizophrenic tendencies in its approach to handling various internal crises while following a path of rapid and forced industrialization and modernization in the previous two decades. The residue of such rapid change is furthermore well understood to be anomie, disorientation, and other social pathologies, and these also profoundly affected the Jews of eastern Europe, who were themselves not only subject to almost continuous persecution during this time but also to the disorientation and social disintegration characteristic of grand socio-economic transformations. This is the context in which the claim of mass gassing and extermination arose and found its fulfilment.”

Crowell’s attempt to explain the origin and development of “the gassing claim” could have claimed some importance because it could have begun to redress what has been, until now, the single largest liability of the Holocaust deniers: their inability to produce, in forty years of effort, a plausible counter-narrative to the inherited history of the Holocaust or, more particularly, the history of Auschwitz. The negationists claim to be revisionist historians, but they have yet to produce a history that offers a credible, “revised” explanation of the events in question. Until Crowell’s piece appeared, Rassinier and his disciples have had an exclusively nihilist agenda. They have attacked the inherited account on the unproven assumption of some general conspiracy, but

they have not been able, or willing, to even begin writing a single piece of investigative journalism--let be it produce one product of serious revisionist historiography--that gives us the origin and development of this conspiracy, the reason why and how it seized on, of all places, those very “ordinary” Auschwitz concentration camps as the fulcrum of its effort to hoodwink both gentiles and Jews, to leverage the international community in general, and defraud the Germans and the Arabs in particular. Crowell’s article attempts to create a plausible narrative could have begun, at least superficially, to engage with issues of relevancy and causation, and to apply judgement. This having been said, one cannot but judge Crowell’s attempt an utter failure. As a hypothesis, the air-raid-shelter origin of the “myth” of the gas chambers does not stand up to serious criticism. Not only do his claims make little sense, but his hypothesis is without any value because he did not submit it to the essential test: if Auschwitz would have been equipped with substantial gas-tight civil defence measures within its crematoria, than one ought to expect that one could deduce as its entailed consequent either the fact that also other concentration camps would have been equipped with such installations, or the fact that, if those camps did not show similar installations, one could establish very clear reasons why Auschwitz would have been equipped with substantial gas-tight air raid shelters within the crematoria, and the other camps not. Crowell did not test his hypothesis, and therefore it cannot be verified. He has not offered a single scrap of evidence that confirms the entailed consequent of the hypothesis. Hence, for all his effort, his hypothesis that the gas chambers can be explained as substantial gas-tight civil defence measures is without any value.

Irving does not seem to be bothered by all of this. Not only does he continue to offer his website to Crowell’s essay, but recently also increased Crowell’s offering, accompanied by the following introduction. “New Documents on Air Raid Shelters at Auschwitz Camp Brief Introduction AMERICAN WRITER “Samuel Crowell” [*pseudonym*], author of

Technique and Operation of German Anti-Gas Shelters in WW2, published in German translation in Germar Rudolf's journal *Vierteljahreshefte für freie Geschichtsforschung* [VffG/VHO@aol.com] submitted three documents recently obtained from the archives of the former Soviet special state archives (the "trophy") archives. [For Crowell's other writings see <http://www.codoh.com/inconshr123.html>]. These bear on his thesis that the gas-tight doors found at the Auschwitz site (a facsimile of which is displayed at the Holocaust Memorial Museum at Washington DC) were nothing more sinister than the remains of air-raid shelters; all such shelters were fitted with gas-tight doors, in anticipation of Allied poison-gas attacks. What the documents do not state explicitly, in our opinion, is whether the shelters were for prisoners, the camp guards, or both. Focal Point Publications." The three letters that Crowell obtained from Moscow with the help of an anonymous donor indeed concern the creation of air-raid shelters. Two of the documents date from late 1943, and concern problems in the production and delivery of 176 pre-fabricated concrete arches that were installed over small, one-and two-person trenches that were created at regular intervals around the perimeter of Birkenau in order to provide, in case of an air raid, shelter for the SS men guarding the camp. These small shelters, which are still to be seen all around the perimeter of the camp, were not gas-tight, but completely open towards the prisoner compound, so that the guards could continue to cover the part of the perimeter assigned to them with their machine guns. Both the letters of October 25 and November 5, 1943 clearly refer to these small, open shelters, and neither letter contains any reference to a gas-tight shelter.

The third letter dates from November 16, 1944. By the late fall of 1944, allied air raids on the Auschwitz area had become commonplace, and the Soviet army had advanced within sixty miles of Auschwitz. The Central Construction Office was now ordered to create a few larger shelters for a maximum of 50 men each, and a smaller shelter with room for 20 persons and an emergency operation room. These were to

accommodate SS personnel, and were to be built in the large SS compound at Birkenau--primarily in the eastern section of the SS camp to service the SS hospital. The design for the shelter for 50 men, which survives in the archive of the Central Construction Office, consisted of a C-shaped trench covered with 66 of the same kind of pre-fabricated concrete arches as had been used for the small, one-to two-person shelters designed a year earlier. Only now these were interconnected to make four interconnected bombproof corridors, each 1.50 metres wide. Each corridors was designed to accommodate in theory 15 men, but as the letter indicates, the Berlin headquarters indicated the need to lower the maximum accommodation from 60 to 50 people. The blueprints show attached to the four corridors that make up the main shelter four small toilet spaces, and four entrances. At each of the four entrances the architects projected a small vestibule identified as "Gasschleuße" (gas-lock). The second design shows a trench shelter reinforced with masonry walls, covered with a concrete roof. Like the other design, it is equipped with a gas lock. These air-raid shelters were thus indeed gas-tight. It is, however, interesting to note that the architects achieved their aim to produce a gastight shelter by means of a lock that was designated as a gas-lock in the drawings. None of the blueprints of the crematoria show a space identified as a "Gasschleuße"--another indication that Crowell's hypothesis does not hold. None of the designs for morgue 1 of crematoria 2 and 3 show the required emergency exit--every air raid shelter was required to have such an alternative exit. None of these designs show the required strength of the walls and roofs, or the required 80 centimeter thick earth covering. The designs for the two air-raid shelters designed for the SS compound in Birkenau follow the norms published in Neufert's 1944 edition of his *Bau-Entwurfslehre*--a fact that should not surprise as this book was owned by the SS Central Construction Office in Auschwitz.

In his comments on the letter, which took the form of nine points, Crowell assumed that the letters of late 1943 and the letter of November 1944 referred to exactly the same kind of shelter. “#3 The three documents give us some idea of scope and cost. We know we are talking about trench shelters, because these usually hold about 50 people (letter of November 11, 1944) and are built for the prisoners (“Defending”, Part 2). We must be discussing at least 176 such shelters, so as I interpret the “Bogenstücke”....” The blueprint BW 14 makes it clear that the shelter was to accommodate SS men, and there the suggestion that there would have been 176 of such shelters is simply absurd. The shelter BW 14 uses 66 of the pre-fabricated concrete arches, and the letter of October 25, 1943 mentions the delivery of only 176 pieces, that is barely enough to make only three of these shelters. But, as we have seen, in 1943 the issue was not to create large shelters, but many small ones serving the SS men guarding the periphery of the camp.

In points 5 to 7 Crowell presents a remarkable example of false analogy. “#5 The German civil defense philosophy was that Luftschutzkreisen were designed to be fully integrated; in other words, you did not build just a few shelters for a few people, you endeavored to build shelters for everyone (“Defending,” Part 1). The presence of these trench shelters, in other words, strongly implies that fixed structures were also equipped with air raid shelters. #6 To put it another way, the presence of these trench shelters strongly argues that the crematoria were also equipped with their own air raid/gas shelters, because that accords with German LS policy. #7 Since #6 is the argument of “Technique”, we can safely argue that each crematorium had such air raid/gas shelters. But in that case, where were the gas chambers?” While it is true that the German civil defence system was based on the principle that in principle all citizens were to have equal access to air-raid shelters, one cannot argue that this philosophy also applied to the concentration camps, and certainly not to Jewish inmates imprisoned in those camps. Primo Levi recorded shortly after his return from Aus-

chwitz-Monowitz that, when in August 1944 the bombings began of the IG Farben Buna plant, the inmates were not allowed to seek shelter.

“Entry to the reinforced shelters was forbidden to us. When the earth began to tremble, we dragged ourselves, stunned and limping, through the corrosive fumes of the smoke bombs to the vast waste areas, sordid and sterile, closed within the boundary of the Buna: there we lay inert, piled up on top of each other like dead men, but still aware of the momentary pleasure of our bodies resting. We looked with indifferent eyes at the smoke and flames breaking out around us: in moments of quiet, full of the distant menacing roar that every European knows, we picked from the ground the stunted chicory leaves and dandelions, trampled on a hundred times, and chewed them slowly in silence.

When the alarm was over, we returned from all parts to our posts, a silent innumerable flock, accustomed to the anger of men and things; and continued that work of ours, as hated as ever, now even more obviously useless and restless.” Thus the presence of a few shelters for SS men does not imply the presence of shelters for the inmates. And certainly it does not lead to the conclusion that the crematoria would have been equipped with shelters. After all: if the narrow, uncomfortable concrete-reinforced trenches would have been good enough for the SS, why would the inmates have deserved better? Crowell assumed that “fixed structures were also equipped with air raid shelters.” It is up to him to show evidence for this. The only “fixed structure” in Auschwitz that was retro-actively fitted with an air raid shelter was crematorium 1. Located next to the SS hospital of Auschwitz I, it was to serve sick SS men. No other buildings were so equipped. This can be easily determined by means of an even cursory glance at the blueprints preserved in the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oswiecim, or by visiting the remaining “fixed structures.” So therefore the reasoning that

1. there are trench shelters in Auschwitz *therefore*
2. the “fixed structures” in Auschwitz are equipped with shelters *therefore*
3. the crematoria are equipped with shelters *therefore*

4. the crematoria did not contain gas chambers fails.

For the record, I will provide the last two points Crowell made after having “proved” on the basis of the existence of trench air raid shelters that the gas chambers did not exist. “ #8 It is also noteworthy that the SS would go to so much time, expense and trouble, to build gas-tight air raid shelters for people who were supposed to be condemned to extermination. #9 It is furthermore noteworthy that neither Pressac, nor any establishment Holocaust historian, has ever bothered to even notice the importance of these civil defense measures. After all, if you have hundreds of air raid shelters, that’s a lot of gas tight doors.” I presume that, as one undoubtedly considered by Crowell as a “establishment Holocaust historian,” I stand accused for having so misinterpreted the kindness of the SS to the Jews, and for having so misunderstood the significance of all those gas tight doors. Yet as a scholar willing to change his mind whenever the evidence proves me wrong, I will just pose Crowell this one, simple question: “If there were so many hundreds of gas-tight air raid shelters, with so many hundreds of gas-tight doors, where are all those hundreds of gas-tight doors? Or if they were destroyed at the end of the war, where are in the archives references to all those hundreds of gas-tight doors? Where are the work-orders, where are the bills?” I only know of a very few references, and strangely enough those all seem to refer to doors and shutters used for spaces usually identified as homicidal gas chambers....

For all its idiocy, Crowell’s piece is without doubt the most substantial piece concerning Auschwitz to be found on Irving’s website. For the rest, Irving seems to use this medium as an electronic flea-market where he makes all his old ideas about Auschwitz available to the public. For example, he provides a full transcript of his 1988 testimony in the Zündel Trial as provided in Barbara Kulaszka’s partisan digest of the case entitled *Did Six Million Really Die?* With a foreword written by Robert Faurisson, Kulaszka’s 564-page long digest, which included the condensed version of The Leuchter Report (pages 469 to 502) was pub-

lished by Zündel's publishing venture Samisdat Publishers Ltd. in 1992. Or one can inspect at Irving's site one of his trumpcards: the passage from Professor Hinsley's book *British Intelligence in the Second World War* that notes that "[t]he returns from Auschwitz, the largest of the camps with 20,000 prisoners, mentioned illness as the main cause of death but included references to shootings and hangings. There were no references in the decrypts to gassing."

Many of the items Irving posts on his website aim at "poisoning the well." For example, one article entitled "On a Lecture to German Schoolchildren by Kasimierz Smolen, former director of the Auschwitz site," posts a picture of Smolen lecturing a group of adolescents. "A news item in the *Westfälische Nachrichten* Mar. 10, 1997 shows one Kasimierz Smolen, 76, identified as a former director of the Auschwitz museum 1955 to 1991, lecturing to two hundred innocent teenaged school boys and girls in an indoctrination class at the *Friedensschule* (Peace School) in Münster, Germany." At every point the article tries to discredit Smolen, or use him to discredit the testimony of other eyewitnesses. For example, Smolen is identified as "a clerk in the camp's Political Section, and from Aug. 1942 he was, he admitted, one of the hated 'Kapos.'" Irving's designation of Smolen as "one of the hated Kapos" is simply slanderous: Smolen remained employed as a clerk in the registry department throughout his stay in Auschwitz. What Irving does not mention is that Smolen was active in the camp resistance, Together with Ludwik Rajewski, Tadeusz Szymanski, Tadeusz Wasowicz and Jan Trebaczewski, Smolen collected evidence of the crimes the SS committed in Auschwitz by keeping at the risk of his own life a private record of the transports brought to the camp and the number of deportees admitted to the camp after selection. Yet Irving proves capable of turning Smolen's resistance activity to challenge the historical record concerning the selections. Smolen "claimed to have copied out a twenty-eight page summary of the arriving transports: the first rosta showed prisoner No.1 arriving on June 20, 1940...." "There were ten-

wty-six pages of Frauentransporte (women's transports)--No. 1 arrived on Mar. 23, 1942 and No. 75, 697 on Feb. 26, 1944 (Smolen thus seemingly discounts the heart-rending stories of separations of man from wife as they stepped off the train onto the dreaded "Ramp" at Auschwitz." Contrary to Irving's suggestion, the two lists of male and female prisoners, made upon their registration into the camp, does not contain any information about the way these inmates had arrived in Auschwitz. They contain no information if the transports were all male, or all female, or mixed. Irving's comment in the parentheses either shows his ignorance of the nature of the lists, or his partisan view of Smolen. It certainly does not testify to his ability as a historian. "After the decision to go for the final solution, taken, Smolen assured the teenagers, at the (Jan. 1942) Wannsee conference, a death machine without parallel had been installed at his camp, with between seventy and ninety percent of arriving Jews taken direct from the railroad ramp to the gas chambers as they were unfit for work. (Anne Frank's family evidently escaped this drama: all three members survived at the camp from 1944 until her father fell ill; he was being cared for in the S.S. hospital, when he was liberated in Jan. 1945; and her sister died of typhus, to which plague the wretched Anne herself, like hundreds of thousands of others, also succumbed after being evacuated from the camp in 1945 to Bergen-Belsen.)"

One must admit to a certain sense of awe when confronted with Irving's attempt to suggest that the history of the Frank family casts doubt on the alleged role of Auschwitz as an extermination camp. A quick consideration of the facts of the case, however, makes clear that once more his challenge has no other base than a combination of (at best) ignorance and the fallacy of composition, added to which is (likely) a good dose of special pleading and a tendency to discredit in advance any evidence contrary to Irving's position on Auschwitz. On August 4, 1944 the Franks were found and arrested. The 55-year old Otto Heinrich Frank, the 44-year old Edith Frank-Holländer, the 18-

year old Margot Betty Frank and the 15-year old Annelies Marie Frank had been relatively well fed and were in good health. After a four-week stay in the transit camp at Westerbork, where their condition did not deteriorate, the Franks were deported to Auschwitz on September 2, 1944--their train was the last transport from Holland to Auschwitz. One September 5 the train arrived in Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the 1,019 deportees were subjected to selection. In total 258 men and 212 women were admitted to the camp, the rest were killed in the crematoria. Both because of their age and their health, all the Franks fitted the category of those deemed "fit for work." Otto was brought in Auschwitz I, Edith, Margot and Anne in the women's camp in Birkenau. In the end of October the SS began the evacuation of the camp, and on October 28 Margot and Edith were put on transport to Bergen-Belsen. Edith remained behind, and given her deteriorating health probably would have been killed in the gas chambers if not for Himmler's order to dismantle the killing installations. Edith was brought to the inmate infirmary in the women's camp, and died there on January 6, 1945. Otto survived because, through the intervention of a Dutch doctor, he was admitted to the infirmary in Auschwitz 1, where he was liberated by the Russians on January 27, 1945. While he received no treatment in the infirmary, he was spared the beatings he had received before. The more than six-feet tall Otto weighed 114 pounds when the Russians arrived. Margot and Anne, fatally weakened by the journey from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen, succumbed to the typhus epidemic that killed 17,000 inmates in March, 1945.

Like the hiding experience of the Franks between 1942 and 1944, their sojourn in Auschwitz was not typical. When they arrived in the camp the killing of those *considered to be on arrival* as "unfit for work" was still going on on a daily basis but, owing to the increasing scarcity of labour and the increasingly important role of concentration camps as pools of forced labour, the SS had decided to lengthen the average lifespan of the inmates destined for ultimate elimination. Therefore the camp

routine which had been absolutely murderous two years earlier had been made somewhat more bearable for the inmates, and the killings at the whim of individual Kapos and SS guards had stopped. As a result, the decline of health of the Franks was slower than it would have been under “normal” Auschwitz conditions. By the time that their health had deteriorated to such a point that, under the normal camp regime as it had existed between 1942 and 1944, they would have been selected for the gas chambers in one of the regularly occurring selections within the women’s and men’s camps, the machinery of death was already in a state of dissolution: the last selection for the gas chambers to which the Frank women could have been subjected, which occurred in the infirmary in the women’s camp, happened on October 20, 1944--that is eight weeks after their arrival. By the time Otto Frank was taken in the infirmary, selections of male inmates had come to an end.

In conclusion: any attempt to take the exceptional experience of the Franks--none of them was gassed in Auschwitz--as a basis for a universal conclusion--therefore no gassings took place in Auschwitz--is a classic example of the fallacy of converse accident, or tabloid thinking. This form of argument has been a favourite device of propagandists, and has no place in historical discourse.

The rest of the article on Kasimierz Smolen’s lecture continued to present speculative arguments, misinformation, and *non sequiturs*. “The German newspaper reports alas little of the subsequent discussion: no doubt some of the brighter children will have asked Smolen--who miraculously survived Hitler’s Final Solution although languishing five years within Auschwitz as a Pole, a Jew, a resistance fighter, and a communist--about his different evidence at the Nuremberg Trials, about the fake (“reconstructed”) gas chamber and crematorium chimney erected at the Auschwitz museum site in 1948, and about why he continued to pass this building off as genuine for thirty-five years; and about that tablet of stone erected under his stewardship

commemorating “over four million” liquidated at the camp, a figure which the communist Smolen defended rigidly until his enforced resignation in July 1990.” For the record: Mr. Smolen survived “Hitler’s Final Solution” because he was a gentile, and not a Jew. And Smolen did encourage Dr. Piper’s path-breaking research into the number of victims, and endorsed his conclusions during the internal review in 1986. Still under his directorship, the Auschwitz museum moved in 1990 to change the official assessment of the number of victims from the range of 2.5 million to 4 million to a range between 1 and 1.5 million victims. As director Smolen endorsed this change, yet privately he did state that while he believed that while Piper’s minimum numbers were solid, he did not rule out the small possibility that the real number of victims would have been higher. Asked about the 4 million number, he stated that “while in my opinion no-one can deny with absolute certainty the number of 4 million, it must however be considered to be unlikely.” Given the great emotional issues attached to the change in the official victim count of Auschwitz, I easily can understand why Smolen preferred to make the statement the way he did. I cannot understand, however, how Irving could see Smolen’s general endorsement of Piper’s calculations as a rigid defence of the Soviet figure.

Let us continue towards the end of Irving’s discussion of Smolen’s Münster lecture. “The figure on the stone tablet was erased immediately, and replaced some years later, grudgingly, with one alleging the deaths of one million. There is no doubt that large numbers of Jews and other innocents died at Auschwitz. The circumstances are however very much in dispute, and the true figure is coming down with each week that passes.” Given the enthusiastic support of the staff of the museum and the International Council that oversees the museum, I do not see any reason for the adverb “grudgingly.” Furthermore there is no justification for the clause “and the true figure is coming down

with each week that passes.” Neither the museum nor legitimate historians working in the field have proposed a major revision of Piper’s number of victims.

The article ended with another speculative argument followed by some misinformation, which has no bearing on Smolen’s Münster lecture, but offers once more insight in Irving’s current position concerning the war-time history of Auschwitz. “Some children may even have asked about the forensic tests conducted by Fred Leuchter, by Germar Rudolf, by the Jan Sehn institute of Kraków and by other bodies, all of which show no trace of cyanide-compound residues in the alleged homicidal structures.” It is unlikely that these “children”--I presume Irving calls these high school students “children” as it allows him to invoke the fairy tale of the Emperor’s New Clothes--would have asked about Leuchter, Rudolf, and the late Professor Markiewicz. But if they did, then it is possible, yes even probable, that Smolen would have told them about the final conclusion of the report that came from the Jan Sehn Institute in Cracow: “The present study shows that in spite of the passage of a considerable period of time (over 45 years) in the walls of the facilities which once were in contact with hydrogen cyanide the vestigial amounts of the combinations of this constituent of Zyklon B had been preserved. This is also true of the ruins of the former gas chambers. The cyanide compounds occur in the building materials only locally, in the places where the conditions arose for their formation and persistence for such a long time.” All-in-all, Irving’s account of Smolen’s lecture offers little except negationist propaganda.

One can go on, and subject every offering at Irving’s website to similar kinds of criticism. The overriding aim of the various items presenting eye-witness-testimony is to discredit them. For example, Irving presents under the general heading of “Liars and other eye-witnesses” an article that appeared under the headline “Book ‘An Artistic Picture’: Survivor never saw actual gassing deaths” in the *Toronto Star* on January 24, 1985. It reported on Christie’s bullying cross-examination of

Vrba during the Zündel Trial. “Defence attorney Doug Christie, of Victoria, challenged Vrba’s earlier testimony that he saw a Nazi SS soldier in a gas mask pouring poison gas into a lower bunker connected to a Birkenau crematorium. Vrba yesterday admitted he was never inside that particular bunker, after Christie suggested it was the roof of a mortuary Vrba had seen, not a gas chamber.” One wonders, of course, how Vrba’s observation of an SS man pouring Zyklon B into the underground space can be discredited by his admission that he never was in that underground space. But Irving has no difficulty in quickly condemning Vrba as a “liar,” throwing in an editorial aside even doubt on Vrba’s 1944 escape from Auschwitz, adding to this the suggestion of a widespread conspiracy concocted by Slovak Jews and the American Jew Henry Morgenthau.... “IT IS WORTH COMMENTING that Rudolf Vrba, alias Walter Rosenberg, is not just any survivor: he and a certain Wetzler claimed to have escaped the camp in the spring of 1944, and it was their horrific eye-witness account, edited by the Slovakian Jewish community leaders, which was released in November 1944 by the War Refugee Board in Washington (in fact by Henry Morgenthau acting behind the back of, and against the wishes of, the two other Board members Henry Stimson and Cordell Hull).”

For the record, here an excerpt from the 1985 proceedings of the first Zündel Trial. Vrba had told the court that he had escaped Auschwitz in April 1944 in order to warn the Jewish community in Hungary that the crematoria were prepared for them. Then he told the court that, soon after the Hungarian action had begun, the Auschwitz crematoria became overloaded, and the Sonderkommando began to incinerate bodies in large incineration pits. During cross-examination, Christie wasted no time to use this statement to discredit the testimony of Vrba. “[Mr. Christie]: “Did you see one body being taken out of the crematorium and hauled to a pit?” [Mr. Vrba]: “This happened in May and June and July 1944. And I escaped in April. In other words--” Q.: “The answer is no.” A.: “In other words, I have not [been] present during the

mass murder of the Hungarian Jews. Indeed, my job was to escape from Auschwitz before this mass murder started and to warn them.” Q.: “In spite of the fact that you weren’t a witness to such a thing, you have told us these things were fact. Right?” A.: “These things can be considered as a fact. Also, I haven’t been on the moon. I consider it a fact that somebody landed on the moon, and that the picture was not made in the Star Trek atelier because there are certain informations that a person doesn’t doubt. If I used your logic, you can come to me and say that the earth is flat. Everybody can see it, and I can’t prove otherwise, and the astronauts who went to the moon, they were filmed with an atelier together with Star Trek, and all of this was invented. How can I object against this argument?”

Vrba’s anguished outburst may not have measured up to the decorum of judicial proceedings. But for anyone who has been forced to deal for months on end with the dismal sophistries of men like Christie, and the relentless ability of the people on whose behalf he acted to interminably offer new suggestions to deny the obvious, Vrba’s sense of utter exhaustion and despondency with the whole affair rings only all-too-true. And so I use him to bring my report to closure--despite the fact that in this day and age of chameleonesque media, which allow for a continuous changing and updating of information, endings have become almost impossible to achieve. One knows that in such a world one can only repeat Samuel Beckett’s Clov: “Let’s stop playing.”

“Hamm: “Never!” (*Pause*) “Put me in my coffin.” Clov: “There are no more coffins.” Hamm: “Then let it end!....With a bang!” *With a bang* . . .

As I wrote at the beginning of this report, Resnais’ and Cayrol’s 1955 movie *Night and Fog* provided my entrance into the world of the camps. As I have come to the end the descriptive part of this report, I will leave you with the haunting words which, at some time in the early 1970s, sent me on my way to become a student of the history of Auschwitz--a history that included and continues to include, as we have seen, its

own negation and as such refuses to be imprisoned in the past--a history which, unless studied, understood, properly (re)presented, and taught, could generate a new and awful present.

Night and Fog ends with an evocation how, at the end of the war, the concentration camp universe collapsed under its own weight, to leave mountains of unburied corpses, dazed "survivors," and the people who designed and operated the camps. "A Kapo, a Junker, and then an earnest, pleasant-looking young man testify in court. "I am not responsible," says the Kapo. "I am not responsible," says the officer. "I am not responsible." A final look at a mountain of naked, mutilated corpses. "Then who is responsible?" (Into color): Moving over a rich field with flowers; the twigs and rocks on the ground are reminiscent of the human bones. "At the moment I speak to you, the icy water of the ponds and ruins is filling up the hollows of the charnel house. A water as cold and murky as our own bad memories. war is napping, but with one eye always open.' Moving along the sunny landscape, flowers swaying in the breeze; the camps are in the background. "The faithful grass has come up again on the *Appelplatz*, around the cell blocks. An abandoned village, but still full of peril." Still moving: crematorium ruins; twisted wires; broken watchtowers; crumbled chambers; slabs of cracked concrete; abstract figures in stone. "The crematorium is no longer in use. The devices of the Nazis are out of date. Nine million dead haunt this landscape. Who is on the lookout from this strange tower to warn us of the coming of new executioners? Are their faces really different from our own? Somewhere among us, there are lucky Kapos, reinstated officers, and unknown informers. There are those who refused to believe this, or believed it only from time to time. And there are those of us who sincerely look upon the ruins today, as if the old concentration camp monster were dead and buried beneath them. Those who pretend to take hope again as the image fades, as though there were a cure for the plague of these camps. Those of us who pre-

tend to believe that all this happened only once, at a certain time and in a certain place, and those who refuse to see, who do not hear the cry to the end of time.”

CONCLUSION

In the case of David John Cawdell Irving, plaintiff, and Penguin Books Limited and Deborah E. Lipstadt, defendants, there are a number of points of contention that touched my own expertise as a scholar of Auschwitz. At the end of my report, I believe that it is indeed possible to reduce the issues at stake to the ten questions asked in the Introduction. Four of which concern the history of Auschwitz:

- (i) Has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that Auschwitz was equipped with homicidal gas chambers, and has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that these gas chambers were systematically used?
- (ii) Has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that Auschwitz functioned between the summer of 1942 and the fall of 1944 as an extermination camp for Jews?
- (iii) Has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that most of the Jews who arrived in Auschwitz were murdered shortly after their arrival in the aforesaid gas chambers?
- (iv) Has it been established beyond reasonable doubt how many Jews were killed in the gas chambers upon arrival in Auschwitz, how many Jews were killed or died from the effect of general deprivation, exhaustion or disease whilst in the camp, and how many others died in the camp as the result of various causes? Six questions concern the plaintiff:
- (v) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny that Auschwitz had homicidal gas chambers and that these gas chambers were systematically used?
- (vi) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny that Auschwitz functioned between the summer of 1942 and the fall of 1944 as an extermination camp for Jews?
- (vii) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny that most of the Jews who arrived in Auschwitz were murdered shortly after their arrival in the aforesaid gas chambers?

(vii) Did David John Cawdell Irving frivolously deny, without having done any serious research in the matter, the results of responsible scholars into the number of people who died in Auschwitz?

(ix) Did David John Cawdell Irving ally himself with well-known Holocaust deniers, including individuals such as Dr Robert Faurisson, and Ernst Zündel?

(x) Is David John Cawdell Irving a Holocaust denier?

I will review these questions one by one:

(i) Has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that Auschwitz was equipped with homicidal gas chambers, and has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that these gas chambers were systematically used?

The answer is yes: the “intentional evidence” given by former inmates and the most important perpetrators is corroborated by the “non-intentional evidence” provided by the documents in the archive of the Auschwitz Central Construction Office, the results of the forensic investigations done in 1945 by Jan Sehn and Roman Dawidowski, and the testing of samples of the walls of the gas chamber of crematorium 1 and the ruins of the gas chambers of crematoria 2, 3, 4 and 5. The attempts by Holocaust deniers such as Rassinier, Faurisson, Butz, Stäglich and Leuchter to discredit the evidence on the basis of hermeneutic analysis of “intentional evidence” and scientific analysis of the “non-intentional evidence” has been shown to be of little or no significance, and do not discredit the overwhelming evidence that converges on the conclusion that Auschwitz was equipped with homicidal gas chambers and that these gas chambers were systematically used.

(ii) Has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that Auschwitz functioned between the summer of 1942 and the fall of 1944 as an extermination camp for Jews?

The answer is yes: the “intentional evidence” given by former inmates and the most important perpetrators is corroborated by the “non-intentional evidence” provided by the records of transports to Auschwitz. The attempts by Holocaust deniers such as Christophersen and

Stäglich to discredit the evidence on the basis of their own eye-witness testimony has been shown to be of no significance, and do not discredit the overwhelming evidence that converges on the conclusion that Auschwitz was a place where Jews were systematically put to death.

(iii) Has it been proven beyond reasonable doubt that most of the Jews who arrived in Auschwitz were murdered shortly after their arrival in the aforesaid gas chambers?

The answer is yes: the “intentional evidence” given by former inmates is corroborated by the “intentional evidence” given by the perpetrators. Deliberate murder was the main cause of death in Auschwitz, and not the effects of general deprivation, exhaustion or disease, or the effects of allied bombing on inmates evacuated as Irving speculated to Dresden in early 1945.

(iv) Has it been established beyond reasonable doubt killed in the gas chambers upon arrival in Auschwitz, how many Jews were killed or died from the effect of incidental cruelty, general deprivation, disease whilst in the camp, and how many others died in the camp as the result of various causes?

The answer is probably: the “intentional evidence” given by Höss is can be largely corroborated by the “non-intentional evidence” provided by the records of the transports to Auschwitz, and demographical studies that study total Jewish mortality of all causes during the Holocaust and subtracts from this number the mortality caused by deprivation in the ghettos, open-air shootings, and killings in the Operation Reinhard camps and other concentration camps. Probably between 800,000 and 900,000 Jews were killed in Auschwitz upon arrival at the camp as part of the state-initiated and state-sponsored “Final Solution of the Jewish Question,” to which must be added another 100,000 Jews who died in the camp from the effect of incidental cruelty, general deprivation, exhaustion or disease. This brings a total of between 900,000 and 1,000,000 Jewish victims of Auschwitz. In addition to which “120,000 other inmates” (or “another 120,000 in-

mates”) died in the camp as the result of German policy or negligence. The largest sub-group of these victims were the Poles (74,000), followed by Romani people (21,000) and Soviet prisoners-of-war (15,000). Holocaust deniers such as Irving have not been able to create a substantial challenge against this assessment of the total mortality of Auschwitz.

Six questions concern the plaintiff, and I will consider them one by one:

(v) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny that Auschwitz had homicidal gas chambers and that these gas chambers were systematically used?

The answer is yes: He has done so at various occasions, for example in the flyer that announced the publication of the Leuchter Report (1989), in his open letter to Hugh Dykes, M. P.(1989), in his lectures in Moers and Toronto (1990), in his presentation at the Tenth International Revisionist Conference (1990), and in his lecture in Milton, Ontario (1991).

(vi) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny that Auschwitz functioned between the summer of 1942 and the fall of 1944 as an extermination camp for Jews?

The answer is yes: he did so explicitly or implicitly at the occasions mentioned above.

(vii) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny that most of the Jews who arrived in Auschwitz were murdered shortly after their arrival in the aforesaid gas chambers?

The answer is yes: whenever he addressed the issue specifically, he preferably sought to blame the responsibility for their deaths on the effects of the allied bombing raids. See the Leuchter Report press conference (1990) and his lecture “The Search for Truth in History Banned” (1993).

(vii) Did David John Cawdell Irving deny, without having done any serious research in the matter, the results of studies into the number of people who died in Auschwitz done by responsible scholars?

The answer is yes: he did so in his presentation at the Tenth International Revisionist Conference (1990) and in his lecture “The Search for Truth in History Banned “ (1993).

(ix) Did David John Cawdell Irving ally himself with well-known Holocaust deniers, including individuals such as Dr Robert Faurisson, and Ernst Zündel, and institutions like the Institute for Historical Review?

The answer is yes: since 1988 Irving has had a business relationship with Ernst Zündel, was in frequent contact with Dr. Robert Faurisson, and essentially adopted the latter’s brand of Holocaust denial when he endorsed and published the Leuchter report.

(x) Was David John Cawdell Irving by the time Deborah Lipstadt’s *Denying the Holocaust* went to press a Holocaust denier?

The answer is yes.

I have been advised by my Instructing Solicitors of my overriding duty to the Court which I understand is paramount in my role as an expert of the Court. I understand that I am to assist the Court in all matters within my expertise regardless of whom my instructions are from and who is paying my fee. I confirm that this report is impartial, objective and unbiased and has been produced independently of the exigencies of this litigation.

I believe that the facts I have stated in this report are true, and that the opinions I have expressed are correct.

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