

## PRAVDA



Translated and annotated by  
**"Samuel Crowell"**  
(nom-de-plume),  
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In 1979 **Robert Faurisson** found a brief reference to this *Pravda* article in New York's *Daily News*, February 2, 1945, while researching post-war war crimes prosecutor files. In *Pravda* files, Faurisson found two articles, dated February 1 and 2, 1945. [See Udo Walendy, *Historische Tatsachen*, No. 34, October 1987; and Faurisson in *IHR Journal*, June-August 1997.]

On **February 2, 1945** *Pravda*, organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, published an article briefly describing what Red Army troops had found on overrunning the Nazi slave labour camp at **Auschwitz**. The article, the first public revelation of the site's existence, is surprising for what it does *not* mention.

### Introduction

THE ARGUMENT between revisionists and non-revisionists is that the record of Nazi atrocities, though no doubt based in fact, contains significant amounts of fiction. Whether fact or fiction, any atrocity claim should be placed in its proper historical context so that the researcher can understand either how the facts came to be known or how the fiction evolved in the popular mind.

The first press reporting on the **Auschwitz-Birkenau camp** is therefore bound to be of interest to historians, regardless of how they regard the Auschwitz claims. The following article, by **Boris Polevoi**, was originally published on Friday, February 2, 1945, in the Soviet national paper *Pravda*, less than a week after the camp had been liberated (January 27, 1945), and a full three months before the official Soviet report on Auschwitz (May 6, 1945), known by the Exhibit-Number assigned to it at the International Military Tribunal (IMT) as **USSR-08**.

What is most striking about this press report is that it is totally at variance with the version of Auschwitz that we have come to know, substituting the traditional atrocity record with another, completely imaginary one. That the first non-anonymous observer at the Auschwitz camp could be so far from the current narrative speaks not only to the inaccuracy of this initial report, but also to the artifice of all subsequent ones.

## THE FACTORY OF DEATH AT AUSCHWITZ<sup>[1]</sup>

**I**T 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. What is noted here are only the outlines coming from a first glance acquaintanceship with the site of the monstrous outrages of the Hitlerite

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 leveled the mounds of the so-called "old" <sup>[3]</sup> graves in the Eastern <sup>[4]</sup> 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 <sup>[5]</sup> where they fell in, were completely burned, their bones converted to meal in the rolling mills, and then sent to the surrounding fields. In

hangmen.

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." [2] 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.

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 labor, they were assigned the task 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.

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

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 [6]: 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 submachine 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."

But for the prisoners of Auschwitz death itself was not the most terrible thing. The German sadists, before killing their confinees, tormented them with hunger, cold, 18 hour days, and monstrous punishments. They showed me leather-covered steel rods that they used to beat the confinees. On the handle -- the mark of the Krupp factory in Dresden. These articles were produced on an industrial scale. I saw, in facilities in the southern part of the camp, benches with straps on which people were beaten to death. They were covered with zinc so the blood of the victims could be washed off: the hangmen had a care for hygiene! I saw a specially constructed oaken chair, in which people were killed, after having had their backs broken. I saw massive rubber truncheons, all bearing the stamp of the Krupp factory, with which the confinees were beaten about the head and genitals.

I saw thousands of martyrs at Auschwitz -- people, so worn out that they swayed like shadows in the wind, people, whose age it was impossible to determine.

The Red Army saved them, and pulled them from hell. They honor the Red Army as the avengers for Auschwitz, for Majdanek, and for all the pain and suffering which the fascist hangmen have brought to the people of Europe.

**B. Polevoi**  
*at Auschwitz (by wire)*

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.

### General Comments:

As noted above, Polevoi's narrative has nothing in common with the Soviet Special Commission report on Auschwitz, issued three months later on May 6, 1945. That report, in turn, would show the influence of the War Refugee Board (WRB) Report of November 26, 1945, issued in Washington, D.C. An obvious inference is that the Soviet Auschwitz narrative was revised subsequent to this report to make it harmonize with the various anonymous messages which comprised the WRB report. Nevertheless, Polevoi's report shows other influences and connections.

1. The concept of the "factory of death" is today well-known in the Holocaust literature, but appears to have its beginnings here. That concept in turn seems clearly linked to Russian, Soviet, and Western symbolism rejecting the industrial factory system, cf. the short stories of Anton Chekhov or various writings of Maxim Gorky.
  2. The somewhat fantastic concept of fertilizing the ground with the ash of crematees was a common notion, compare Huxley's *Brave New World*, and usually went hand in hand with a rejection of cremation as a means of disposal of the dead, a means which was gradually re-emerging at this time. In World War Two propaganda, it seems to have been mentioned first by the Soviets in connection with the liberation of Majdanek in August, 1944.
  3. The concept of the Germans "wiping out the traces of their crimes" goes back, paradoxically, to the Katyn Forest revelations of 1943, when the Germans exhumed the bodies of 4,400 Polish officers slain there by the NKVD. At the time the Soviets claimed that the Germans had dug up the remains of the Polish officers, taken them to Katyn, gone through their pockets, planted documents, reburied them, planted trees over them, and then dug them up again, all in order to embarrass the Soviet Union. (A Soviet Special Commission report attesting to these claims was later submitted "as a fact of common knowledge" at the International Military Tribunal.)
- Having thus established the principle of the Germans' crafty plotting, the Soviets would then apply the same thinking to many other cases in order to explain, not the presence of forensic remains, but rather their absence: at Krasnodar (July, 1943), Kharkov (September, 1943), Babi Yar (November, 1943), and Majdanek (August, 1944).
4. It need hardly be mentioned that the "electric conveyor belt" has no place in any subsequent Auschwitz narratives, but, at the time, it was commonly believed that the Germans had massacred millions of people in large electric chambers at Belzec and elsewhere.
  5. The "blast furnace" into which the people would fall and be burned does not appear in any previous propaganda, to our knowledge. However, it is mentioned in one version of the "Gerstein Statement", composed by a former SS hygienist (and thus Zyklon B handler) three months later, at the end of April and beginning of May, 1945. The "blast furnace" trope in turn probably looks back to such anti-industrial metaphors as the "Moloch" scene in Fritz Lang's silent film classic, *Metropolis* (1925).
  6. The "special transportable apparatuses for killing children" are probably references to gas vans, their special utilization for that purpose first attested at the Krasnodar-Kharkov trials in 1943. While the documentary evidence for these vans seems relatively decent, no one has ever located one; Gerald Fleming (Gerhard Flehinger), in his *Hitler and the Final Solution*, reproduces a photo of a van alleged to be a gas van in the hands of a post-war Polish commission, the present location of the vehicle is unknown. Their usage is not attested at Auschwitz today.
  7. The "stationary gas chambers" is apparently a reference to either the delousing stations BW 5/A and 5/B at Birkenau, or else Crematoria IV and V. If the latter, the ornamental turrets might be a reference to the *gasdichte Türme* (probably chimneys with gas-attack protection features) with which those crematoria were known to be equipped. But if the reference is to Crematoria IV and V, that contradicts current lore, which holds that the Germans destroyed the

crematoria before retreating in order to "wipe out the traces of their crimes."

8. The reference to the "gas chambers" as "garages" ("*garazhi*") was a characterization first made of the "gas chambers" at Majdanek, which were actually delousing chambers equipped with air-raid shelter doors to give them an additional civil defense and decontamination function. The "garage" characterization would also resurface in the "Gerstein Statement", noted above.

9. While there are no doubt significant remains located in the Auschwitz area, no mass graves of the type described in the text have ever been located.

## Footnotes:

NOTE: Throughout I have used the same word for terms, thus *palacha* is always "hangmen", *zlodeyanie* is always "outrage" (the more typical term for "crime" being *prestuplenie*), "prisoner" for *uznik*, but "confinee" for *zakliuchennyi*, and so forth, with one exception. The word *kombinat* in the title is translated as "factory" although the sense of the word is of an industrial plant, and it is in the latter sense that it is translated throughout the rest of the article.--Translator

1. *Kombinat smerti v Osventsime*, *Pravda*, February 2, 1945, page 4. The Polish Historical Society is credited with re-discovering this article. [\[RETURN\]](#)

2. *kaminakh*, lit.: "fireplaces", the quotation marks are in the original whenever this word is used. [\[RETURN\]](#)

3. *starykh*, lit.: "old", the quotation marks are in the original. [\[RETURN\]](#)

4. *vostochnyi*, and throughout Polevoi designates "East", although strictly speaking there was no Eastern extremity of the camp, Birkenau lay to the North-West of the Auschwitz *Stammlager* and the crematoria were at the western extremity of that camp. [\[RETURN\]](#)

5. *shakhtnyi pech*, lit.: "shaft oven", possibly cognate to the German *Schachtoven*, not precisely a blast furnace but still a top-loading furnace in the metallurgical industry. [\[RETURN\]](#)

6. Here we have allowed ourselves some liberties with Polevoi's use of words in order to better convey his sense. *Kustarnichali*, the verb, from *kustar*, "handicraftsman", has connotations of desultory muddling in Russian, but is more typically encountered in the term *kustarnyi promyshlennost*, that is, "cottage industry"; such home manufacture, notorious for its irregularity, being the principal means whereby the Russian peasant supplemented his income. Since Polevoi clearly wishes to contrast this inefficient labor with the factory concept, we have rendered the more frequent usage. [\[RETURN\]](#)

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