

**The Central
Construction Office
of the
Waffen-SS and Police
Auschwitz**

Organization,
Responsibilities,
Activities

Carlo Mattogno



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Cover: top left: Interior view of a room of the office building of the Central Construction Office in Auschwitz (APMO, neg. 20995/138); top right: some of the staff of the CCO (APMO, neg. 422); bottom: Organigram of the CCO, see doc. 3 in this book.

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Preface

After opening the Moscow archives to historians, the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police Auschwitz – *Zentralbauleitung der Waffen-SS und Polizei Auschwitz* – began to attract the attention of scholars, thanks above all to Jean-Claude Pressac.¹

The Central Construction Office is commonly mentioned by historians and journalists, but we still know practically nothing about this extremely important agency, which was responsible for the planning and construction of the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex. Apart from the scanty information supplied by French historians,² very little is known. The importance of a specific study on the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police Auschwitz lies not only in the clarification of an aspect of the history of the camp, which is still wrapped in obscurity for the most part, but also in understanding the know-how of the organization and of the tasks of the Central Construction Office of Auschwitz. This enables a more profound understanding of documents. This in turn provides protection against facile interpretive errors of such documents, a frequent occurrence among Auschwitz historians.

This study is based primarily on unpublished Moscow documents. It constitutes the first attempt to reconstruct the history of the Central Construction Office of Auschwitz. Although it is far from perfect, due precisely to its pioneering nature, it does delineate the structure, tasks, and essential activities of this office in an organic manner.

* * *

On January 27, 1945, Soviet soldiers of the 60th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front entered Auschwitz. The various commissions of inquiry, which carried on their activities in February and March of 1945, confiscated an enormous quantity of documents abandoned by the SS. Among the documents was also the archive of the Central Construction Office. The greater part of these documents were then taken to Moscow, while the remainder was left at

¹ Jean-Claude Pressac, *Les Crématoires d'Auschwitz: La machinerie de la meurtre de masse*. CNSR Editions, Paris 1993.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 132-135; more recent works on Auschwitz published after that of J.-C. Pressac are even shorter on information on this topic, including the most important ones: Franciszek Piper, *Arbeitseinsatz der Häftlinge aus dem KL Auschwitz*, Verlag Staatliches Museum in Oswiecim, 1995; Robert Jan van Pelt, Debórah Dwork, *Auschwitz 1270 to the present*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1996; Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz. Evidence from the Irving Trial*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis 2002. Even the *opus magnum* in five volumes of the Museum of Auschwitz deals with the whole matter in little more than five pages: Aleksander Lasik, "Die Organisationsstruktur des KL Auschwitz," in: Waclaw Długoborski, Franciszek Piper (eds.), *Studien zur Geschichte des Konzentrations- und Vernichtungslagers Auschwitz*, Verlag des Staatlichen Museums Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oświęcim 1999, vol. I, pp. 300-305.

Auschwitz at the disposition of the Polish examining magistrate, Jan Sehn, who began his activities in April 1945.

The archive of the Central Construction Office is conserved at Moscow in the *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennii Vojennii Archiv* (Russian State War Museum, formerly known as the *Tsentr Chranenija Istoriko-documental'nych Kollektcii* (Center for the Conservation of the Historical-Documentary Collection) on Viborgskaja Street. The catalogue system is organized by the following: *fond* (fund), *opis* (list), and *delo*³ (file). A *fond* consists of several *opisi*, one *opis* of several *dela*. The documents of the Central Construction Office form part of the 502 *fond* containing 4 *opisi*, indicated by the Arabic numbers 1, 2, 4 and 5; *opis* 1 contains 452 *dela*, consecutively numbered from 1 to 450 (2 files are double: 23a and 59a) and approximately 62,800 pages of documents; *opis* 2 contains 164 *dela* consecutively numbered from 1 to 154 (10 files are double or triple or quadruple: 1a, 1be, 1ve; 34a; 60a, 60be, 60ve, 60ghe; 84a and 124a) and consists of approximately 22,800 pages of documents; *opis* 4, which contained the original Auschwitz death books (*Sterbebücher*), then ceded to the State Museum of Oswiecim-Brzezinka (Auschwitz), presently consists of 52 *dela* progressively numbered from 1 to 52, containing approximately 67,500 pages, of which nearly 300 pages are documents of the Central Construction Office, while the rest are photocopies of the death books; *opis* 5 contains 23 *dela*, progressively numbered from 1 to 23, and consists of approximately 2,300 pages. In total, the archive on Viborskaja Street contains approximately 88,200 pages of documents from the Central Construction Office. For every *opis*, there is a search register in which the individual *dela* are catalogued with a brief description of the content, the number of the pages of the file, and possibly the year to which the documents contained in it refer. The *opisi* do not have a precise logical order and contain *dela* on various topics; the *dela*, in the register of the *opis*, are by contrast grouped by topic (for example, invoices, electrotechnical installations, sewer pipes, administration, offices, disinfestation and disinfection, etc.); this system of cataloguing nevertheless only reflects to a small degree the archiving organization of the Central Construction Office. Many documents exhibit a double numbering: that older one probably corresponds to the first cataloguing done by the Soviets, the present one, existing in the registers of the *opisi*, dates back to the 1950s.

In the quotations contained in this study I have indicated the Moscow archives with the abbreviation RGVA, consisting of the initials of its name, therefore, the *fond*, then the *opis*, and finally the *delo* and the number, with which the document is catalogued there (including the rare cases, in which this number is not legible on the photocopies in my possession), for example, RGVA, 502-1-11, pp. 55-57. Many documents are also written on the reverse of the sheet. This bears the same cataloguing number as the front page, but is identified by the letters “ob” (= *obratnaja storona*: rear part). I have by con-

³ The pronunciation is approximately “*dyela*”.

trast indicated it with the letter “a”. For greater clarity I have also mentioned the type of document and its heading.

Carlo Mattogno