

A New Book Is Said to Refute Revisionist View of Holocaust

By RICHARD BERNSTEIN

A 563-page study of the Nazi gas chambers has been published in a limited edition in the United States by Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, the French Holocaust researchers and Nazi hunters. They say the volume provides a new kind of definitive scholarly documentation of the murder of millions of Jews and others during World War II.

The study is by Jean-Claude Pressac, a pharmacist who began his work doubting that the Holocaust even took place. In his research, involving some 13 visits to the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp over nearly a decade, Mr. Pressac found what he presents as proof, based entirely on technical analyses of the camp, that the Holocaust was every bit as monstrous and sweeping as survivors have said.

The book, which was written in French, has been printed in an English edition by the Klarsfelds' foundation in part to counter efforts by revisionist figures both in this country and in France to propagate the notion that the Holocaust did not take place and that the gas chambers did not exist. The revisionists, who include a former history professor at the University of Lyons, Robert Faurisson, have rejected the accumulation of eyewitness testimony about the Holocaust.

The Revisionist View

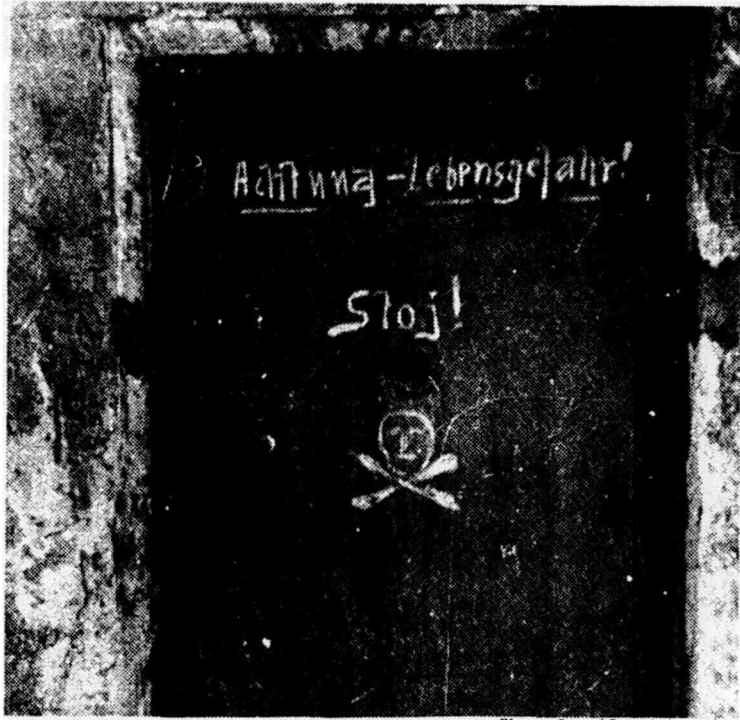
The revisionist idea, based on supposedly scientific analyses of such installations as Auschwitz and propagated through newsletters, books and conferences, is that the Holocaust is a hoax invented by Jews to win sympathy for Israel and Jews elsewhere in the world.

While the notion that the Holocaust did not take place is an extreme minority view motivated, many feel, by classic anti-Semitism, Jewish groups here and abroad worry that as the remaining survivors of the death camps pass from the scene, the revisionist concept could eventually seep into mainstream opinion.

Mr. Pressac undertook research at the archives at the death camp of Auschwitz with the intention of substantiating the thesis that, in fact, the gas chambers never existed. Instead, after what he maintains was the most exhaustive study of the technical aspects of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp ever done, he says he has proved not only that the gas chambers existed, but also that their specifications enabled them to do exactly what the Holocaust eyewitnesses said they did: murder over a million people at the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp alone in a highly efficient operation that left few material traces.

And so the publication of Mr. Pressac's "Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers" is not only an unusual addition to the Holocaust literature; it is also a personal story of scientific discovery during which, as Mr. Pressac writes in a postscript, he was converted from "revisionist" to "exterminationist."

"Pressac is the first to try to assemble all the written information,



Warsaw Central Commission Archive

A photograph of a gas chamber door from the book "Auschwitz: Technique and Operation of the Gas Chambers." A warning written on the door after the camp's liberation reads "Attention! Danger! No entry!"

the technical plans and specifications and to base his proof on that, so it's complementary to the other proof," said Mr. Klarsfeld, who came to New York recently to discuss the book. The other evidence referred to by Mr. Klarsfeld is the huge mass of eyewitness testimony that exists on the Holocaust.

Although the new book, an oversize volume, is the work of Mr. Pressac, a foundation created by the Klarsfelds has printed about 1,000 copies of the English edition, about one-third of which have been sent without charge

Technical analyses of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp offer evidence.

to libraries, research institutes and Jewish organizations around the world. Information about purchasing copies can be obtained by writing to the Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, 515 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y., 10022.

The volume produced by Mr. Pressac includes hundreds of architectural drawings of the huge labor camp, which was built in stages by the Nazis at Auschwitz-Birkenau, one of several camps used by the Nazis to exterminate Jews, gypsies, Poles and others. The drawings selected for the book by Mr. Pressac were done by the German architects and contractors who were involved in building the camp.

Mr. Pressac presents, in generally dry, unemotional language — except for occasional criticisms of the revisionists — a mountain of technical

data, photographs, printed specifications for poison gas, crematory manufacturers' instructions, construction crew work slips and numerous pieces of correspondence from Nazi archives tracing the various stages in the Auschwitz-Birkenau construction.

In the postscript to his book, Mr. Pressac states some of the reasons for his early doubts that a Holocaust machinery existed. He says, for example, that on an early visit to the Auschwitz archives he looked at drawings of two large, rectangular rooms that traditional historians have long said were, respectively, an undressing room and a gas chamber where hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed.

Mr. Pressac said that on first visiting the actual site of the gas chamber — officially labeled a Leichenkeller or corpse cellar in the German documents — he found various air ducts and drainage pipes. These, he felt, would have made it impossible to use these rooms to gas people because the poison would have seeped into the numerous rooms of the rest of the building, killing everybody, including the Nazi guards.

Blocked Passage

Another problem, he writes, was that the passage between the two rooms was partly blocked by a chute large enough to accommodate corpses, so it seemed impossible that the claimed 5,000 victims a day could have passed from one to the other. The instruction manual on the Zyklon-B gas that was used, moreover, indicates that 20 hours needed to pass before it was safe to enter a room in which the gas had been used. This struck Mr. Pressac as meaning that it would have been impossible for the extermination rooms to have been emptied of corpses and refilled with

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new victims every half hour or so, as would have been necessary for such a large number of victims.

These questions have enabled the revisionists to contend that the gas chambers were actually used to disinfect prisoners' clothing but not to kill people. The rooms in question, they have argued, were simply morgues, not gas chambers, and the crematories in the rooms above them were

there to handle the normal deaths that occurred in the camp, much of which was originally built to house Russian prisoners of war.

Mr. Pressac concludes in his study that there were indeed a large number of rooms at Auschwitz used to disinfect clothes and other possessions, not for murder.

Mr. Pressac traces a detailed history of the two installations at Auschwitz where a majority of the killings of Jews took place — about 750,000, or about three-quarters of the total number at the Auschwitz camp. He argues that the gas chambers were, in fact, originally built as ordinary morgues for what started out as a prison labor camp. In 1942, however, when the decision was made to exterminate the Jews, the rooms were converted into what he calls "homicidal gas chambers" and used as such for much of 1943 and 1944.

Mr. Pressac, for example, traces the conversion of the two morgue rooms in the basement of what he calls Krematorium II, using the German term, into an undressing room and a "homicidal gas chamber." The drainage and ventilation systems that appear on some early drawings were sealed off from the rest of the buildings. A wall was built shielding the chute so passage between the undressing room and the extermination chamber was unobstructed. Gas-tight doors were installed replacing double doors that the revisionists, studying other, earlier drawings, contend would not have been installed on a gas chamber.

20 Minutes to Clear Gas

Mr. Pressac also studied the ventilation systems in the drawings for the modification of the "morgues." They show, he says, that it would be possible to evacuate the gas in about 20 minutes, allowing the room to be cleared, the corpses to be sent upstairs on an elevator and another group of victims to be brought from the undressing room into the gas chamber.

The importance of this research, Mr. Pressac writes, is that it proves on the basis of German documents alone that the Holocaust did take place.