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The Chemical & Toxicological Impossibility Of The Auschwitz Gas Chamber Legend

Commentary
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3-3-6

Preliminary note: This essay is dedicated to Holocaust revisionist scholar Dr. Robert Faurisson. He was the first to point out the chemical and toxicological impossibility of these Auschwitz gas chamber stories.

Section one

In early 2005, Holocaust historian Deborah Lipstadt published her widely admired *History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving*.¹ The book is her version of events surrounding the high-profile, 2000 libel trial in which British historian David Irving sued Lipstadt for labeling him a "Holocaust denier." During the duration of the trial, the media spotlight fell upon the ongoing battle between revisionist and traditional views of the Jewish tragedy during W.W.II. In her publication, she put forth in laymen's terms that everyone could understand, straightforward reasons as to why one should reject Holocaust revisionist theories and accept the existence of the homicidal Auschwitz gas chambers.

In Part I of this two part series, we rebutted a portion of Lipstadt's critique of Fred Leuchter, the American gas chamber expert who carried out the first ever forensic study of the alleged Auschwitz gas chambers. We saw that, although Leuchter's pioneering report had its shortcomings, its findings were essentially corroborated by the more thorough and exacting scientific study of the former Max Planck Institute chemistry doctoral candidate, Germar Rudolf.

Both reports found only minuscule traces of hydrogen cyanide gas (HCN) residue in samples taken from the walls and floors of the alleged homicidal Auschwitz gas chambers. Yet, very large amounts of HCN residue were found in samples taken from the non-homicidal disinfestation chambers, where HCN was used only to delouse mattresses, clothing and other belongings. If the structures in question were actually used as homicidal gas chambers, one would expect to find a considerable HCN residue buildup, somewhat comparable to that found in the non-homicidal disinfestation chambers. In both reports the conclusions are the same. The alleged homicidal gas chambers never existed.

Here in Part II, we will examine the technique and operation of the alleged Auschwitz gas chambers as put forth by Professor Lipstadt and one of her main expert witnesses, Dr. Robert Jan van Pelt, and then ask the questions: "Is this scientifically possible? Did the gas chambers ever exist?"

Section II

In her attempt to prove that the Auschwitz gas chambers existed, Lipstadt critiques the report of Holocaust revisionist and gas chamber expert Leuchter. "Had Irving done some research," she writes, "he might have discovered Leuchter's mistaken assumption that it took 3,200 parts of HCN per million to kill humans, when in fact it took far less. On the basis of this wrong calculation, Leuchter had contended that the residue from such a large amount of gas [would have necessitated that] the Sonderkommandos--the inmates who removed the bodies--would have had to wait twenty-four hours before entering the chambers."²

In order to give the reader the appropriate perspective, let us recreate Lipstadt's scenario. The intended victims (one to two thousand) were jammed into the gas chamber. The deadly hydrogen cyanide was circulated throughout the chamber, and the victims were murdered. The ventilation systems removed the residual HCN. Now it was time for the inmates to go into the chamber and remove the bodies for cremation. She asserts that it was wrong for Leuchter to claim that the Sonderkommandos would have had to wait twenty-four hours before entering the chamber. This claim and others were wrong, Lipstadt insists, "because it actually took only 10 percent of what Leuchter had assumed was necessary to kill humans." She claims this is Leuchter's fundamental mistake--"the assumption that it took far more gas to kill humans than to kill vermin, when, in fact, the reverse was true."³

Simply put, much more gas was used in a non-homicidal disinfestation than in a homicidal gassing.⁴

The assertions of the late Jean-Claude Pressac--a widely respected expert

on the Auschwitz gas chambers whose work attempted to refute the Holocaust revisionists--undermines Lipstadt. Pressac claimed that 12 to 20 grams per cubic meter is the concentration of the HCN allegedly used in a homicidal gassing, while 2 to 5 grams per cubic meter was the concentration used in a non-homicidal disinfestation/delousing.⁵ Contradicting Lipstadt, Pressac is claiming that a greater gas concentration would have been used to kill humans than that needed to kill vermin in a delousing. Once again, Pressac's claim contradicts Lipstadt, which suggests that she and her fellow promoters of the Holocaust ideology change their story according to the propaganda needs of the moment.

Enter Dr. Robert Jan van Pelt, a professor of architecture at the University of Waterloo, Canada. He is widely considered to be the foremost expert on the technique and operation of the alleged Auschwitz gas chambers. In connection with the defense of Professor Lipstadt at the Irving-Lipstadt libel trial in London from January to April 2000, van Pelt testified as an expert witness on these alleged instruments of mass murder. It is readily apparent that Lipstadt relies heavily on the work of van Pelt in her attempt to prove the existence of the Auschwitz gas chambers. So, any critique of Lipstadt's theories must also be a critique of van Pelt.

In his magnum opus, van Pelt makes three important claims in regard to the technique and operation of the homicidal gas chambers. First, most of the deadly hydrogen cyanide gas released into the chamber was absorbed by the victims' bodies.

Contradicting Holocaust revisionist claims, he insists that the ventilation systems of the gas chambers were efficient enough to remove virtually all of the remaining HCN after a mass gassing so that the Sonderkommandos could enter the chambers within a very short time after the death of all of the victims in order to do their work. In van Pelt's own words: "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 [needed to ventilate the gas chambers so the Sonderkommandos could safely enter them to remove the bodies] could be reduced to twenty minutes."⁶

Finally, he claims that David Olere, a French-Jewish deportee to Auschwitz in 1943, is one of the most important eyewitnesses to the operation of the gas chambers. In his own words, the sketches of Olere "provide a very important visual record of the design and operation of the gas chamber and incinerators of Crematorium 3"⁷ Indeed, throughout his entire study he attempts to demonstrate that Olere is a credible eyewitness by showing how his sketches are consistent with physical evidence.

Jean-Claude Pressac also claimed that the drawings of Olere that will be

examined in this article are an important visual record of the operation of the homicidal gas chambers.⁸ And last but not least, Deborah Lipstadt attempts to convince her readership that Olere is a credible eyewitness by showing how his claims are consistent with the physical evidence. In this regard, she refers to the "drawings by Sonderkommando David Olere, who, upon liberation sketched the gas chambers.

The sketches, Robert Jan [van Pelt] noted, were fully corroborated by the architectural plans in the Auschwitz Central Construction Office and the aerial photos."⁹

Thus, Lipstadt, Pressac and van Pelt claim that Olere is perhaps the most important eyewitness to the alleged mass gassings, and his sketches, paintings and drawings provide the world with an accurate description of the technique and operation of the Auschwitz gas chambers. But is this so? Professor van Pelt's omission and inclusion suggest otherwise.

Let us begin with van Pelt's omission. In his book van Pelt published some of Olere's more important sketches regarding the structure and operation of the alleged gas chambers, but failed to include one of his most important drawings. It is the painting showing the Sonderkommmandos opening the gas chamber door and pulling the bodies out after a mass gassing. In the painting, the inmates are shirtless, and they are not wearing any gas masks, rubber gloves or protective suits. Before proceeding, the reader is strongly urged to view and study the sketch in question. It is online at the address in this footnote. Scroll down to "Document 30."¹⁰

Pressac includes this painting in his book because it allegedly is an important visual record of the operation of the gas chambers. In regard to this matter, he wrote: "The fragment of furnace shown on the left, beyond the two arrows, is purely symbolic (there was no furnace in the basement) and spoils a scene which would have been irreproachable without this addition 'to make it better.'" Pressac is clearly saying that this sketch is an accurate picture of what happened, even though it does contain one purely symbolic item.¹¹

This is a strange omission on the part of van Pelt. That is to say, he writes a book about the operation of the gas chambers, yet omits to include a sketch of "how-it-really-happened." For here we have an alleged sketch of "how-it-really-was" after a mass gassing, when the Sonderkommandos--under the watch and supervision of Nazi guards--opened the door of the gas chamber to remove the victims

Perhaps one reason that van Pelt failed to include this most important sketch is because he may have realized it could not have happened the way Olere claimed it did. Herewith.

Authoritative industrial sources confirm the extreme danger surrounding the use of HCN. Poisoning can easily occur by inhalation or skin absorption.¹²

Leuchter spoke of the dangers surrounding the handling of just one (!) victim that was poisoned by HCN in a gas chamber: "You go in. The inmate has to be completely washed down with chlorine bleach or with ammonia. The poison exudes right out through his skin. And if you gave the body to an undertaker, you'd kill the undertaker. You've got to go in; you've got to completely wash the body."¹³

Bill Armontrout, expert witness at the second Ernst Zundel trial in Toronto and warden of the Missouri State Penitentiary, which includes an execution gas chamber, confirms the danger: "One of the things that cyanide gas does, it goes in the pores of your skin. You hose the body down, see. You have to use rubber gloves, and you hose the body down to decontaminate it before you do anything [else]."¹⁴

In his capacity as warden, Armontrout was personally responsible for carrying out executions by the use of cyanide gas, and he was accepted as an expert witness in a court that was hostile to Holocaust revisionism.¹⁵

Armontrout revealed to the Toronto court the safety precautions necessary to prevent those who handled the dead criminal's body from being poisoned by the deadly HCN themselves: "The ventilation fan ran for approximately one hour before two officers equipped with Scott air-packs (self-contained breathing apparatus which firemen use to enter smoke-filled buildings) opened the hatch of the gas chamber and removed the lead bucket containing the cyanide residue. The two officers wore rubberized disposable clothing and long rubber gloves. They hosed down the condemned man's body in the chair, paying particular attention to the hair and the clothing because of the cyanide residue, then removed him and placed him on a gurney where further decontamination took place."¹⁶

Real life tragic incidents corroborate Leuchter's and Armontrout's claims.

Twenty-three year-old Scott Dominguez descended into a tank that once held hydrogen cyanide, and later phosphoric acid, in order to clean it. When this unfortunate worker began chipping away at the chemical film and hosing it down with water, hydrogen cyanide gas was produced.

Just like the workers in Olere's drawings who supposedly removed the corpses from the Auschwitz gas chambers or the hair and gold from the teeth of gassed victims, Mr. Dominguez was not working with any safety equipment--no gas mask or protective suit. He was overcome by the HCN and had to be carried away by emergency firefighters. This hapless man

suffers from permanent brain damage because of his exposure to HCN.¹⁷

Another tragic incident involving firemen during a rescue operation further supports Leuchter's and Armontrout's assertions. In June 1995, there was a dramatic accident in a cave in the French city of Monterolier. Three children lit a fire in a cave, and threw an unexploded bomb they found from W.W.I that contained hydrogen cyanide gas into the fire. The bomb exploded and released the deadly HCN. It killed the children and also four firemen that came to the rescue. According to a Professor of Physical Chemistry, Louis Soulie, the deaths of the children and firemen, and even the fireman who was wearing a gas mask, were due to the fact that hydrogen cyanide dissolves in the sweat and penetrates the body through the skin, where it causes poisoning.¹⁸

Let us repeat: One French fireman was wearing a gas mask, but he perished because the HCN dissolved in his sweat and penetrated his body. Even six days after their deaths, a cyanide concentration twice as high as the lethal dose was detected in the blood of the corpses.¹⁹

Finally, there is the incident of suicide by cyanide poisoning that took place at Grinnell College, Iowa. A student committed suicide by swallowing so much potassium cyanide that the fumes from his body sickened nine people, all of whom had to be taken to a hospital. The potassium cyanide reacted with the water in his body to produce cyanide gas. The fumes that emitted from his body were so disturbing, that the residence hall where the tragic incident took place, and the hospital where the student's body was taken, had to be aired out.²⁰ Keep in mind these are fumes that exuded from just one body. Imagine the fumes exuding from one to two thousand bodies that were allegedly poisoned by HCN in the Auschwitz gas chambers!

In order to give the reader the appropriate perspective, let us recreate van Pelt's alleged scenario. The intended victims (one to two thousand) were jammed into the gas chamber. The deadly hydrogen cyanide was circulated throughout the chamber, and the victims were murdered. The victims' bodies absorbed the vast majority of the deadly gas-it is in the skin, in the hair, pores and lungs of the victims. The ventilation systems quickly removed the residual HCN. Now it was time for the inmates to go into the chamber and remove the dead bodies for cremation.

Once again, let us give van Pelt the benefit of the doubt-the victims' bodies absorbed the vast majority of the deadly HCN gas. Here we have over one thousand dead bodies being saturated with deadly HCN-it is in the victims' hair, noses, mouths, on their skin, in their lungs. As Bill Armontrout points out, the HCN exudes from the victims' bodies.

The Sonderkommandos enter the gas chamber to remove the bodies. According to one of van Pelt's most important eyewitnesses, David Olere, the inmates who removed the bodies from the chambers wore no gas masks, protective suits or rubber gloves to protect them from the inhalation or skin absorption of HCN. They did not even have shirts on!

The heavy labor of removing the thousand bodies from the chambers causes the Sonderkommandos to sweat. People who are sweating are even more prone to absorb the deadly HCN through the skin.

As the evidence points out, the victims' bodies exude the deadly HCN-this is why the body of someone who has died from HCN poisoning must be hosed down and rigorously decontaminated. In neither Pressac's nor van Pelt's authoritative tomes is there any mention that each victim's body was hosed down and thoroughly decontaminated after a mass gassing, nor is this process included in any of Olere's "true-to-life" sketches.

We return to the operation of the gas chambers. The Sonderkommandos enter the chambers to remove the bodies. They perspire because of the hard labor. This makes them even more prone to absorb the deadly HCN gas that exudes from the mass of dead bodies in the gas chamber. As Professor Soulie points out, the firemen died from HCN absorbed by their sweat, even though one of them was wearing a gas mask. Dr. van Pelt's most important eyewitness, David Olere, claims in his sketches that the Sonderkommandos were shirtless and they wore no rubber gloves, nor did they wear any gas masks. This makes them extremely prone to HCN poisoning by way of skin absorption and inhalation.

As we saw in the incident of the suicidal student from Grinnell College, the fumes from just one body were toxic enough to cause nine people to go to the hospital. Imagine the toxicological impact of one to two thousand dead bodies, all exuding the deadly HCN, upon the Sonderkommandos and Nazi guards who were wearing no gas masks or protective suits. It would have been overwhelming!

Thus, the important sketch of Lipstadt and van Pelt's most important eyewitness, David Olere, contains a chemical and toxicological impossibility. Although his discussion of this matter is somewhat vague, van Pelt seems to implicitly realize that the Sonderkommandos would have--at the very least!-- needed gas masks to enter the gas chamber after they opened the door to remove the bodies.²¹ In this particular sketch, the inmates removing the bodies and the Nazi guards supervising those executions are not wearing any gas masks. The inmates dragging the dead bodies are even shirtless!

Perhaps this is the reason that van Pelt failed to publish this most important

drawing of Olere. He may have realized that the sketch of his most important eyewitness to the operation of the gas chambers contained a physical impossibility. In other words, he may not have published this most important sketch because he did not want to give Holocaust revisionists ammunition to use against the Auschwitz gas chamber story.

But it gets even worse for Lipstadt and van Pelt. Let us now turn to a sketch of David Olere that van Pelt did include in his book-the sketch that shows the Sonderkommandos inside of the gas chamber after a gassing collecting the hair and gold teeth. Alongside of the Sonderkommandos is a Nazi guard, only part of his leg and jackboot showing. Once again, the Sonderkommandos are not wearing any gas masks, rubber gloves, or protective suits to protect them from the deadly HCN that would have exuded from the bodies of the over one thousand victims. Before proceeding, the reader is strongly urged to view and study the sketch under discussion. It is online at the address in this footnote.²²

We return to the assertions of the expert witness, warden Bill Armontrout. The body of a gassed criminal is hosed down and decontaminated, and especially close attention is paid to the hair, as it is here that much of the deadly HCN collects. Yet, in Olere's sketch, we see the Sonderkommandos-with no rubber gloves, gas masks or protective suits-putting their hands in the hair of the pile of victims!

Remember, van Pelt claims that the vast majority of the deadly gas was absorbed by the victims' bodies-only to exude from the hair and skin of the victims and ultimately kill the Sonderkommandos who collected the hair and gold teeth! Nowhere in van Pelt's tome is it mentioned that each and every body was hosed down and decontaminated before the hair and gold in the teeth were removed. Nor does the "how-it-really-happened" sketch of Olere show the Sonderkommandos-with gas masks and protective suits--hosing down and decontaminating each and every body, which would have been necessary to prevent poisoning from the ocean of deadly HCN that would have exuded from the over one thousand dead bodies.

We return to Lipstadt. She is saying that because only 320 parts per million (10% of what Leuchter claimed) was necessary to kill humans, the ventilation systems could have removed the residual gas quickly, and the inmates could have entered the chambers a very short time after the homicidal gassings to remove the victims for cremation. All would have run relatively smoothly.

Dr. van Pelt claims that 300 parts per million of HCN is lethal to humans, and allegedly, this is the concentration the Nazis used in the gas chambers.²³ The 300 parts per million necessary to kill humans is a little less than the Lipstadt's threshold of 320 parts per million. This suggests that

even small amounts of gas that would have exuded from the skin, nose, mouth, and hair of one (!) dead body could have killed any Sonderkommando, or any of the Nazi guards that allegedly supervised those executions.

Even worse for the Lipstadt/van Pelt scenario, the amount of HCN exuding from each of the over one thousand bodies would have, in the end, accumulated to an ocean of gas to poison both the Sonderkommandos and the Nazi guards by skin absorption or inhalation.

At the risk of sounding redundant, let us again recreate the gassing scenario of Lipstadt and van Pelt in order for the reader to clearly understand the chemical and toxicological impossibility of the operation of the Auschwitz gas chambers. One thousand to two thousand victims are herded into the gas chamber. The doors are closed, and the deadly HCN is circulated throughout the chamber. The gas murders the victims. As van Pelt claims, their bodies absorb most of the gas. The residual, remaining amount is extracted from the chamber by the powerful ventilation systems.

The door of the gas chamber is opened. According to the most important eyewitness, David Olere, the inmates who entered the chamber to remove the bodies for cremation wore no gas masks, rubber gloves or protective suits to protect them from HCN poisoning by way of inhalation or skin absorption. The inmates that entered the chamber to collect the hair of the victims wore no gas masks, rubber gloves, or protective suits to protect them from poisoning by way of inhalation or the skin absorption of the deadly HCN. The Nazi guards that supervised these executions wore no gas masks or protective suits.

The Sonderkommandos are confronted with one to two thousand bodies, all saturated with deadly HCN. They do their work with no gas masks, rubber gloves or protective suits. According to van Pelt, the vast majority of the gas was absorbed by the victims' bodies, only to exude from those same bodies and poison anyone who was not wearing a gas mask, protective suit and rubber gloves.

One of the important points here is this. Even if we give Lipstadt and van Pelt the benefit of the doubt, and assume that all of their assertions on the operation of the "gas chambers" are all correct, their gas chamber operation scenario is still virtually impossible.

If, without gas masks, rubber gloves and protective suits, it is extremely dangerous to handle just one (!) body saturated with the deadly HCN; if only one dead body saturated with the deadly HCN can exude enough toxic fumes to send nine people to the hospital, it would be almost impossible to handle one to two thousand dead bodies saturated with HCN without gas

masks, protective suits and rubber gloves.

The inmates in Olere's sketches that allegedly handled those one to two thousand dead bodies without gas masks, rubber gloves, and protective suits would have been poisoned by way of inhalation or skin absorption. The physical evidence provided by the three examples of HCN poisoning-the Scott Dominguez incident, the Grinnell College suicide, and the children in the cave incident-support this revisionist claim. Thus, Lipstadt and van Pelt's most important eyewitness puts forth an impossible scenario.

It does no good to counter the revisionists by saying: "Well, the drawings of David Olere are just symbolic of what really transpired. He was engaging in 'artistic license' when he depicted the Sonderkommandos with no gas masks, rubber gloves and protective suits." If this is so, then his sketches are not an accurate representation of the operation of the gas chambers. And, Dr. van Pelt's claim that Olere's sketches provide a very important visual record of the operation of the gas chamber of Crematorium 3 is not true.

Furthermore, it does no good to counter the revisionists by saying: "Well, the Nazis didn't care about the lives of the Sonderkommandos, so they did not have to use the safety precautions of gas masks, protective suits and rubber gloves." Quite the contrary. The Nazi guards that allegedly supervised those executions had to make certain that the Sonderkommandos quickly removed all of the bodies to make room for the next batch of victims. Thus, they would have had to make certain that the inmates stayed alive at least long enough to "get the job done." That is, in order for them to stay alive long enough to complete the job, they would have had to wear gas masks and protective suits. Furthermore, in order to protect the lives of the Nazi guards that allegedly supervised those executions, it would have been necessary for them to wear gas masks and protective suits.

Finally, let us assume that what Jean-Claude Pressac claimed is the truth. The Sonderkommandos that entered the gas chambers after a mass gassing wore gas masks.²⁴ Even if we assume this to be so, the "Auschwitz gas chamber" story is still impossible. This still leaves open the fact that HCN poisoning can occur by skin absorption. Nowhere in sketches of Olere or in the authoritative tomes of van Pelt or Pressac is it ever claimed that the Sonderkommandos wore rubber gloves or protective suits to protect them from the skin absorption of the ocean of deadly HCN that would have exuded from the myriad of bodies in the gas chambers.

The reader is asked to recall the story of the four firemen who perished from the skin absorption of HCN, in spite of the fact that one of them was wearing a gas mask. The reader should simply consider the devastating toxic effect upon the Sonderkommandos, all wearing gas masks, when they

put their bare hands into the HCN saturated hair and mouths of the over one thousand victims. Poisoning by skin absorption would have occurred, because they never decontaminated each body and they wore no protective suits or rubber gloves.

What I reveal here is nothing new. As far back as the 1970s, Holocaust revisionist scholar Robert Faurisson revealed to the world the chemical and toxicological impossibility of this Auschwitz gas chamber legend.

Ironically, it is, I believe, a very favorable sign for the future of Holocaust revisionism that most of the Western power elites refuse to debate the Holocaust revisionists, but only resort to name calling, threats of career destruction and jail sentences. It suggests to the world that Holocaust revisionism cannot be defeated with evidence and reason. The opponents of revisionism are intellectually impotent, and they cannot defeat revisionism with facts, evidence and logic. The "Holocaust" is a weak and flimsy ideology that needs special laws, threats of career destruction and jail sentences to protect it.

Footnotes

Deborah E. Lipstadt, *History on Trial: My Day in Court with David Irving* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2005).

Ibid, p.122.

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Ibid. p.36.

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Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial* (Indiana University Press, 2002), p.275.

Ibid, p.173.

Pressac, p. 493. Scroll down to Documents 30 and 31. Online: <http://www.mazal.org/Pressac/Pressac0493.htm>

Lipstadt, p. 140.

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<http://vho.org/GB/Books/trr/1.html#1.2>. For a list of other articles on this matter, see the references in footnote 20 on p.19 of Rudolf.

See the article about this in Rudolf, p.20. Online:
<http://vho.org/GB/Books/trr/1.html#1.2>

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See Rudolf, pp. 17-18. Minnesota State University, Mankato Reporter, Online Edition, 10 October 1998, "Suicide fumes sicken nine Iowa students." Online: <http://vho.org/GB/Books/trr/1.html#1.2>

Robert Jan van Pelt, p.275.

Pressac, p.493. Scroll down to Document 31. Online:
<http://www.mazal.org/Pressac/Pressac0493.htm>

Robert Jan van Pelt, p.362.

Pressac, p.16. Online:
<http://www.mazal.org/Pressac/Pressac0016.htm>

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