

# Special Treatment in Auschwitz

Origin and Meaning of a Term

**Carlo Mattogno**



**Theses & Dissertations Press**  
**PO Box 257768, Chicago, Illinois 60625**

**October 2004**

**HOLOCAUST Handbooks Series, Vol. 10:**

Carlo Mattogno:

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

Translated by Regina Belser

Chicago (Illinois): Theses & Dissertations Press,

Imprint of Castle Hill Publishers, October 2004

ISBN: 1-59148-002-7

ISBN: 1-59148-012-4: Auschwitz Studies Set, vol. 1

ISSN: 1529-7748

Original Italian edition:

Carlo Mattogno:

*“Sonderbehandlung” ad Auschwitz. Genesi e significato.*

Edizioni di Ar, Padova, 2000.

© by Carlo Mattogno

Distribution Australia/Asia: Peace Books, PO Box 3300,

Norwood, 5067, Australia

Distribution Rest of World: Castle Hill Publishers

UK: PO Box 118, Hastings TN34 3ZQ

USA: PO Box 257768, Chicago, IL 60625

Set in Times New Roman.

[www.vho.org](http://www.vho.org)

[www.tadp.org](http://www.tadp.org)

# Table of Contents

	Page
<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>PART ONE</b> .....	<b>13</b>
I. Jean-Claude Pressac’s Interpretation.....	13
II. Critical Analysis of Jean-Claude Pressac’s Interpretation .....	15
1. The Explanatory Reports by Bischoff.....	15
2. The Himmler Visit to Auschwitz .....	17
3. The Mystery of the Bunkers of Birkenau.....	25
4. The Four Barracks “ <i>for Special Treatment</i> ” and the Bunkers of Birkenau .....	26
<b>PART TWO</b> .....	<b>29</b>
1. The Beginning of Jewish Transports to Auschwitz.....	29
2. The Origin of “ <i>Special Treatment</i> ” in Auschwitz .....	35
3. “ <i>Special Treatment</i> ” and “ <i>Disinfestation Facility</i> ” .....	38
4. “ <i>Special Treatment</i> ” and Zyklon B: The Typhus Epidemic of Summer 1942 .....	41
5. “ <i>Special Treatment</i> ” and Disinfestation of Jewish Personal Property .....	46
6. “ <i>Special Treatment</i> ” and the New Function of the POW Camp .....	50
7. “ <i>Special Treatment</i> ” of Jews Not Fit for Labor .....	52
8. “ <i>Special Construction Measures</i> ” .....	56
9. “ <i>Barracks for Special Measures</i> ” .....	59
10. “ <i>Special Action</i> ” and the Erection of Sanitary Facilities.....	60
11. “ <i>Special Actions</i> ” and the Construction of Crematorium II .....	62
12. “ <i>Bathing Facilities for Special Actions</i> ” .....	66
13. “ <i>Special Actions</i> ” and the Internment of the Jewish Transports .....	71
14. “ <i>Special Actions</i> ” and the Storage of Jewish Property .....	72
15. The “ <i>Special Actions</i> ” and Dr. Johann Paul Kremer.....	75
16. “ <i>Cremation with Simultaneous Special Treatment</i> ” .....	87
17. The Crematoria of Birkenau: “ <i>Special Facilities</i> ” and “ <i>Special         Basements</i> ” .....	93
18. “ <i>Special Action Hungary</i> ” in 1944.....	96
19. “ <i>Special Action</i> ”: Interrogation by the Gestapo .....	98
20. “ <i>Special Barrack ‘B’</i> ” of Auschwitz.....	99
21. “ <i>Special Units</i> ” of the Crematoria.....	101

<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>107</b>
Abbreviations .....	107
Documents .....	108
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Index of Names.....</b>	<b>145</b>

# Preface

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

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

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

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

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

Moreover, we have at our disposal a great number of important documents, in which the expression ‘special treatment’ (as well as other alleged ‘code

---

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

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

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

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

<sup>5</sup> *International Military Tribunal*, Nuremberg 1947, Vol. 11, pp. 336-339; first mentioned by Arthur R. Butz, *The Hoax of the 20th Century*, Historical Review Press, Brighton 1976, pp. 147–149; cf. the new edition, Theses & Dissertations Press, Chicago, IL, 2003, pp. 145.

words' like 'special measures,'<sup>6</sup> 'special action,'<sup>7</sup> or 'special unit'<sup>8</sup>) exhibit an entire palette of varied meanings, which nonetheless refer to perfectly normal aspects of camp life in Auschwitz and which in no single instance indicate the murder of human beings. These documents are for the most part unknown to researchers, and those already well known have been and are given distorted interpretations by the representatives of the official historiography.

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

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

Carlo Mattogno  
Rome, September 5, 2003

---

<sup>6</sup> German: "Sondermaßnahmen."

<sup>7</sup> German: "Sonderaktion."

<sup>8</sup> German: "Sonderkommando."

# Introduction

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

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

Therefore, in order to deduct a criminal meaning from expressions beginning with ‘special,’ the Polish commission began its ‘decoding’ with the assumption that homicidal gas chambers were located in the crematoria of Birkenau. Later, the official historiography switched to the converse argument: Starting from the premise that a criminal meaning was inherent in these terms, it derived from this the existence of homicidal gas chambers in Auschwitz. In

---

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

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

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

this way, a pseudo-logical circular reasoning came into being, which leads from the gas chambers to the expressions beginning with ‘special,’ and from these expressions back again to the gas chambers, and in which the official historiography has been imprisoned for decades. Needless to say, the term ‘special unit,’ which has constantly been misused to refer to the staff of the crematoria in order to create the impression that criminal activities took place in these facilities, also dovetails with this ‘logic’.<sup>12</sup>

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

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

and he adds that the documentation now available makes possible

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

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

According to official historiography, the beginning of special treatment in Auschwitz coincided with the first ‘selection,’<sup>14</sup> which took place on July 4, 1942. Under this date the *Auschwitz Chronicle* notes:<sup>15</sup>

*“For the first time, the camp administration carries out a selection among the Jews sent to the camp; these are in an RSHA<sup>[16]</sup> transport from Slovakia. During the selection, 264 men from the transport are chosen as able-bodied and admitted to the camp as registered prisoners. They receive Nos. 44727–44990. In addition, 108 women are selected and given Nos. 8389–8496. The rest of the people are taken to the bunker and killed with gas.”*

This interpretation leads to another circular reasoning, since unregistered prisoners can be regarded as ‘gassed’ only if one assumes *a priori* the exist-

---

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

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Claude Pressac, *Die Krematorien von Auschwitz. Die Technik des Massenmordes*, Piper, Munich 1994, p. 2. For a critique of Pressac, cf. H. Verbeke (ed.), *Auschwitz: Nackte Fakten*, Vrij Historisch Onderzoek, Berchem 1995.

<sup>14</sup> The term then used by Germans was *aussortieren* (sorting out), not *selektieren*. Editor’s comment.

<sup>15</sup> Danuta Czech, *Auschwitz Chronicle, 1939-1945*, H. Holt, New York 1990, pp. 191f.

<sup>16</sup> *Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA = Reich Security Main Office.



tence of extermination facilities in the Bunkers of Birkenau, based upon simple eyewitness statements.

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

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

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

Despite these serious weaknesses, Pressac was the most renowned representative of the official historiography concerning Auschwitz;<sup>17</sup> for this reason it seemed appropriate to take his conclusions as a starting point for my investigation.

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

Since the analysis I proposed is of a documentary nature, the problem of the prisoners deported to Auschwitz, but not registered there, will merely be treated in passing, for the documentation on this is extremely sparse. Consequently, here I must be satisfied with refuting certain common allegations.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Pressac died on July 23, 2003, at the age of 59. The new star in the firmament of official historiography is Robert Jan van Pelt, author of a 438-page report largely dedicated to the Auschwitz camp (*The Pelt Report*), which was presented at the defamation action brought (and lost) by David Irving against the publishing house of Penguin Books and Deborah Lipstadt. In his argumentation on Auschwitz, van Pelt has slavishly followed Pressac, who is clearly by far superior with regard to a critical spirit and a sense of restraint.

A revised version of van Pelt’s expert opinion was published as a book: Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz. Evidence from the Irving Trial*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington/Indianapolis 2002. Cf. Robert H. Countess, “*Van Pelt’s Plea against Sound Reasoning*,” *The Revisionist* 1(1) (2003), pp. 99-104.

<sup>18</sup> Likewise, a systematic treatment of all registered prisoners who were subjected to a “special treatment” would amount to an extensive analysis of the current claims of gassing as well as of the fates of various groups of prisoners, which would exceed the bounds of this investiga-

After all, the documents cited in Chapters 1 and 7 of Part Two incontestably prove that in August and September of 1942 the Jews deported to Auschwitz were shipped farther to the east and that one of their destinations was a camp in Russia.

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

The references to cremation in Auschwitz come from my work *I forni crematori di Auschwitz. Studio storico-tecnico con la collaborazione del dott. Ing. Franco Deana* (The crematoria furnaces of Auschwitz. Historical and technical Study in collaboration with Dr. Eng. Franco Deana),<sup>19</sup> to which I direct the reader interested in a more detailed treatment.

---

tion. I have published several such analyses elsewhere: Carlo Mattogno, "Die Deportation ungarischer Juden von Mai bis Juli 1944," *Vierteljahreshefte für freie Geschichtsforschung*, 5(4) (2001), pp. 381-395 (soon to be published in English in *The Revisionist*); "The 'Gassing' of Gypsies in Auschwitz on August 2, 1944," *The Revisionist*, 1(3) (2003), pp. 330-332; "Das Ghetto von Lodz in der Holocaust-Propaganda," *Vierteljahreshefte für freie Geschichtsforschung*, 7(1) (2003), pp. 30-36 (soon to be published in English in *The Revisionist*). A further article dealing with the Jews deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz is in progress and will soon be published in *The Revisionist*. In addition, a comprehensive study on this subject is in preparation.

<sup>19</sup> In print, Edizioni di Ar, Padua. An English translation of this mammoth work will be available from Theses & Dissertations Press, PO Box 257768, Chicago, IL 60625.