# The Impact of Nazi Medical Experiments on Polish Inmates at Dachau, Auschwitz and Ravensbrück

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**Aleksandra Loewenau**

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**Abstract**

Polish citizens of various backgrounds, gender and religion suffered greatly during the six years of Nazi occupation (1939-1945). Thousands of members of the country's elite, including physicians, priests, writers and politicians, were executed during the first months of World War Two along with nearly three million Polish Jews who perished in the years that followed. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of Polish men and women were imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps. All incarcerated Poles experienced humiliation, hunger, mistreatment and torture; moreover, selected Polish prisoners participated in medical experiments both as victims and as assistants of Nazi doctors, which not only effected their health, behaviour and reputation within the camp but also hugely influenced their post-war life in Poland or abroad.

This thesis examines three interrelated issues in relation to Polish prisoners: priests at Dachau, physicians at Auschwitz and women at Ravensbrück, taking a biographical approach for the wartime and post-war periods. First, it presents the way they coped with medical experiments and with everyday life in their respective concentration camps; secondly, it analyses the purposes of, and reasons for, the experiments and how the process of the prisoners' participation in Nazi medical research changed their behaviour; finally, this thesis explores the measures victims took after the war to draw attention to Nazi crimes and the injustice of which they were victims.

**Acknowledgments**

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**Abbreviations**

AAN- Archiwum Akt Nowych (Archives of Modern Records)

AK- Armia Krajowa (the Home Army)

AL- Armia Ludowa (the People's Army)

AŻIH- Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (Jewish Historical Institute Archives)

BL- Biblioteka Lekarska (Medical Library)

BArchv- Bundes Archiv (Bundes Archives)

CMS- Center for Migration Studies

DA-Dachau Archives

DP-Displaced Person

FO- Foreign Office

GK- Główna Komisja (the Main Commission)

GKBZHwP- Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce (the Main Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland)

HO- Home Office

ICRC-International Committee of the Red Cross

IHRC- Immigration History Research Center

IPN- Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (the Polish Institute for National Remembrance)

ITS- International Tracing Service

MH- Ministry of Health

NARA- National Archives and Record Administration

NMT- Nuremberg Medical Trial

NSDAP-The National Socialist German Workers' Party

NTP-Nuremberg Trial Project

OKBZHwP- Okręgowa Komisja Badania Zbrodni Histlerowskich w Polsce (the Local Commision to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland)

PAAA-Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (Political Archives of the Foreign Ministry)

PAMAB- Archiwum Państowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau (Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum Archives)

PCK- Polski Czerwony Krzyż (Polish Red Cross)

PI- Polish Institute

POSK- Polski Ośrodek Społeczno-Kulturalny (Polish Social and Cultural Association)

RAF -Royal Air Force

RVA or RA-Ravensbrück Archives

TAHRCUA-The American History Research Center and University Archives

TAP- Tajna Armia Polska (the Secret Polish Army)

TNA- The National Archives

TS- Treasury Secretary

UK-United Kingdom

UN- United Nations

US- United States of America

USHMM- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

WL- Wiener Library

WO- War Office

ZOW- Związek Organizacji Wojskowej (the Union of Military Organisation)

ZWZ- Związek Walki Zbrojnej (the Union of Armed Struggle)

**Notes on Translations:**

All foreign language quotations used in this thesis were translated by the author unless other stated.

# INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores how the values, priorities and behaviour of Polish non-Jewish inmates in Nazi concentration camps during World War II were affected by imprisonment and the medical experiments conducted on some of their number.[1] Within this context, it is important to understand that Poles of different gender, social position and occupation were equally vulnerable to Nazi persecution.[2] Despite many differences often associated with their social background, the Poles discussed in this thesis all felt an equally strong sense of patriotism that had been manifested in their family homes for generations.[3] Moreover, this identity, often motivated by the Catholic faith, led many Poles to join the resistance. This subsequently resulted in their arrest, imprisonment and participation in Nazi medical experiments, which further influenced their position, condition and conduct in the concentration camps.

This thesis analyses three different social groups. Firstly, members of the Polish clergy, who had enjoyed privileged status in interwar Poland, found that incarceration and medical experimentation presented the greatest test yet of their vocation.[4] Secondly, the activity of some Polish physicians at Auschwitz illustrates both the horrors of the camp and the negative consequences of experimental

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[1] The topic of human behaviour in the concentration camps has generated a great deal of interest among psychologists and psychiatrists since the late 1940s. For more information see Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 2005); Elie A. Cohen, *Human Behaviour in the Concentration Camp* (London: Free Association Books, 1988); Kazimierz Godorowski, *Psychologia i psychopatologia hitlerowskich obozów koncentracyjnych: Próba analizy postaw i zachowań w warunkach ekstremalnych obciążeń* (Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1985). Moreover, for the effects of the concentration camp on the post-war life of former prisoners see Antoni Kępiński, 'Tak zwany KZ-Syndrom: Próba syntezy', *Przegląd Lekarski* 23 (1970), pp. 18-23.

[2] Between 350,000 and 400,000 of Poles were imprisoned in Nazi camps during World War II.

[3] Those Poles, who were born in the early twentieth century, were raised on nineteenth-century romantic literature, which described Polish heroism fighting against enemies often without any success. Thus, the purpose of novels and theatrical plays written by Adam Mickiewicz and Henryk Sienkiewicz, for instance, was 'to lift up the hearts of Poles'. For more information see Stanisław Eile, *Literature and Nationalism in Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).

[4] The Polish clergy were particularly targeted by the Nazis because of their influential position. On the losses among Polish clergymen see Bohdan Bejze (ed.), *Martyrologia duchowieństwa polskiego* (Łódź: Archidiecezjalne Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1992).

medicine for those who assisted Nazi doctors. Although at Auschwitz skilled physicians of various nationalities and religions were forced to implement medical experimentation by Nazi doctors, this dissertation analyses a story of one of five Polish physicians involved in x-ray sterilisation experiments at Auschwitz, Władysław Dering. [5] His case is particularly interesting due to his senior position at the camp and anti-Semitic allegations that were placed against him. Moreover, out of five Polish prisoner-physicians who participated in sterilisation experiments, only Dering was treated as a war criminal. Thus within this context, it is important to examine the motives that led Dering, who was a member of the underground movement in Warsaw and, at the same time, a respected prisoner-doctor, to agree to remove gonads[6] of Jewish prisoners at Auschwitz.[7] This decision profoundly affected his life and reputation. In addition to priests and physicians, this thesis discusses a third group that of ordinary Polish women who, despite experience of brutal interrogation, hard labour and extremely painful medical operations, managed not only to maintain human values but also serve as examples of courage and heroism for their fellow prisoners at Ravensbrück.[8]

Using these three groups as historical evidence, this dissertation examines the origin, character and conditions in three major Nazi concentration camps: Dachau, Auschwitz and Ravensbrück.[9] Particular attention will be paid to the medical

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[5] The other four physicians whose activity at Auschwitz will be described further in this thesis were: Jan Grabczyński, Zenon Ławski, Aleksander Górecki and Klebanowski.

[6] Castration is a medical procedure during which both testicles or ovaries are removed; thus, when one testicle or ovary were taken out I will use terms 'removal or excision of gonads'.

[7] For the issue of sterilisation and castration experiments at Auschwitz and removal of gonads see Rubeigh J. Minney, *I Shall Fear No Evil: The Story of Dr Alina Brewda* (London: William Kimber, 1966); also see Adélaïde Hautval, *Médecine et crimes contre l'humanité: Le refus d'un médecin, déporté à Auschwitz, de participer aux expériences médicales* (Paris: Félin, 2006).

[8] Karolina Lanckorońska, *Wspomnienia wojenne: 22.09.1939-5.04.1945* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2001).

[9] There are numerous monographs about Nazi concentration camps. For an overview see Wanda Kiedrzyńska, *Międzynarodowa bibliografia hitlerowskich obozów koncentracyjnych, 1933-1976* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, 1981).

experiments that were conducted on inmates in those camps, with a special emphasis on experimental treatments for malaria, sterilisation by radiation, phlegmon, war wounds by use of sulphonamides, bone fracture and transplant operations.[10] Furthermore, the position of Poles within Nazi experimentation, both as victims—for instance Polish Catholic priests at Dachau or female Polish political prisoners at Ravensbrück—and as prisoner-doctors involved in criminal research as assistants of Nazi physicians, will be explored.[11] More importantly, this thesis sheds light on the Nazi medical experiments from the prisoners' perspective, with particular regard to the selection of research subjects, medical procedures and the side-effects of those treatments, concluding with a discussion of the trauma experienced by many inmates after the war.

Within the context of these three camps and three different categories of Polish prisoners, this dissertation presents a complicated set of relations between inmates on the following levels: 1) *religion*, the differences between priests and lay prisoners at Dachau; 2) *gender*, through a comparison of women at Ravensbrück and male prisoners in other camps; and 3) *racial*, exemplified by Dering's attitude towards the SS and the Jewish prisoners at Auschwitz.

In order to offer a comprehensive analysis of the experience of Polish victims of Nazi medical experimentation, this dissertation also explores the life of these Poles after the war. The varying journeys to freedom of women from Ravensbrück provide an evocative example of diverse experiences. In this context, I will also analyse the circumstances that forced Władysław Dering to leave Poland. Moreover, the fate of Polish priests who never returned to Poland due to the hostility of the

[10] Alexander Mitscherlich and Fred Mielke, *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit: Dokumente des Nürnberger Ärzteprozesses* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Bücherei Verlag, 1960), pp. 131-166 and 237-249.
[11] Stanisław Sterkowicz, *Nieludzka medycyna: Lekarze w służbie nazizmu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Medyk, 2007).

Communist Government will be described.[12] In addition, I will examine the contribution of several victims of medical experiments from Ravensbrück in bringing Nazi doctors to trial, and the effort they put into informing public opinion about medical crimes.[13] Furthermore, this dissertation will analyse Dering's desperate attempt to clear his name in a libel trial against Leon Uris, the author of *Exodus*, which took place in 1964 in London, and the consequences this event had upon his reputation.[14]

Finally this dissertation engages with wider debates on medical ethics and explores the vexed issue of the Federal German Government's compensation scheme for the victims of Nazi medical experiments. It will discuss Germans' reluctance in fulfilling its obligations towards claimants, including the time-consuming application process for compensation and the strict requirements with regard to medical examination and certification. Post-war political relations between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany caused delays to payments to victims. Experiences of the process of applying for compensation differed between those who remained in Poland and those who went abroad.[15] The help offered by American and British organisations resulted in compensation for many Polish victims. The "human guinea pigs" from Ravensbrück, however, despite great determination, often failed to secure the financial support they unquestionably deserved.[16]

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[12] For the case of one of the Polish priests who immigrated to the US see Stanisław Grabowski, *Follow Me: The Memoirs of a Polish Priest: Monsignor Stanisław Grabowski* (Roseville: White Rose Press, 1997).

[13] Some of those testimonies are available online: see http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu (Accessed on 2 February 2011)

[14] Mavis Millicent Hill and Norman Williams, *Auschwitz in England: A Record of a Libel Action* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1965).

[15] See Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, 'Deutschland und das Problem der Nachkriegsentschädigungen für Polen', in Hans Günter Hockerts, Claudia Moisel, Tobias Winstel (eds.), *Grenzen der Wiedergutmachung: Die Entschädigung für NS-Verfolgte in West- Osteuropa 1945-2000* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006), pp. 667-740.

[16] Jarosław Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi: Sprawa ofiar niemieckich eksperymentów medycznych w KL Ravensbrück', *Glaukopis* 9 (2007), pp. 94-133.

## HISTORIOGRAPHY

The issue of the three Nazi concentration camps (Dachau, Auschwitz and Ravensbrück) and medical experiments was raised for the first time, albeit in general terms, by former inmates in 1945-46.[17] The monograph *Der SS-Staat: das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager*, written by a former Buchenwald prisoner, Eugen Kogon, and published in 1946, has often been cited by scholars as a pioneering first-person insight into the camps.[18] One of the first reports regarding medical crimes committed at Dachau was written in 1946 by Luxembourgian political prisoners Jupp Feltes and Paul Langers.[19] Although a slim publication, their *Menschenexperimente in Dachau* nonetheless contains several photographs, illustrating the atrocities committed there.[20]

However, the major events that raised popular awareness about medical experimentation in the camps were the post-war trials of Nazi war criminals. One of the first trials held by the Allies, during which medical experiments were closely investigated, was the Dachau Trial that took place between 15 November and 13 December 1945.[21] The trial was organised solely by the Americans and, in contrast to the former military tribunals, it was not well publicised. As a consequence, few scholarly publications examining medical experiments at Dachau have been published. However, in 2007, Angelika Ebbinghaus and Karl Heinz Roth, despite a

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[17] Hundreds of diaries of war survivors have been published since the war ended. These are only a few examples: Stanisław Grabowski, *Znienawidzeni-- 22583 P: Z przeżyć polskiego księdza w niemieckich obozach koncentracyjnych* (Philadelphia: Polish Star Publisher, 1947); Stanisław Grzesiuk, *Pięć lat kacetu* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1965); Karolina Lanckorońska, *Michelangelo in Ravensbrück: One Woman's War Against The Nazis* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2007).

[18] Eugen Kogon, *Der SS-Staat: das System der deutschen Konzentrationslager* (München: Im Verlag Karl Alber, 1946).

[19] In addition, several Polish former prisoners wrote their recollections between 1945 and 1946, to be closely analysed below.

[20] Jupp Feltes, Paul Langers, *Menschenexperimente in Dachau* (Eschalzette: Wagner, 1946).

[21] Files of this trial are held at the National Archives and Record Administration in College Park in Maryland , USA.

limited number of sources, offered a constructive analysis of the medical crimes in their *Medizinverbrechen vor Gericht: Die Menschenversuche im Konzentrationslager Dachau.*[22]

Another trial that received rather limited attention was the Hamburg Ravensbrück Trial (5 December 1946-3 February 1947), although Arthur Keith Mant, a forensic pathologist and the head of the British Army's Special Medical Section War Crimes Group, investigated the medical crimes committed at Ravensbrück. His report included abstracts from perpetrators' interrogation reports, quotations taken from statements of witnesses whom he interviewed and his own expert commentary.[23] As a result, he provided a well-constructed, factual report, in which he analysed detailed descriptions of experiments, as well as their purposes and side-effects.

The breakthrough in alerting public opinion to Nazi medical crimes, however, came with the proceedings of the Nuremberg Medical Trial (9 December 1946-20 August 1947), which attracted the attention of the worldwide press. The Nuremberg Medical Trial also established certain guidelines for historians regarding the number and the nature of experiments performed by German doctors during the war. Two authors, who were directly connected with the trials, and whose publications became a source of inspiration for historians were the Head of the German Medical Commission to the Medical Tribunal, Alexander Mitscherlich, and the medical advisor to the Chief of Counsel for War Crimes, Leo Alexander. Mitscherlich, who was a neurologist, along with the medical student Fred Mielke

[22] Angelika Ebbinghaus and Karl Heinz Roth, 'Medizinverbrechen vor Gericht: Die Menschenversuche im Konzentrationslager Dachau', in Ludwig Eiber and Robert Siegel (ed.), *Dachauer Prozesse: NS-Verbrechen vor amerikanischen Militärgerichten in Dachau 1945-1948* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007), pp. 126-160.
[23] Keith Mant, 'The Medical Services in the Concentration Camp of Ravensbrück', *The Medico-Legal Journal*, 17 (1949), pp. 100-118.

wrote a lucid report entitled *Das Diktat der Menschenverachtung: Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit: Dokumente des Nürnberger Ärzteprozesses*. This report was published during the Nuremberg Medical Trial in 1947. Two years later Mitscherlich and Mielke wrote *Wissenschaft ohne Menschlichkeit: medizinische und eugenische Irrwege unter Diktatur, Bürokratie und Krieg*, which was supplemented by additional trial quotations taken from witnesses' and defendants' statements.[24] However, both books were based solely on selected documents used during the Nuremberg Medical Trial. Authorial comments and observations are lacking. A more analytical viewpoint was offered by the neurologist Leo Alexander, who wrote a series of articles in which he examined the purpose of Nazi medical experiments, their potential scientific value and the side-effects on their victims.[25]

A different approach was taken by a French psychologist, closely connected to the Nuremberg Medical Trial, François Bayle.[26] Unlike Alexander and Mitscherlich whose publications focused on medical procedures, Bayle's *Les Expériences Humaines en Allemagne Pendant la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* examined the perceptions of Nazi medical crimes by prosecuted German physicians. In addition, he included psychological profiles of the perpetrators, as well as comprehensive analysis of their behaviour towards their victims. Bayle based his monograph on observations and interviews, which he conducted before the trial.

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[24] Alexander Mitscherlich and Fred Mielke, *Das Diktat der Menschenverachtung: Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit: Dokumente des Nürnberger Ärzteprozesses* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider Verlag, 1947); *Wissenschaft ohne Menschlichkeit: medizinische und eugenische Irrwege unter Diktatur, Bürokratie und Krieg* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1949). The shortened version of the latter work will be often cited in this dissertation as *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit: Dokumente des Nürnberger Ärzteprozesses* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1960).

[25] Leo Alexander, 'The Treatment of Shock from Prolonged Exposure to Cold, Especially in Water', Combined Intelligence Objectives Subcommittee, July 1945; also by Alexander, 'Medical Science under Dictatorship', *New England Journal of Medicine* 241 (1949), pp. 39-47. In addition, I consulted copies of Alexander's Papers brought by Professor Weindling from Duke University.

[26] François Bayle, *Croix Gammée Contre Caducée: Les Expériences Humaines en Allemagne Pendant la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* (Neustadt: Imprimerie Nationale, 1950).

Since the 1990s the interest in 'the Nuremberg Code' among scholars and the general public has continued and given rise to dozens of books published in Europe and other parts of the world.[27] However, the majority of authors, not having access to other primary sources, relied solely on documentation from the Nuremberg Medical Trial, an approach which often lacked critical analysis.[28] Nonetheless, several publications stand out, in particular Paul Weindling's comprehensive study, *Nazi Medicine and the Nuremberg Trials: From Medical War Crimes to Informed Consent*, in which Nazi medicine is viewed through the prism of the Nuremberg Medical Trial and presented from three angles: those of victims, perpetrators and prosecutors.[29]

The first pamphlets and monographs to present the history of the concentration camps were published in the early 1950s.[30] They were written mainly by former prisoners who were not victims of medical experiments; however, they did acknowledge the Nazi medical crimes and their victims, who were described for the most part according to nationality.[31] One such study was *Christ in Dachau* written by a German priest, Johann Maria Lenz, who described the persecution of the Catholic clergy and emphasised the inferior position of the Polish priests in relation to the clergy of other nationalities.[32] In *Forgive but Not Forget*, Sylvia

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[27] Worthy of particular mention are the German monograph by Angelika Ebbinghaus and Klaus Dörner, *Vernichten und Heilen: der Nürnberger Ärzteprozess und seine Folgen* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 2001), and Christian Bonah, Étienne Lepicard and Volker Roelcke (eds.), *La médecine expérimentale au tribunal: implications éthiques de quelques procès médicaux du XXe siècle européen* (Paris: Éditions des Archives contemporaines, 2003).

[28] The prosecutors at the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial had only partial access to primary sources because substantial quantities were destroyed by the Nazis. Thus, many estimates given by witnesses could not be verified.

[29] Paul Julian Weindling, *Nazi Medicine and the Nuremberg Trials: From Medical War Crimes to Informed Consent* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[30] The contribution of Polish authors will be analysed in a separate section.

[31] There were also a considerable number of publications written by those who liberated Dachau, especially Americans. However, those studies only described the situation at the time of liberation.

[32] Johann Lenz, *Christ in Dachau* (Oxford: Newman Bookshop, 1952). A more recent publication about conditions at Dachau was written by Jean Bernard, a French priest, who brought attention to the fate of other ethnic groups who were held at the camp. His account is important in terms of

Salvesen, a prisoner at Ravensbrück who worked as a nurse at the camp hospital, described the attitude of victims of medical experiments with great admiration and compassion.[33]

The interest in concentration camps increased after the 1970s; this led to many early publications being re-issued, such as *Ravensbrück* by a French resistance fighter, Germaine Tillion.[34] Moreover, in addition to accounts produced by those who had experienced life in the camps at first hand, historians and journalists also began documenting the events. Paul Berben, a historian and member of the Dachau International Committee, published a history of the camp entitled *Dachau 1933-1945: The Official Story*,[35] while, the French journalist, Christian Bernadac, directed greater attention towards the victims at Ravensbrück and Dachau.[36]

Most of the recent appraisals of Nazi concentration camps have introduced new issues; for instance, relations between inmates. Thus, Jack Morrison's monograph *Ravensbrück: Everyday Life in a Women's Concentration Camp 1939-1945* gives a straightforward and comprehensible account of conditions at the camp, covering relations between prisoners, working conditions and medical issues.[37] A historian, Harold Marcuse, wrote a substantial study entitled *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933-2001,* describing not only the origins and function of the camp, but also the issues with which prisoners struggled

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understanding relations between prisoners of different nationalities. See Jean Bernard, *Priestblock 25487: A Memoir of Dachau* (Bethesda, Md.: Zaccheus Press, 2007).

[33] Sylvia Salvesen, *Forgive but Not Forget* (London: Hutchinson, 1958).

[34] This monograph was first published in 1946. Several new editions were published after 1973. It was also translated into German and English. See the first edition Germaine Tillion, *Ravensbrück* (Neuchâtel: Cahiers du Rhône, 1946).

[35] Paul Berben, *Dachau 1933-1945: The Official Story* (London: Norfolk Press, 1975).

[36] Christian Bernadec, *Camp for Women: Ravensbrück* (Geneva: Ferni Pub. House: Distributed by Friends of History, 1978); and *Witches of God* (Geneva: Ferni Pub. House: Distributed by Friends of History, 1978).

[37] Jack G. Morrison, *Ravensbrück: Everyday Life in a Women's Concentration Camp, 1939-1945* (Princeton: Marcus Wiener Publishers, 2000).

after liberation. The issue of medical experiments, on the other hand, was marginalised.[38]

Another mode of addressing the experiments was introduced in the 1980s, when the focus turned towards perpetrators and victims. However, Nazi doctors were presented as a group rather than as individuals. One such analysis was offered by Robert Lifton, who wrote an acclaimed study of several Nazi physicians and their assistants. In his work *Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* he included the achievements of Nazi physicians prior to the war, as well as their wartime medical careers, which he supported with quotations from witnesses.[39] The significance of Lifton's book is unquestionable; however, using it as a source is problematic due to its lack of references and its many subjective judgments. Other relevant studies include Vivien Spitz's *Doctors from Hell: the Horrific Account of Nazi Experiments on Humans*[40] and George Annas and Michael Grodin's *The Nazi Doctors and the Nuremberg Code*.[41] Annas and Grodin tackled issues relating to ethics in medical experimentation; however, as their work was based on the court proceedings of the Nuremberg Medical Trial, they did not bring much original research to the topic. Ruth Jolanda Weinberger's *Fertility Experiments in Auschwitz-Birkenau: Perpetrators and their Victims* deserve to be mentioned as it is the first monograph to describe the profiles of doctors who were responsible for sterilisation experiments on Jewish inmates at Auschwitz.[42] Recently, several biographies of high-ranking Nazi physicians have appeared, such

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[38] Harold Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp: 1933-2001* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[39] Robert J. Lifton, *Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).
[40] Vivien Spitz, *Doctors from Hell: The Horrific Account of Nazi Experiments on Humans* (Boulder: Sentient Publication, 2005).
[41] George J. Annas and Michael A. Grodin, *The Nazi Doctors and the Nuremberg Code* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
[42] Ruth Jolanda Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments in Auschwitz-Birkenau: Perpetrators and Their Victims* (Saarbrucken: Sudwestdeutscher Verlag für Hochschulschriften, 2009).

as Ulf Schmidt's *Karl Brandt: The Nazi Doctor, Medicine, and Power in the Third Reich* and Judith Hahn's *Grawitz, Genzken, Gebhardt: drei Karrieren im Sanitätsdienst der SS.*[43]

Hardly any of these authors offered individual portrayals of the Nazi doctors who conducted experiments at Dachau, Ravensbrück and Auschwitz-Birkenau. Two dissertations, *Malariaexperimente in Konzentrationslagern und Heilanstalten während der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* by Hana Vondra and *"Doktor Herta Oberheuser": Tätigkeit im Dritten Reich und Lebensweg nach 1945 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Auseinandersetzungen um den Entzug ihrer Approbation* by Ulrike Steenbuck, are the exceptions. Vondra wrote a precise analysis of Professor Schilling's attempt to develop a method of immunising humans against malaria, which he practised on prisoners at Dachau.[44] Steenbuck, on the other hand, is the author of an informative biography of Herta Oberheuser, who was a doctor involved in the experiments on prisoners conducted at Ravensbrück, and who was the only female defendant at the Nuremberg Medical Trial.[45]

Unlike Western historiography, the first post-war Polish publications focused primarily on experiments on Poles. The first person to write a comprehensive medical report about medical experiments was a former prisoner of Ravensbrück, Zofia Mączka, who worked as an anaesthetist at the camp hospital. In her article, 'Operacje doświadczalne przeprowadzone w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', Mączka described, in detail, the experiments conducted on seventy-

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[43] Ulf Schmidt, *Karl Brandt: The Nazi Doctor, Medicine, and Power in the Third Reich* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007); Judith Hahn, *Grawitz, Genzken, Gebhardt: Drei Karrieren im Sanitätsdienst der SS* (Münster: Klemm & Oelschläger, 2007).
[44] Hana Vondra, *Malariaexperimente in Konzentrationslagern und Heilanstalten während der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, Dissertation an der MH Hannover (Abtlg. Geschichte der Medizin, 1989).
[45] Ulrike Steenbuck, *"Doktor Herta Oberheuser": Tätigkeit im Dritten Reich und Lebensweg nach 1945 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Auseinandersetzungen um den Entzug ihrer Approbation* (Kiel: NP, 1994), Unpublished dissertation.

four Polish women.[46] Kornel Michejda, a Polish surgeon who examined victims of medical experiments after the war at the Gdańsk Medical Academy, wrote a continuation to Mączka's report. Michejda, in his article 'Wyniki ekspertyzy sądowo-leksarskiej: Operacje doświadczalne w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', described the state of victims' health more than five years after the experiments ended.[47]

From the late 1950s until the late 1970s, the theme of medical experiments was analysed in depth by a group of physicians and former prisoners at Auschwitz associated with the oldest Polish medical journal *Przegląd Lekarski.* Articles published in this journal covered nearly every medical experiment at Auschwitz and beyond. Thus, the most important study dealing with Horst Schumann's attempts to find the required level of radiation necessary to sterilise a human being through use of x-ray machines was written by Stanisław Kłodziński.[48] A further set of experiments was described by Dorota Lorska in her article, 'Blok 10 w Oświęcimiu', which analysed Carl Clauberg's chemical sterilisation experiments at Auschwitz. When Lorska worked as a prisoner-doctor at Block 10, she observed directly the side-effects of the sterilisation procedures.[49] Czesław Głowacki was another physician who discussed Clauberg's research. His article 'Z dokumentacji zbrodniczych doświadczeń Clauberga', in addition to Lorska's, offers estimates of numbers of sterilised women and photographs of the uteri of several victims.[50]

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[46] Zofia Mączka, 'Operacje doświadczalne przeprowadzone w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce* 2 (1947), pp. 123-133.

[47] Kornel Michejda, 'Wyniki ekspertyzy sądowo-leksarskiej: Operacje doświadczalne w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', *Biuletyn Głównej Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w Polsce* 2 (1947), pp. 134-175.

[48] Stanisław Kłodziński, 'Z zagadnień ludobójstwa "sterilizacja" i kastracja promieniami Roentgena w obozie oświęcimskim: Dr Horst Schumann', *Przegląd Lekarski* 1 (1964), pp. 105-111.

[49] Dorota Lorska, 'Blok 10 w Oświęcimiu', *Przegląd Lekarski* 1 (1965), pp. 99-104.

[50] Czesław Głowacki, 'Z dokumentacji zbrodniczych doświadczeń Clauberga', *Przegląd Lekarski* 33 (1976), pp. 86-96.

Histories of concentration camps written in Poland differ from those published elsewhere. The vast majority of early Polish accounts were written by scholars and former prisoners. Father Albert Urbański in his 1945 book *Duchowni w Dachau: Wspomnienia z przeżyć około dwóch tysięcy księży w obozie koncentracyjnym* discussed the origins, structure and functioning of Dachau. Although couched in general terms, this book includes a list of almost every priest who was incarcerated in that camp including his nationality, diocese, date of birth, date of death and, in some cases, whether the priest was a victim of medical experimentation.[51] Father Stefan Biskupski in his 1946 pamphlet *Księża polscy w niemieckich obozach koncentracyjnych: Wspomnienia byłego więźnia obozów w Sachsenhausen i Dachau* included limited information with regard to the issue of malaria and phlegmon experiments.[52]

These early attempts at compiling a record of the experiments performed at Dachau were acknowledged only by select groups i.e. by the Polish clergy, a large number of whom were subjected to medical experimentation, and who suffered great losses during the war. Further, Wanda Kiedrzyńska, a historian whose work was widely publicised in Poland, wrote the first complete monograph on Ravensbrück, covering the period from the establishment of the camp until its liberation.[53] She described of medical experiments based on accessible historical records and victims' testimonies. Despite her efforts, Kiedrzyńska failed to produce an account which dealt with the brutality of the treatment accorded to prisoners of all nationalities objectively. She is not an isolated example. Teodor Musioł, a

[51] Albert Urbański, *Duchowni w Dachau: Wspomnienia z przeżyć około dwóch tysięcy księży w obozie koncentracyjnym* (Kraków: Nakładem Ojców Karmelitanów, 1945).
[52] Stefan Biskupski, *Księża polscy w niemieckich obozach koncentracyjnych: Wspomnienia byłego więźnia obozów w Sachsenhausen i Dachau* (London: Mildner, 1946).
[53] Wanda Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück: Kobiecy obóz koncentracyjny* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1961).

prisoner at Dachau, wrote an extensive monograph about the history of that camp entitled *Dachau: 1933-1945*.[54] He offered well-constructed critical analyses of primary sources, of which a great number were included in his book. Musioł, however, followed the common pattern set previously by Kiedrzyńska, and glorified Polish prisoners as opposed to other (in particular German) inmates. Stanisław Sterkowicz, a former prisoner of Neuengamme, a physician and the husband of one of the victims from Ravensbrück (Janina Marczewska-Sterkowicz), wrote a number of monographs in which he discussed the nature and character of concentration camps, the profiles of the Nazi physicians involved in medical crimes, as well as medical experimentation itself.[55] Describing the profiles of Nazi doctors, Sterkowicz, unlike other of authors, also included details about the lives of the perpetrators after the war.[56]

Despite its prominence in Polish historiography, the experience of the Polish victims of medical experiments has largely been ignored by Western historiography. There are two fundamental reasons for this neglect. Firstly, the majority of memoirs were written in Polish and printed in limited editions during the Cold War, when cultural exchange between the Eastern Bloc and the West was very limited.[57] The task of interviewing the remaining victims posed further challenges to Western scholars, due to restrictions on travel and the language barrier. Secondly, for decades the focus of Western historians has been, almost exclusively, on Jewish

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[54] Teodor Musioł, *Dachau: 1933-1945* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo "Śląsk", 1968).

[55] Works related to the theme of my thesis are: Stanisław Sterkowicz, *Zbrodnicze eksperymenty medyczne w obozach koncentracyjnych Trzeciej Rzeszy* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ministra Obrony Narodowej, 1981); *Nieludzka medycyna: Lekarze w służbie nazizmu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Medyk, 2007); *Kobiecy oboz koncentracyjny Ravensbrück* (Włocławek: Włocławskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2006); *Obóz koncentracyjny Auschwitz-Birkenau* (Włocławek: Włocławskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2010).

[56] The other two authors who wrote biographical profiles of perpetrators were Weinberger and Steenbuck.

[57] Moreover, it was believed, not without reason, that studies published in Poland during that period were strongly influenced by the Communist regime.

survivors. Despite this, several victims of medical experiments took the initiative to record their suffering in diaries and memoirs. The number of publications is small but they contain important information. One of the first such published recollections was *I boję się snów*, the autobiography of a victim of sulphonamide experiments at Ravensbrück, Wanda Półtawska. She presented the suffering of victims in a straightforward way without glorifying it.[58] In his memoirs, *Będziecie moimi świadkami*, Father Kazimierz Majdański, who was infected with phlegmon at Dachau, described the honourable, but occasionally shameful, behaviour of Polish priests.[59] Also worth mentioning are two collective publications of victims. The first, *Ponad ludzką miarę*, is a collection of biographies of Polish "human guinea pigs" from Ravensbrück, which includes information about their pre-war and post-war life.[60] The second one is *Cudem ocaleni: Wpomienia z Kacetów*, which includes the recollections of several Polish Catholic priests who were victims of malaria or phlegmon experiments at Dachau, and who settled in the United Kingdom after the war.[61]

By the time Communism collapsed in 1989, the Polish victims of medical experiments were nearly forgotten. The majority had passed away. Despite these limitations, two authors undertook the challenge of addressing the topic of medical experiments from the victims' perspective. A German author, Freya Klier, wrote the first non-Polish monograph *Die Kaninchen von Ravensbrück: Medizinische Versuche an Frauen in der NS-Zeit*, in which she described the experiences of

[58] Wanda Półtawska, *I boję się snów* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1962).
[59] Kazimierz Majdański, *Będziecie moimi świadkami* (Szczecin: Kuria Biskupia, 1987).
[60] Helena Klimek (ed.), *Ponad ludzką miarę* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1972).
[61] Ernest Chowaniec (ed.), *Cudem ocaleni: Wpomienia z Kacetów* (London: Katolicki Ośrodek Wydawniczy Veritas, 1981).

Polish women who were used for medical research at Ravensbrück.[62] Klier paid considerable attention to the origin of the camp and the biographies of perpetrators. As a result, the topic of victims is one of many rather than the book's main focus. On the other hand, Loretta Walz in her monograph, "*Und dann kommst du dahin an einem schönen Sommertag": Die Frauen von Ravensbrück*, focused more intensively on the victims, but included the background to issues, such as the medical experiments that occurred in the concentration camp.[63] Her book has a more personal voice in terms of her use of victims' testimonies.

The case of a notorious Polish prisoner physician, Władysław Dering (who assisted SS doctor, Horst Schumann, in conducting his medical experiments), illustrates however the difficulty one faces when critically examining victims' testimonies.[64] Dering became a controversial character due to a fictional work, *Exodus* written by Leon Uris. Several unsupported statements from the book resulted in a libel trial, Dering v. Uris, which took place in 1964 in London.[65] Over a decade later, the same author wrote another novel *QBVII*, which was a fictional account of the libel trial and of Dering's life.[66] Both novels are of interest; however, since both confuse fiction with historical reality, historians should not follow Hermann Langbein who created a negative profile of Dering using quotations from Uris.[67] A year after the trial, and several months after Dering's death, Mavis Millicent Hill's and Norman Williams' monograph *Auschwitz in England: A Record of a Libel Action* was published. This account describes the proceedings of the case

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[62] Freya Klier, *Die Kaninchen von Ravensbrück: Medizinische Versuche an Frauen in der NS-Zeit* (München: Knaur, 1994).
[63] Loretta Walz, "*Und dann kommst du dahin an einem schönen Sommertag": Die Frauen von Ravensbrück* (München: Kunstmann, 2005).
[64] Primary sources referring to Dering are held at the Polish Institute for Remembrance in Warsaw, Medical Library in Warsaw, The National Archives in London, the Polish Institute in London, and at the Polish Library in London.
[65] Leon Uris, *Exodus* (New York: Doubleday, 1958).
[66] Leon Uris, *QB VII* (New York: Doubleday, 1970).
[67] Hermann Langbein, *Menschen in Auschwitz* (Vienna: Europaverlag,1972).

in detail.[68] Although this work is not a biography of Dering, it analyses his statements and the testimonies of other witnesses. It is hence a convincing interpretation of the sterilisation experiments and the interpersonal relationships between prisoners.

The last topic covered in this dissertation concerns the issue of compensation from the Federal German Government for the Polish victims of medical experiments. This issue has not been analysed in depth by historians, despite the fact that there is a considerable amount of primary sources available.[69] Most likely, this is because it has generally been treated as part of a bigger topic. Recently two Polish scholars, Krzysztof Ruchniewicz and Dominik Sołtysiak, have engaged with the issue of compensation. Ruchniewicz discussed Polish efforts to secure German reparations in general; in addition, he described the complicated political relations between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany that influenced the issue of compensation for victims of medical experiments.[70] He was not able however to analyse adequately the issue of the first compensation claims which were submitted to the Polish Red Cross because these documents were not available to him, due to the Polish Data Protection Act of 1997. Sołtysiak, however, a legal specialist, evaluated mostly the legal background to the compensation issue.[71]

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[68] Mavis Millicent Hill and Norman Williams, *Auschwitz in England: A Record of a Libel Action* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1965).

[69] American efforts for compensation of Polish victims are recorded in documents available at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Documentation relating to the engagement of the UN is held at the UN Archives in Geneva. Finally, copies of applications of the claimants are held in Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, at the Polish Institute for National Remembrance, and at the Archives of the Polish Red Cross.

[70] Krzysztof Ruchniewicz, *Polskie zabiegi o odszkodowania niemieckie w latach 1944/45-1975* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Universytetu Wrocławskiego, 2007).

[71] Dominik Sołtysiak, 'Podstawy prawne i implementacja odszkodowań niemieckich dla polskich ofiar eksperymentów psedudomedycznych w latach 1945-1989', in Witold M. Góralski and Sławomir Dębski (eds.), *Problem reparacji, odszkodowań i świadczeń w stosunkach polsko-niemieckich 1944-2004* (Warszawa: Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 169-193.

This dissertation engages with the above mentioned scholarship and adds new dimension to our knowledge of issues such as: a) existing narratives on Nazi medical experiments on humans and b) the way in which life stories of prisoners of concentration camps have been discussed to date. As seen, the topic of Nazi medical experiments has preoccupied many scholars; thus, we know what kinds of experiments were conducted, who performed the procedures, their purpose and their results. Victims, however, with minor exceptions, have been marginalised and presented either highly selectively or as anonymous statistics. The majority have passed away; yet, some of them left behind testimonies relating to their experiences, and their life stories can still be traced. Addressing the issue of Nazi medical experimentation from the perspective of the victims' experience will illustrate its true impact.

The next question is: who were the victims? The best known group of victims whose number, nationality, gender and age were known already in the late 1940s were the Polish women at Ravensbrück. Polish Catholic priests imprisoned at Dachau have been depicted as primary victims of Claus Schilling's malaria experiments, despite the fact that an easily accessible source verifies that they were the third largest group experimented upon, after Soviet inmates and German criminals.[72] Regardless of the fact that Polish priests feature in most studies dealing with Nazi medical experiments, there are no monographs focusing on members of the Polish clergy who were used for medical research on malaria or phlegmon. No study has engaged with issues such as the "crimes" for which these priests were sent to Dachau, how they were treated, why they were chosen for medical experiments and what happened to them after the war. Current information is not only limited but

[72] Analysing the list of 1,091 victims of malaria experiments submitted to the International Tracing Service by Eugen Ost in the 1960s suggests that Polish priests were not the largest group of victims. This topic will be closely examined later in this dissertation.

also outdated.[73] Therefore, this dissertation aims to offer a comprehensive perspective, situating Nazi medical experiments within the relationship between victims and perpetrators, as well as within its political culture.

One direction, in relation to the presentation of prisoner profiles, has been to portray negatively those who held privileged positions, such as *Kapos*, while labelling as heroes ordinary prisoners who survived the camp. The glorified portrayal of the "ordinary prisoner", which appeared in various publications, supports this theory.[74] However, the proper subject of analysis, as it is suggested here, is the process by which behaviour patterns change as a result of torment, hunger and living in constant fear. To present the true nature of incarceration and the influence it had on inmates, as well as the full range of behavioural responses, some of which were less than exemplary, should be emphasised. For example, it is important to understand that in extreme circumstances prisoners were forced to steal from each other in order to survive.

Finally, the subject of German compensation for Polish victims of Nazi medical experiments has been generally ignored by scholars. There are many publications which have addressed reparation and compensation for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, yet only two Polish authors, mentioned above, have tackled the issue of compensation for Polish victims, and only in the form of single chapters.[75] However, sufficient primary sources are available to expand considerably upon this and related subjects, including issues of finance, the influence of international

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[73] The majority of scholars used as their primary source testimonies given by witnesses during the Nuremberg Medical Trial, which include several inconsistencies.

[74] For example see Terrance De Pres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[75] In addition a German historian Stefanie Baumann described the Ravensbrück victims' fight for compensation. See Stefanie Michaela Baumann, *Menschenversuche und Wiedergutmachung: Der lange Streit um Entschädigung und Anerkennung der Opfer nationalsozialistischer Humanexperimente* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2009).

politics and abuses of power. Moreover, compensation settlements, seen as giving final closure to victims of experiments, deserve attention so as to acknowledge the continued suffering of victims after the war.

How does this dissertation contribute to this ever-growing historiographical debate? In most of the publications about medical experiments there is hardly any information about the victims; the focus continues to be on the perpetrators. This thesis adopts a narrative approach to analyse previously undiscovered sources (for example approximately 4,000 files of Polish victims who applied for compensation), as well as, other primary and secondary materials in order to describe the conduct and rationale of Nazi medical experiments. This dissertation, therefore, investigates the victims' life stories and experiences. Why were they sent to concentration camps? What were their living conditions like within the camps? What was their understanding of medical experiments and how did they cope with becoming "human guinea pigs". By analysing their feelings of hope, fear, and faith, and their determination to survive and help each other, this dissertation critically examines the situation that medical experiments involved more than just experimental procedures. The aim, therefore, is to provide a reminder that, behind the raw statistical data of experiments, there were thousands of people who suffered because of medical abuse, and that medical experiments should be seen through the eyes of their victims.

In this context, a biographical profile of Władysław Dering is necessary. Dering's reputation is that of a "collaborator" who brought shame to the medical profession. It is important to understand how a respected prisoner could change into a perpetrator who removed gonads of innocent Jews. It is self-evident that the camps demoralised their inmates, wearing down their moral strength and reinforcing the

instinct to survive. At times that instinct inevitably took precedence over ethical considerations.

Furthermore, this dissertation places the topic of compensation within its broad historical context. It examines the continuation of the struggle for justice by a group of extraordinary Poles who began fighting for their rights at Ravensbrück and then, for many years after the war, continued to fight for the compensation to which they were entitled.

This dissertation thus has three fundamental aims: 1) to explore how a privileged, influential and relatively wealthy group of Polish Catholic priests dealt with social degradation, humiliation, hunger, work and medical experiments at Dachau; 2) to use Dering as a case study both to understand how a respected doctor could become a "castrator" at Auschwitz and to determine which factors influenced his decisions and to demonstrate how experience of the camp affected his life; 3) to use the *Rabbits* as an example in order to illustrate how the physical suffering caused by medical experiments could help in developing a bond between victims, and in building the mental strength and determination to fight for survival and justice during and after the war.

## ARCHIVES AND METHODS

This thesis is one of the outcomes of the AHRC funded research project 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism' directed by Paul Weindling and Marius Turda. As a result, I was able to benefit from collected materials and the project's database. Thanks to my language skills, I was able to collect and analyse primary and secondary sources in regard to Polish victims of Nazi medicine. My contribution to this project will be presented in a form of detailed tables and charts throughout this dissertation.

To discuss the experience of selected Polish prisoners of Dachau, Auschwitz and Ravensbrück regarding Nazi medical experiments, I analysed primary sources in reference to: the concentration camps; Polish priests who were incarcerated at Dachau; Władysław Dering's life and camp activities are described in depth; and the group of Polish female prisoners at Ravensbrück known as the *Rabbits*. I have also examined materials in regard to medical experiments on malaria; phlegmon; sterilisation by use of chemical liquids and radiation; sulphonamide in treating war wounds; bone, muscle and nerve regeneration; and the issue concerning compensation claims for Polish victims of medical experiments against the Federal German government.

These topics offer a wealth of primary material that informs the three larger themes in regard to Polish inmates: a) priests at Dachau; b) physicians at Auschwitz; and c) women at Ravensbrück. These three themes in turn are viewed through three stages, thus: 1) the period before the experiments, which involves the history of arrests and subsequent adaptation to the concentration camp reality; 2) the period during the experiments, which includes the selection of experimental candidates; the course of experiments; their side effects, and the changes in the behaviour patterns of

inmates caused by the experiments; and, finally 3) the period after the experiments, which involves the period after the liberation including the post-war trials; emigration; repatriation, as well as the ensuing fight for compensation.

Materials in regard to the conditions at Dachau, the position of Polish Catholic priests within the camp, and the purpose of the medical experiments can be found amongst witness statements from those who testified at the Nuremberg Medical Trial, which can be accessed at the National Archives in Kew (hereafter TNA). Documents of similar content, including files on the Dachau Trial and other reports in reference to the conditions at the camp that were written by American soldiers, I consulted at the National Archives and Record Administration II (hereafter NARA) College Park, Maryland. Additional materials on experiments, such as malaria cards; lists of Claus Schilling's victims of malaria experiments; and Heinrich Schütz's phlegmon experiments lists discovered by me at the International Tracing Service (hereafter ITS) Digital Collection at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (hereafter USHMM), the ITS itself in Bad Arolsen, the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, and at the Dachau Memorial Museum Archives in Germany. These materials helped me reconstruct the course of the experiments and offer some important statistics. Moreover, to familiarise myself with the post-war experience of Polish priests, I analysed other materials in reference to Displaced Persons (hereafter DP) camps including DP identity cards and reports submitted to the UN which I found at the ITS Digital Collection USHMM; the UN files in New York; the Immigration History Research Center of the University of Minnesota and the American History Research Center and University Archives at the Catholic University of America in Maryland. Further, applications for emigration to the US by Polish priests were made accessible to me by the Center for Migration Studies in

Long Island. I was able to trace the post-war life of Polish priests who immigrated to the UK through documents collected by the Polish Division of the Royal Air Force, particularly personal files of members of the Second Corps of General Anders' Army, which several priests joined after the liberation of Dachau. I also consulted fragmentary files of members of the Polish Association of Ex-Political Prisoners of German Prisons and Concentration Camps, which were deposited at the Polish Institute in London.

Document relating to Dering's education and pre-war life were found at the Archives of the Medical Library in Warsaw, TNA in Kew, and the *Archiwum Państwowego Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau* (the Archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Museum). These also included information about his involvement in the underground movement. Documents related to the topic of sterilisation experiments including medical registers, I found at the ITS in Bad Arolsen, the ITS Digital Collection at the USHMM, but also at the *Żydowski Instytut Historyczny* (the Jewish Historical Institute) in Warsaw and at TNA. Materials, which document the involvement of the Polish government in Dering's trial, were accessed at the Medical Library and the *Instytut Pamięci Narodowej* (the Polish Institute for National Remembrance) in Warsaw. Moreover, documents in relation to the post-World War Two Polish immigration to the UK, and to Dering's arrest are to be found at the Polish Institute in London. Very fragmentary information about his life between 1949 and 1960 was deposited in the Emigration Archives at the Polish Library in the *Polski Ośrodek Społeczno-Kulturalny* (hereafter POSK) (the Polish Social and Cultural Association) in London. Finally, materials concerning the libel trial between Dering and Leon Uris are located at the Wiener Library and TNA.

Materials in reference to the arrest and incarceration stories of the *Rabbits*, including detail of the experiments, given by witnesses and defendants can be found among the above-mentioned files of the Nuremberg Medical Trial but also in documents related to the British-administrated Ravensbrück Trial in Hamburg Trial, of which copies were made accessible to me by Professor Weindling in addition to Leo Alexander's Papers, and Keith Mant's Papers. Fragmentary information can also be found in the Archives of the Ravensbrück Memorial Museum. Personal stories of all the *Rabbits* were deposited at the *Archiwum Akt Nowych* (hereafter ANN) (the Archives of the Modern Record) in Warsaw. Several reports on the liberation of Polish victims of medical experiments from Ravensbrück can be found in the *Polski Ośrodek Źródłowy* (the Polish Research Institute) in Lund in Sweden. Materials in relation to the *Rabbits*' visit to the US and the engagement of the American organisations in helping them in the Caroline Ferriday Collection and the Benjamin Ferencz Collection, which are held at the Archives of the USHMM. Documents that present the first attempt of the *Rabbits* at gaining compensation can be found at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz in Germany and at the Archives of the Human Rights Division of the UN in Geneva. I was able to view files on compensation cases, which were resolved in Poland between 1971 and 1987, at the IPN[76] in Warsaw, at the ANN, and at the *Fundacja polsko-niemieckie pojednanie* (the Foundation for Polish-German Reconciliation) in Warsaw. Those materials allowed me to explore the theme of compensation for Poles, which has not been discussed to date.

In addition, I have relied on published diaries and memoirs, to be found at the Warsaw University Library, Bodleian Library, the Library of Slavonic Studies at University College of London, the Polish Library at POSK, the *Studium Polski*

[76] I was the first researcher to view its collection of over 4,000 positively resolved applications for compensations from the German Federal Government of the Polish victims of medical experiments.

*Podziemnej* (The Polish Underground Movement Study Trust) in London, the Wiener Library in London, the National Medical Library in Bethesda in Maryland, the Archives of the Catholic Relief Services in Baltimore, and the Library of Congress.

The primary and secondary materials listed above show that completion of this thesis required obtaining access and critical analysis of numerous sources. This in turn required an accurately applied methodology. Firstly, the methodology is one of record-linkage. Thus, various retrospective personal accounts, such as published memoirs, oral testimonies and written recollections attached to compensation claims, were linked with surviving war-time primary sources. Among these are original malaria cards of research subjects from Dachau and the surgical register from Auschwitz. The second feature of the methodology used here is that of record linkage in order to present pre-war life stories of selected prisoners. Both types of sources were equally important for the methodologies employed. The personal narratives provided information about pre-war and war-time experiences of prisoners, which included social background, arrest and incarceration history as well as the psychological torment they experienced. However, details such as dates and names mentioned are often misleading. The primary sources, on the other hand, provide merely statistical data such as dates and details of experiments. Thus, applying the method of record linkage was meant to eliminate any factual inaccuracies, both intentional and accidental, that occurred in personal accounts, and also to create psychological profiles of inmates. Here, a third feature of my methodology is used in that I present medical experiments from the prisoners' perspective. In addition, evidence in regard to post-war trials, immigration and

compensation claims enabled me to construct post-war life stories of the Polish prisoners discussed in the dissertation.

**STRUCTURE**

The first part of this dissertation examines the arrest of Polish Catholic priests, Polish physicians, precisely Władysław Dering and Polish women and their subsequent conditions in concentration camps during World War Two. The nature of the conditions at Dachau, Auschwitz and Ravensbrück are highlighted as having an influence on the way prisoners were treated and how they dealt with the incarceration.

The second part focuses on the subject of medical experiments. Purpose and genesis of the medical research on malaria, phlegmon, war wounds treatment and sterilisation of humans will be discussed. I will also present the process by which victims were selected and the course of the experiments. Lastly, the impact of experiments on prisoners' behaviour during their incarceration will be analysed.

The third part of this dissertation explores the events that took place in a period covering several months before, and then during the liberation of Dachau, Auschwitz and Ravensbrück. It also describes the issues that Poles had to face shortly after the liberation including: the priests' decisions in regard to emigration or repatriation; Władysław Dering's arrest and his legal struggle with the Polish government, whilst being held in prison in Brixton in England; and, the engagement of the *Rabbits* in post-war trials of the Nazi criminals.

The fourth part of this dissertation explores the post-war life of the Polish participants in medical research. In particular, it looks at the lives of Catholic priests—who had been experimented upon with malaria and phlegmon at Dachau—after the war in Poland and abroad. By analysing the proceedings of the libel trial of Dering versus Uris, I will emphasise the influence of testimonials on understanding and sustaining the memory of the Holocaust and Nazi medical crimes. Finally, this

part emphasises the very important, yet rather undeveloped, topic of compensation for the victims of medical experiments, which was sponsored by the Federal German government. To this end, the engagement is discussed of the British and Americans in the struggle for compensation for Poles, as well as the political issues that were involved in that process and the results achieved in reference to the financial support for victims between 1951 and 2006.

# PART I: CONCENTRATION CAMPS AND PRISONERS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The process of establishing the concentration camp system in Nazi Germany can be divided into two periods: a) 1933-1936, which was characterised by the growing power of the Nazi movement in Germany, and b) 1936-1941, during which the Nazis secured and centralised their supremacy. The origin of the Nazi concentration camp began with setting the Reichstag ablaze on 27 February 1933. The next day, the Emergency Decree for the Protection of the Nation and State was passed. According to the provisions of this decree, the basic rights of German citizens were abolished, and the arrest and imprisonment of political opponents without a formal court order were also permitted.[1] This new policy was intended to eliminate every trace of actual or potential opposition to Nazi rule. As a result, thousands of German communists, socialists, Sinti, Roma and Jehovah's Witnesses were imprisoned at some of the first concentration camps, such as Dachau, Oranienburg or Kemna.[2] In the early 1930s, building a camp from scratch was not a common practice. The Nazis preferred to use existing structures, such as workhouses or prisons.[3] However, most of these early camps were not designed to detain a large number of prisoners due to relatively limited space that could not be expanded; thus, prisoners were usually released after a few months. Meanwhile, the political repression and terror tactics against enemies

[1] Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 30.
[2] Eugen Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1950), p. 30. This is an English translation of *Der SS-Staat: das System des deutschen Konzentrationslager* published in 1946 in Frankfurt by Fankfurter Hefte.
[3] Nikolaus Wachsmann, 'The Dynamics of Destruction', in Jane Caplan and Nikolaus Wachsmann (eds.), *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 19.

of the Nazi state were effective because the opposition weakened. Despite the fact that the figures of arrested people declined, the number of concentration camps grew.

In 1936, the Nazis began creating new concentration camps that were built from scratch in carefully chosen locations.[4] However, the character of the camps changed. First of all, the opposition was virtually eliminated; thus, the Nazis' focus shifted from political opposition to racial and criminal groups instead.[5] Secondly, forced labour facilities were created for the new prisoners, which in later years were used for the extermination of inmates. Lastly, the terror and brutality towards prisoners increased. In the meantime, the majority of the early camps were closed apart from Dachau, which was used as a model camp.[6]

Between 1939 and 1941, the Nazis continued building new camps in order to control the resistance in the occupied territories. Before the war, the camps officially aimed to re-educate enemies of the state; however, during the war the character of the camps changed again, as prisoners were used as forced labour in the war effort.[7] In 1942, after the decision on the "Final Solution" of the Jewish issue was made, the Nazis began building extermination centres, which took the lives of millions of European Jews.[8] In addition, many concentration camps also became centres for unethical medical research to which inmates were forcibly subjected.

After the invasion of Poland in 1939, thousands of Poles were arrested for political reasons, in addition to the terror unleashed on Polish Jews. In the majority of these cases their only crime was their nationality. The imprisonment of Poles by

[4] The vast majority of concentration camps were built during that time: 1936 Sachsenhausen; 1937 Buchenwald; 1938 Flossenbürg; 1938 after the Anschluss Mauthausen; 1939 Ravensbrück and Stutthof.
[5] Among those arrested were Sinti and Roma, Jews, homosexuals, prostitutes and others.
[6] Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, p. 33; also Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, p. 34.
[7] Rudolf Höss, *Autobiografia Rudolfa Hössa: Komendanta obozu oświęcimskiego* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Prawnicze, 1990), p. 111.
[8] Wachsmann, 'The Dynamics of Destruction', pp. 26-32.

the Nazis was motivated by a planned occupation policy, which was applied to the *intelligentsia*[9] and other influential groups, such as the clergy, who were expected to lead the masses in resistance. Yet the prisoners were representatives of all groups of Polish society including teenagers, farmers, illiterates and even criminals. All of them suffered torture, starvation and forced labour; however, for the wealthier groups of Poles coping with lack of food was arguably harder as they were not familiar with hunger. The same was the case for many women, who were not used to hard labour; pulling a stone road-roller was beyond their strength. The extreme conditions inside concentration camps had enormous impact on prisoners' behaviour. Motivated by the instinct to survive, many mistreated fellow prisoners. In contrast, others managed to maintain their moral values and helped each other.

The origin and nature of three Nazi concentration camps—Dachau, Auschwitz and Ravensbrück—will now be considered. I will analyse the conditions at the model camp of Dachau and the role it played in the concentration camp system. I shall then discuss the changing nature of Auschwitz from a place of detention for Polish resistance fighters, to the biggest extermination centre of European Jewry. Further, I will analyse the functioning of Ravensbrück, as the largest camp for women. Moreover, I will examine the influence that the camps had on prisoners' conditions. Finally, this part analyses to what extent the conditions

[9] The *Intelligentsia* was an influential group in pre-war Polish society and played an integral part in creating the early resistance movement during the war. Before World War Two, the *intelligentsia* consisted of approximately 10 per cent of the total of the Polish population. It constituted the élite of the social and political hierarchy; therefore, it controlled the formal government apparatus as well as the most influential pressure groups. The pre-war Polish *intelligentsia* was also the politically-minded class. Members of that group felt that they were morally and intellectually responsible for the security of the less educated members of the Polish population. One of the prime values of the pre-war *intelligentsia* was patriotism, which was taken very personally and was seen as an obligation. Any achievement or failure of their country or of the government was understood as an achievement or failure of the *intelligentsia.* See Alicja Iwańska, *Polish Intelligentsia in Nazi Concentration Camps and American Exile: A Study of Values in Crisis Situations* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998). For statistics see Wojciech Duczmal, 'Poland', in James J. F. Forest and Philip G. Altbach (eds.), *International Handbook of Higher Education* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), vol. 1, pp. 935-951.

inside those camps affected inmates' behaviour. This allows one to understand the victim responses to the experiments in the respective camps, which will be analysed in the following part of this dissertation.

## 2. THE ORIGIN AND THE NATURE OF THE CAMPS: DACHAU, AUSCHWITZ AND RAVENSBRÜCK

### The Purpose and Location of the Camps

Following the Emergency Decree for the Protection of the Nation and State, the Nazis rapidly proceeded with establishing the first concentration camp at Dachau, located approximately twenty kilometres north-west of Munich. On 13 March 1933, representatives of the Munich police, appointed by Himmler, viewed the site of a factory about two kilometres outside the town of Dachau in order to assess its suitability as a potential detention centre.[10] As a result of their visit, water and electricity lines were installed the following day. And, soon after, on 22 March 1933, the first transport of 200 prisoners arrived, transferred from Stadelheim prison in Munich and from Landsberg fortress.[11]

According to the original plans, the capacity of the camp was not expected to exceed 2,700 inmates. However, the number of potential opponents to the Nazis steadily increased. As a result, the camp was enlarged several times, with the first extension taking place in 1937. The number of inmates rose progressively across this period, reaching 6,000 by the end of 1938. Up to this point, the majority of prisoners held at Dachau were of German nationality, as it was mainly a centre for the interrogation and torture of internal opponents of the Nazi government. This changed after the *Anschluss* of Austria (15 March 1938), and further when the Nazi policy against Jews escalated. In the middle of 1938, 18,000 prisoners arrived at Dachau, of whom the majority were Austrians. Furthermore, the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, which took place in November of the same year, caused an influx of approximately 10,000 new inmates. However, at that time, prisoners were only temporarily incarcerated.

[10] Feliks Rak, *Krematoria i róże: Wspomnienia więźnia obozów Sachsenhausen i Dachau* (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1971), p.70; Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 21.
[11] Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 22.

Approximately one third of them were released after a few weeks.[12] Over the years, other prisoners were incarcerated at Dachau including homosexuals, Sinti, Roma and Czechoslovaks.[13] According to several post-war recollections, until the end of March 1933 while the local police guarded the camp, prisoners were in general well treated: their heads were not shaved; they were not forced to work; and they were not marked with numbers. These circumstances changed from April 1933, when SS officers took over the camp, and at that point, the terror began. Furthermore, the first cases of prisoners being tortured to death were already recorded in 1933.[14] During the war, the mistreatment of inmates resulting in death was frequent.

The decision to create a concentration camp in southern occupied Poland, just outside the area of General Government, was made when the Nazi authorities realised that the capacity of Polish prisons was not sufficient for the purposes of interrogating thousands of arrested Poles. The initiative came from the chief of the SS in Breslau, Erich von dem Bach-Zalewski.[15] The nineteenth-century Austrian military barracks, which were located near the small town of Oświęcim, were transformed into a detention centre that was later called Auschwitz.[16] Taking into account that the camp was meant to hold up to 10,000 people, transforming the existing barracks into a camp of that size was a challenge. Early in April 1940, SS-Sturmbannführer and commandant of Sachsenhausen, Walter Eisfeld, came to

[12] Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, pp. 31, 35.
[13] Stanisław Urbańczyk, *Uniwersytet za kolczastym drutem* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1975), p. 149; also Paul Martin Neurath, *The Society of Terrror: Inside the Dachau and Buchenwald Concentration Camps* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), pp. 4-5.
[14] Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 22.
[15] Höss, *Autobiografia Rudolfa Hössa*, p. 103.
[16] Oświęcim is located approximately 50 km southwest of Kraków, close (about 50 km) to the Tatra Mountains. Yisrael Gutman, 'Auschwitz: An Overview', in Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (eds.), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 7.

Auschwitz to inspect the site.[17] In May, the first transport of inmates arrived. They were thirty German criminal prisoners who were brought from Sachsenhausen to effectively run the camp. Subsequently, on 16 June, the first group of Poles arrived.[18] Soon after, it became apparent that the originally designated space was inadequate; therefore, on 1 March 1941, Himmler gave an order to build a sub-camp called Birkenau, or Auschwitz II, in the nearby village of Brzezinka.[19] It was meant to imprison Soviets who were used to build Birkenau; however, due to the decision to implement the "Final Solution" and establish gas chambers and crematoria, it became the largest centre for the extermination of Jews from Europe.[20]

The Auschwitz complex, apart from about forty-eight smaller sub-camps, also included Auschwitz III, otherwise called Monowitz, as a work camp of IG Farben (*Interessen-Gemeinschaft Farbenindustrie*).[21] Birkenau was divided into several parts: one of them was established to imprison women; another for male Jews; and the third part for Sinti and Roma. Auschwitz, on the other hand, remained a concentration camp mainly for members of the Polish Resistance Movement[22] and for Soviet inmates. It was here that the experimental Block 10 was situated.

In the Third Reich, any person defined as an 'enemy of the state' was in danger of being arrested. This designation also concerned women. Until the late

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[17] Józef Garliński, *Fighting Auschwitz: The Resistance Movement in the Concentration Camp* (London: Julian Friedman Publishers, 1975), p. 20.

[18] Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (hereafter IPN), Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni niemieckich w Polsce (hereafter GK), 196/168 Najwyższy Trybunał Narodowy (hereafter NTN), Wyrok w sprawie przeciwko byłym członkom załogi obozu koncentracyjnego w Oświęcimie, p. 70.

[19] At that time there were 10, 900 prisoners incarcerated at Auschwitz. The vast majority of them were Poles. Gutman, 'Auschwitz: An Overview', p. 16. Also Stanisław Kłodziński, 'Pierwsze zagazowanie więźniów i jeńców w obozie oświęcimskim', *Przegląd Lekarski* 1 (1972), p. 81.

[20] Gutman, 'Auschwitz: An Overview', p. 19.

[21] Archiwum Żydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego (hereafter AŻIH) (Jewish Historical Institute Archives), RG# 303/XX Central Jewish Historical Commission by the Central Committee of the Jews in Poland (1944-1947), Archives of the Provincial Historical Commission (since 10.1947 Branches of the Jewish Historical Institute): Katowice, Kraków, Warszawa, Wrocław (1945-1950), folder 201, Filip Friedman, *To jest Oświęcim*, unpublished copy, 1945, p. 2.

[22] In practice, the Germans were arresting people randomly assuming that they were related to the resistance movement. The reason for arrest varied from distributing illegal newspapers to owning a radio.

1930s, it was usually applied to prostitutes, women who had had an abortion and those whose husbands had fled or gone into hiding. However, in April 1933, a decision was made to establish the first concentration camp exclusively for women in Moringen.[23] Another camp was built in Lichtenburg in 1937. It was meant to replace Moringen, which was closed a year later.[24] Shortly, it was discovered that the capacity of Lichtenburg was insufficient for the increasing number of female prisoners. The fact that the concentration camp was located in a castle, which dated from 1582, made it impossible to enlarge. Thus, in November 1938, Heinrich Himmler decided to create a concentration camp for women in Ravensbrück.[25] Records show that in the same year, 500 male prisoners were brought from Sachsenhausen to build a new detention centre just outside the small town of Fürstenberg, approximately ninety kilometres north of Berlin.[26] The nearby Lake Schwedtsee and the Havel River made the location convenient. Additionally, it benefited from a direct rail connection to Berlin.[27] Officially, Ravensbrück began to operate on 18 May 1939 when a transport of 867 German and seven Austrian women arrived from Lichtenburg.[28] Later the same month, another group arrived from Austria, which contained 400 Sinti and Roma. Consequently, by the end of June 1939, the number of prisoners reached 2,000. The first women from Poland were sent to Ravensbrück at the end of the military onslaught of September 1939. By the end of 1939, the number of women imprisoned at the camp reached 2,290. With the beginning of the war, the number of prisoners increased rapidly; thus, the camp was

[23] For history of the camp see Gabrielle Herz, *The Women's Camp in Moringen: A Memoir of Imprisonment in Germany 1936-1937* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).
[24] In 1940 a youth camp was opened that lasted till 1945.
[25] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 12.
[26] Herz, *The Women's Camp in Moringen*, p. 40.
[27] Ibid., p. 16.
[28] Wiener Library (hereafter WL), Collection 612 Komitee ehemaliger politischer Gefangener: Reports and Statistics about Concentration Camps and other, folder 11, Bericht über das Revier des Frauen-Konzentrationslagers Ravensbrück, 7 September 1945.

enlarged four times. Sources show that women imprisoned at Moringen and Lichtenburg were not mistreated and the majority of them were released after a few months.[29] These prisoners, however, were of German nationality. At Ravensbrück, on the other hand, prisoners, particularly those coming from countries occupied by the Nazis, were constantly abused.

**The Character of the Camps**

As already mentioned, Dachau was the last remaining of the first generation of Nazi concentration camps. Therefore, in addition to its primary function as a concentration camp for opponents of the regime, Dachau served two secondary purposes: as training centre for the SS, particularly for future camp commandants, and as a model camp to show to foreign visitors.[30] Furthermore, Dachau was always presented as the "clean" camp. Before the war, the Nazis published reports in the German press, which were supposed to prove that there was no mistreatment happening at Dachau. This propaganda was meant to reassure public opinion because several alarming pieces of information regarding cruelty towards prisoners had appeared in the media.[31] During the war, the Nazis maintained the same image before the other Axis powers, presenting Dachau as a professionally coordinated and exceptionally well-run institution. For that purpose, Block 1, which was one of the hospital blocks, was kept as a model and, according to the recollections of a Polish inmate, Stanisław Skowron, was shown to foreign visitors as proof that, in the Third Reich, standards of hygiene in concentration camps were not inferior during

[29] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 23.
[30] Höss, *Autobiografia Rudolfa Hössa*, p. 75.
[31] Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 26.

wartime.[32] Thus, that part of the hospital was not only spotless but patients had single beds with white bed linen. Each patient had a basin next to his bed, and some of them even had books.[33] However, immediately after an official visit, patients were sent back to the 'real' hospital where they shared a bed with at least two other inmates.[34]

Due to its unique character and representative function, Dachau detained some elite German and European prisoners. Among them numbered: Prince Leopold of Prussia; the former Chancellor of Austria, Kurt von Schuschnigg; and two German church leaders: the Catholic episcopal canon Johannes Neuhäusler and the head of the Protestant "Confessing Church", Martin Niemöller. The experience of members of the elite in comparison to ordinary prisoners was undoubtedly different. The vast majority of prisoners suffered from malnutrition and lived in overcrowded blocks in unhygienic conditions, whereas the privileged inmates resided in relatively good conditions in single cells that were not locked. They did not work and were fed the same food as the SS.[35] Moreover, Dachau was also known as the camp for priests where, between 1933 and 1945, a total of 2,771 clergy were imprisoned.[36] Officially, consolidating incarcerated clergy of all Christian faiths aimed to provide them with better conditions. Evidence proved, however, that only the German clergy benefited from the improvements.

The character of Auschwitz changed significantly over the years in many aspects. Until 1942, Auschwitz was predominantly a camp for Polish members of the

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[32] Stanisław Skowron, *Wspomnienia z pobytu w Dachau* (Kraków: Nakładem Księgarni S. Kamiński, 1945), p. 28.
[33] Ibid., pp. 28-29.
[34] Stanisław Grabowski, *Znienawidzeni-- 22583 P: Z przeżyć polskiego księdza w niemieckich obozach koncentracyjnych* (Philadelphia: Polish Star Publisher, 1947), p. 77.
[35] Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 44.
[36] Patrick J. Gallo, 'The Road to Dachau', in Patrick J. Gallo (ed.), *Pius XII, the Holocaust, and the Revisionists: Essays* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co. Publishers, 2006), p. 56.

resistance movement. In other words, the vast majority of arriving inmates were Polish 'politicals' who were incarcerated for what can be broadly understood as resistance activity against the Third Reich. During that time, Poles formed various prisoners' groups, mainly according to their political views, in order to help and support each other. A year after Auschwitz was established, the camp authorities began assigning inmates to clerical jobs. Consequently, many Poles were able to gain influential jobs and, in some cases, to receive various privileges, because they were the largest group of inmates.[37] Although by 1942 approximately ninety per cent of inmates were non-Jewish Poles, after the "Final Solution" commenced, the number of Jewish inmates began growing rapidly and they became the predominant group represented at the concentration camp complex Auschwitz-Birkenau.[38] This does not mean that Jews were spared from persecution prior to the "Final Solution". In fact, they were present at every Nazi camp from the outset. After *Kristallnacht*, thousands of German and Austrian Jews were either 'strongly persuaded' or forced to emigrate and to give up their possessions to the Nazi government.[39] During the war, and particularly after the Wannsee Conference held on 20 January 1942, the situation of incarcerated Jews changed dramatically.[40] Jews were systematically killed in large numbers. Many were aware of their inescapable fate; thus, above and beyond the effects of deadly malnutrition, heavy labour, diseases and the horrendous accommodation conditions, psychological factors including depression played their part in causing the enormous death rates among Jewish inmates. Yet, the position of skilled Jews was to some extent better. Dedicated physicians, in particular, were able to improve their food rations and accommodation. In the beginning, they were

[37] Höss, *Autobiografia Rudolfa Hössa*, p. 118.
[38] Dieter Pohl, 'The Holocaust and the Concentration Camps', in *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany: The New Histories*, p. 154.
[39] Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 38.
[40] Pohl, 'The Holocaust and the Concentration Camps', p. 154.

assigned as nurses. However, in 1943, due to the increasing number of prisoners, the Nazis began using the skills of Jewish physicians.[41] Undoubtedly, the constant need for health workers made their camp experience bearable in comparison to ordinary Jewish prisoners.[42]

In the beginning, Auschwitz was a strictly male camp; however, this changed due to the large Jewish transports that began arriving in early 1942. As a result, in March 1942, an order to separate ten barracks to accommodate women at Auschwitz was put into operation.[43] In addition, several female criminal prisoners transferred from Ravensbrück were used as guards. They became famous for their particular sadism towards prisoners. As the capacity of the designated area at Auschwitz I was not sufficient, in August 1942, a female section was built at Birkenau.[44]

The progress of the war, which involved continued Nazi expansion to the East and the systematic killing of Jews, caused the complex at Auschwitz-Birkenau to become not only the biggest detention centre, but also the largest Nazi extermination camp. The successful extermination of Jews required an effective method of mass killing. For that reason in 1941, a number of Soviets were used as "human guinea pigs" in testing the efficiency of *Zyklon B* in one of the Auschwitz blocks.[45] The first specific substance used in gassing people was carbon monoxide,

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[41] Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, p. 78; Lifton, *Nazi Doctors*, p. 214.
[42] Höss, *Autobiografia Rudolfa Hössa*, pp. 130-131.
[43] In the beginning, 999 German women and a number of Jewish women were brought from Ravensbrück. See Gutman, 'Auschwitz: An Overview', p. 17.
[44] Höss, *Autobiografia Rudolfa Hössa*, pp. 132-133.
[45] Establishing the exact number of victims and the date of the first gassing is very difficult due to different information being given in publications. For instance Höss mentioned 300 prisoners who were gassed in July 1941, see Höss *Autobiografia Rudolfa Hössa*, p. 135-142; Kłodziński gives an approximate time of the first gassing as between September and October 1941, see Stanisław Kłodziński, 'Pierwsze zagazowane więźniów i jeńców w obozie oświęcimskim', pp. 81-94; Gutman's estimates gave the number of 1000 Soviet POWs gassed in September 1941, see Gutman, 'Auschwitz: an Overview', p. 28. Also see Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 545.

which was deployed at first to kill psychiatric patients in the 'T4'[46] "euthanasia" killing installations and then used from December 1941 in Chełmno. In early 1942, death factories in Treblinka, Bełżec and Sobibór began operating also using carbon monoxide.[47] Prior to that, prisoners were mainly executed by the *Einsatzkommando*.[48] However, that method of eliminating inmates was time-consuming and too expensive. Consequently, in 1942, *Zyklon B* was introduced for mass extermination of Jews at Auschwitz.[49] The actual action of killing Jews began in March 1942, when one of the barracks at Birkenau was transformed into a gas chamber. Shortly after the *Sonderkommando*—a group of Jewish inmates who were specially trained to calmly walk selected Jews into the gas chambers—was created.[50] The *Sonderkommando* was also responsible for pulling out gold teeth, cutting hair off corpses and loading bodies into crematoria ovens.[51] The process of murdering Jews lasted until the early days of 1945.

Ravensbrück was originally established as a concentration camp.[52] However, interrogation of the Camp Commandant, Johann Schwarzburger, during the Hamburg Ravensbrück Trial proves the existence of a gas chamber at the site that operated from November 1944, and that this chamber was destroyed before the

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[46] T4 was a secret "euthanasia" or medical killing program and organisation that targeted handicapped people who were viewed as 'unworthy'. The killing began in September 1939 and officially ended in August 1941. However, it was secretly continued until the end of the war. For detailed analysis see Maike Rotzoll, Gerrit Hohendorf, Petra Fuchs, Paul Richter, Christoph Mundt, Wolfgang Eckart (eds.), *Die nationalsozialistische "Euthanasie"-Aktion "T4" und ihre Opfer: Geschichte und ethische Konsequenzen für die Gegenwart* (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010).

[47] Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 39.

[48] Einsatzkomanndo was a special force responsible for liquidation of Germany's enemies. See Höss, *Autobiografia Rudolfa Hössa*, p. 143.

[49] For a more comprehensive study regarding Zyklon B see Paul Julian Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe, 1890-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 124-136.

[50] To comprehend experiences of members of the Sonderkommando see Shlomo Venezia, *Inside the Gas Chambers: Eight Months in the Sonderkommando of Auschwitz* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).

[51] Höss, *Autobiografia Rudolfa Hössa*, p. 147.

[52] Rochelle G. Saidel, *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p. 13.

liquidation of the camp.[53] However, the fact that crematoria and the gas chamber were located outside the camp makes an estimation of gassed inmates very difficult.[54] Many scholars, however, believe that the size of the Ravensbrück gas chamber was too small to carry out killing on a mass scale; therefore, it was most likely used to shorten lives of ill and elderly prisoners of all nationalities as opposed to Birkenau where over a million inmates were gassed of whom the vast majority were Jewish.[55] Thus, despite the functioning killing facility, the character of Ravensbrück did not change and it remained as a concentration camp. Moreover, the prime purpose of the camp was the exploitation of women. At first, prisoners were used to build accommodation for the SS and to establish the road network within the camp, for which they were forced to pull a roller in a team of twelve to pave the streets. When the war began, other work assignments were introduced, such as work on farms, in factories and even in the nearby town of Fürstenberg. In a similar manner to Dachau, Ravensbrück was also used as a training centre for female SS guards who were later sent to other concentration camps, including Majdanek and Auschwitz.[56]

The treatment of female prisoners at Ravensbrück proved that the Nazis did not hold any favourable attitudes towards women. Female inmates, as with the men in other concentration camps, were assigned to tasks that involved hard labour beyond their strength. Moreover, they were mistreated to the same extent as male

[53] The National Archives (hereafter TNA), War Office (hereafter WO) 235/316, Interim Report by War Crimes Investigation Unit, BAOR on Ravensbrueck Concentration Camp.
[54] In the beginning prisoners' dead bodies were taken to a crematorium in Fürstenberg but when the number of casualties began increasing the camp commandant decided to install a crematorium for the camp, which began operating on 29 April 1943. See Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, p. 115.
[55] Saidel named Ravensbrück as an extermination camp due to the existence of the gas chamber. Evidence shows, however, that it was not used as part of the systematic killing machinery see Saidel, *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück*, p. 20. Also on that point see Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 291. For additional details on using gas chambers in Ravensbrück see Germaine Tillion, *Ravensbrück* (Paris: Seuil, 1988), pp. 329-360.
[56] Saidel, *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück*, p. 13.

prisoners. For instance, a common practice for the camp authorities was keeping prisoners for hours outside their block barefoot in freezing conditions. Women were often forced to defecate inside their block, for which they were punished, because at night they were allowed to use the toilet only once.[57] Despite the brutality that women at Ravensbrück experienced, their behaviour towards each other was more humane in comparison to other camps. In other words, the relations between female prisoners at Ravensbrück were complex, yet not antagonistic. Women were divided into national groups; for instance Germans, as well as Poles, stayed together with minor interaction with other inmates. The quantity of prisoners of each particular nationality was significant in the process of forming groups; however, the year of arrival also had its importance. For instance, French prisoners began arriving at the camp relatively late, in 1943/44, when the camp rules and lucrative positions were already divided between Poles and communists of various nationalities. Therefore, the conditions of the French women were particularly difficult, as they were deliberately dispersed in various blocks to prevent them from forming resistance inside the camp.[58] Moreover, political views and religion also united, and in some cases, divided prisoners. Communists and socialists of various nationalities cooperated and supported each other. Polish women, mostly Catholic, often found socialising with communists awkward.[59] Regardless of nationality, political views and religion, inmates aimed to keep their minds occupied; therefore, finding new, or cultivating old, activities such as art or poetry by women at Ravensbrück was very

[57] Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, p. 35.
[58] The majority of French prisoners at Ravensbrück were incarcerated because of their involvement in the resistance movement in France.
[59] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 91.

important because they felt more comfortable being surrounded by inmates with whom they had something in common.[60]

Out of the three camps discussed above, only the sub-camp of Auschwitz, namely Birkenau, was an extermination camp, where over a million Jews perished. However, in all three camps thousands of inmates including men, women and children died as a result of mistreatment, diseases, hard labour and malnutrition. Consequently, only a small number of inmates survived at the camp until their liberation (see table below). This, however, does not mean that the rest of the inmates died. Indeed, the transfer of prisoners from one camp to another was relatively common. In addition, thousands of inmates left the camp shortly before liberation on 'death marches' to other destinations. However, tens of thousands of weak and undernourished prisoners did not survive the forced marches, which, at times, were over hundreds of kilometres.[61] As has been emphasised in this chapter, the genesis and the character of the camps at Dachau, Auschwitz[62] and Ravensbrück were different; however, the common factor was the dreadful experience of incarceration that the survivors went through. In addition, as shall be discussed in the following part of this thesis, all the above-mentioned camps became centres for unethical medical research, which cost hundreds of innocent lives and left others struggling with health problems for the rest of their lives.

[60] Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, pp. 121-126.
[61] For more information regarding death marches see Daniel Blatman, *The Death Marches: The Final Phase of Nazi Genocide* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).
[62] I will describe both Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II, known as Birkenau.

## Camp statistics [63]

| Camp | Overall number of prisoners | Died at the camp | Liberated at the camp |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dachau | 200,000 | 8,037 Polish non-Jews including 798 priests<br><br>10,000 Jews of all nationalities<br><br>10,000 others including over 4,000 Soviet POWs | 32,000 |
| Ravensbrück | 132,000 females<br><br>20,000 males | 14,000 Polish non-Jews<br><br>Between 5,000 and 10,000 Jews of all nationalities<br><br>Between 7,000 and 13,000 others | 3,800 females and males |
| Auschwitz (including Birkenau) | 1,300.000 | 50,000 Polish non-Jews<br><br>Between 960,000 and 1.100,000 Jews of all nationalities<br><br>150,000 others including 23,000 Sinti and Roma | 7,500 |

[63] For statistics from Dachau see Marcuse, *Legacies of Dachau*, p. 44; Ravensbrück see Bernhard Strebel, 'Das Männerlager im KZ Ravensbrück 1941-1945', *Dachauer Hefte* 14 (1998), p. 141.

## 3. POLISH PRISONERS AND THE REALITIES OF THE CAMPS

### Catholic Priests at Dachau

The first months of the Second World War were characterised by mass arrests of members of the Polish elite. Among them were thousands of priests, representatives of one of the most powerful institutions in pre-war Poland. The Catholic Church was targeted by the Nazis because it was believed to have great power to influence the Polish people, of whom, in the late 1930s, the majority were practising Catholics. The extreme brutality of the first months of the Nazi occupation brought people back to their roots, their culture and also to their religion. Terrified for the future of their country, Poles remembered the great contribution of the Catholic Church in refining Polish traditions and language when, between 1795 and 1918, Poland did not exist as a nation state on the map of Europe. The Nazi leaders were aware of the position and the authority of the Church in Poland, and for that reason they were anxious about the potential for patriotic resistance from the Polish clergy. Therefore, Polish priests faced new regulations allowing the occupying forces to control and restrict their religious activity. Although many priests decided to obey the new rules in order to be able to serve their parishioners, the opponents were removed, imprisoned, 'executed or simply murdered without trial and without the slightest pretence of justification' (see photo below).[64] There were no exact rules by which the Gestapo dealt with the clergy. Some priests were imprisoned in convents; others were taken to the Gestapo head offices for interrogation or were immediately transported to concentration camps.

[64] 'Religious Persecution', *Conditions in Occupied Territories: A Series of Reports Issued by the Inter-Allied Information Committee, London* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1942), vol. 3, p. 18.

*Polish priests and others awaiting execution in Bydgoszcz. September 1939. Source IPN*

Polish priests were imprisoned in several Nazi camps; however, the largest number of them was sent to Dachau, Stutthof, Sachsenhausen, Mauthausen or Auschwitz. For the majority the final destination was Dachau, which had the largest number of clergy as inmates in general. The first large group of Polish priests arrived at Dachau in November 1940. The last and largest group—500 in number— arrived at the end of October 1941. At that point, the number of Polish priests at Dachau reached 1,700.[65] These represented the clergy at all levels, from young clerics to eminent bishops.[66]

The agony of priests began as soon as they entered the gates of the camp. Their conditions at Dachau were especially unpleasant as they were representatives

[65] Mieczysław Grabiński, *Dyplomacja w Dachau* (München: Wydawnictwo "Słowa Polskiego", 1946), p. 150; a different number of priests and a different date for their arrival was given by Rak, *Kramatoria i róże*, p. 100.

[66] Among them were Bishop Kozal from Włocławek and Prelate Boros the chairman of the Catholic Action from Poznań, rector of the seminary in Włocłwek. In addition, there were hundreds of monks, and parish priests. See Grabiński, *Dyplomacja w Dachau*, p. 154.

of both the Polish people, meaning the enemies of the Third Reich, and the Polish Catholic Church, which was under constant attack by the Nazi regime.[67] The hatred of the SS towards the clergy was often manifested by the shredding of prayer books and the tearing of rosaries when the priests' suitcases were searched upon arrival.

Unlike in other Nazi concentration camps, all clergy at Dachau were located in three blocks separated from the rest of the prisoners.[68] This was not a coincidence but a result of negotiations between the Vatican, the German bishops and the Nazi authorities. The Holy See sent his Nuncio Cesare Orsenigo to Berlin to lead negotiations with the Nazis on his behalf.[69] The aim was to confine all clergy in a single camp and so to ease their life by gaining permission to carry on with their religious activity.[70] However, only German priests were able to enjoy fully the religious privileges negotiated by the Vatican.

Generally, priests were treated as ordinary prisoners i.e. they were accommodated in wooden barracks and worked as other inmates. Contact with secular prisoners, however, was very restricted. This was a deliberate tactic, which aimed to prevent them from interacting with other inmates, as it could lead to preaching. In the beginning, Polish clergymen shared barracks with priests of other nationalities. From early 1941, German clergy were concentrated at Block 26, whereas the rest of the priests, out of whom approximately eighty-five per cent were

[67] The treatment that prisoners received in concentration camps varied and was strictly related to their nationality. Germans, no matter if they were criminals or opponents of the Nazi regime, were at the top of the hierarchy; Jews, irrespective of their nationality, always at the bottom; whereas Poles, as Slavs, closely to the bottom. See Danuta Czech, 'The Auschwitz Prisoner Administration', in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, p. 364.

[68] Berben, *Dachau*, p. 148.

[69] For more details see Oscar Halecki, 'The Holy See and the Religious Situation in Central Europe 1939-1945', *The Catholic Historical Review* 53, 3 (1967), p. 399; also see Christian Bernadac, *Witches of God*, p. 218.

[70] Berben, *Dachau*, p. 146.

Poles, were crowded in two barracks, numbers 28 and 30.[71] Each of the priests' blocks was designed to accommodate 260 people. In practice, blocks 28 and 30 hosted more than 1,200 clergy, which later resulted in poor hygiene and fast-spreading infectious diseases. In contrast, the conditions enjoyed by the German clergy, who were favoured by the SS, were more humane. Block 26 was less crowded; the majority of priests had their own bed.[72]

The social position of Polish clergy within the camp was very complex. Although incarcerated as Polish political prisoners, they were isolated from other Poles; therefore, they were not treated as a part of the Polish 'community'. All prisoners at Dachau were treated with deliberate brutality; however, priests were also publicly humiliated. For instance, unlike other prisoners, priests were walked to the sanitary block through the entire camp naked.[73] SS guards often mocked the high position of Catholic clergy. To some extent, these provocative actions had an influence on other prisoners, as the camp leaders tried to create antagonism between Polish secular prisoners and priests by provoking anticlerical attacks. Accusations of laziness and greediness were brought against Catholic clergy. Some Poles took advantage of the situation to remind priests of their condescending attitude towards parishioners, high church taxes and disregard for celibacy. Some teenagers, who were particularly affected by the depraved nature of the concentration camp, provocatively called the clergy by their first name, which in contemporary Polish culture was an obvious sign of disrespect.[74] When asked about the treatment of

[71] Hans Carls, *Dachau, Erinnerungen eines katholischen Geistlichen aus der Zeit seiner Gefangenschaft, 1941-45* (Köln: Bachem, 1946), p. 91.
[72] The German block was less crowded, and thus cleaner. See Urbańczyk, *Uniwesytet za kolczastym drutem*, p. 225.
[73] Chowaniec, *Cudem ocaleni*, p. 12.
[74] Grabiński, *Dyplomacja w Dachau.*, p. 155.

Polish priests at Dachau, during the preparation for the Dachau Trial in May 1945 Father Dąbrowski said:

> Physically, our bad treatment was the same as that of all other prisoners but morally, we suffered even more, because we were continually injured by bad words and called names.[75]

Starting on 25 March 1941, a new policy towards clergy was introduced at Dachau. It was the beginning of a privileged period for Catholic priests.[76] The privileges involved better food, half a litre of hot chocolate and a quarter bottle of wine per person daily. In addition, priests were discharged from work and were ordered to rest for two hours before noon and for two hours in the afternoon. Clergy barracks were separated from others by wire fences. The most crucial out of all the benefits for the clergy was the approval to build a chapel.[77] Consequently, these privileges, especially better food and alcohol, created additional tensions between priests and the secular prisoners.[78] Dachau was presented as a 'sanatorium for priests who did not work but drank wine and beer all day'.[79] Nevertheless, 'some clerics showed a certain amount of incomprehension and selfishness towards their

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[75] Klaus Dörner, Angelika Ebbinghaus and Karsten Linne in cooperation with Karl Heinz Roth und Paul Weindling (eds.) *The Nuremberg Medical Trial1946/1947. Transcripts, Material of the Prosecution and Defense. Related Documents. On behalf of the Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts, Guide to the Microfiche-Edition* (München: Saur, 2001), (hereafter NMT) 3/457 Affidavit of Marion Dombrowski, 13 May 1945.

[76] It is hard to identify who was the driving force behind the introduction of these privileges. There were several theories: the first says that this was a result of the effort of Cardinal Bertram of Breslau, who had already intervened on behalf of incarcerated priests in the past; second, better treatment of clergy was brought about by Pope Pius XII; and the last, assumed that these privileges might have been a consequence of Hitler's successes in Italy and in Africa. For more details see Chester Kozal, *Memoir of Fr. Chester Kozal, O.M.I.* (NP: Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 2004), p. 82; Bronisław Najgier, *Powrót z daleka* (Łódź: Ludowa Spółka Wydawnicza, 1973), pp. 170-171; Rak, *Krematoria i róże*, p. 100.

[77] Urbański, *Duchowni w Dachau*, p. 31.

[78] Najgier, *Powrót z daleka*, p. 170. Also see Carls, *Dachau, Erinnerungen*, pp. 113-114.

[79] Korszyński, *Jasne promienie w Dachau*, p. 40.

companions in captivity' ostentatiously demonstrating their temporary superior position over ordinary secular prisoners.[80]

On 19 September 1941, all privileges were withdrawn from Polish, Dutch, Luxembourgian and Danish priests. Again, the reason for the changes is unclear. The German clergy at Dachau could still benefit from the special treatment.[81] In general, Polish priests were glad that they lost privileges. The harassment they had been experiencing as a consequence of the privileged treatment was finally eliminated. Consequently, Polish clergy, unlike German priests, were banned from using the chapel. Father Kozal believed that it was meant to isolate and discriminate against Polish priests.[82]

Work at the concentration camp could be perceived as a sophisticated method of torture. Inmates worked to increase the income of the SS, and the war-making potential of the Third Reich. According to Himmler, work was meant to have a rehabilitating character. Therefore, it was conducted under the motto, 're-educating enemies of the state'.[83] Prisoners were assigned to a variety of tasks, for instance building new barracks. Occasionally their assignment was moving heavy bags of sand back and forth, not to increase their productivity but purely for torment.[84] In every concentration camp the most desirable posts were connected to the kitchen where it was possible to *"organise"* something to eat. As Stanisław Grzesiuk explained:

> In the camp you had to take two simple rules. The first one was to avoid work. The second one was to learn how to organize something to eat. For instance taking bread of another prisoner was stealing, but

[80] Berben, *Dachau*, p. 147.
[81] Bernadac gives different date 18 October 1941, *Witches of God*, p. 225.
[82] Kozal, *Memoir*, p. 90. See also Biskupski, *Męczeńskie biskupstwo*, p. 39-40.
[83] Musioł, *Dachau*, p. 134.
[84] Ibid., p. 135

> if you take it from a wagon or from the kitchen it's not stealing but organizing.[85]

The conditions of Polish Catholic priests, in terms of hard labour, were particularly difficult, as for many of them this was something entirely new. Priests were treated in the same way as Jews; they were given the worst and the most humiliating jobs. One of them was cleaning the streets, getting rid of the excrement and removing dead bodies.[86] One of the hardest and the most pointless jobs at Dachau, to which Polish priests were regularly assigned, was removing snow. However, they were not given any proper equipment; thus, clergymen had to use their hats and tables that they converted into shovels. When the snow melted, priests had to remove the mud.[87] In 1942, a large number of Polish priests were trained as joiners, builders and bricklayers. Thanks to these new skills, clergymen were ordered to carry out building work, such as crematoria and gas chamber.[88] The largest number of priests, however, worked in Himmler's herb plantation, which was located just outside the camp.[89] From 1941 until 1943, it was the most undesirable place to work due to the prevailing conditions there. In addition, priests who worked in the plantation were not allocated the same food rations as workers in other parts of the camp.[90] Hungry priests, who were in the majority among the farm workers, were forced to feed themselves with all sort of weeds and insects. Father Stanisław Grabowski described how glad he was to be working in a rabbit farm because 'it gave [him] the opportunity to eat rabbit food such as potato skins, grains, and

[85] Stanisław Grzesiuk, *Pięć lat kacetu* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1965), p. 31.
[86] Gustaw Morcinek, *Listy spod morwy,(Sachsenhausen-Dachau)* (Katowice: Literatura Polska, 1946), p. 69; also see Grabowski, *Znienawidzeni*, p. 51.
[87] Grabowski, *Znienawidzeni*, p. 54.
[88] These were completed shortly before liberation, in February 1945. See Horace R Hansen, *Witness to Barbarism* (St. Paul: Thousand Pinetree Press, 2002) p. 215; and Rak, *Krematoria i róże*, p. 101.
[89] In season it employed over 3,000 prisoners and during the off season approximately 1,500 people. See Reimund Schnabel, *Die Frommen in der Hölle: Geistliche in Dachau* (Frankfurt am Main: Rödenberg-Verlag, 1966), p. 141.
[90] Schnabel, *Die Frommen*, p. 143.

beetroot skin'.[91] However, the vast majority of priests were not so fortunate. Hundreds of Polish clergy lost their lives because they were too weak, ill or old to keep up with the speed of exhausting physical labour.

Unlike secular prisoners who were able to obtain better positions that came with larger food rations and better accommodation, like *Kapo*[92] or *Blockführer*[93], Polish priests were not given any chances to improve their conditions inside the camp. The position and respect of their parishioners and superiors that they had previously enjoyed was meaningless at the camp. In other words, at Dachau a bishop and a simple cleric were treated equally, i.e. equally abused.

**Physicians at Auschwitz: Władysław Dering**

As has already been mentioned, Auschwitz was initially established to incarcerate Polish resistance fighters and other Polish opponents of the Nazi regime. The first transport of 728 Poles arrived at the camp on 14 June 1940.[94] It contained resistance fighters, soldiers of the Polish Army and members of the *intelligentsia*. Władysław Alexander Dering was brought to Auschwitz along with 1,500 other Poles on 15 August 1940 with a transport from Tarnów. He was marked with the number 1723 and with a red triangle with a P in it, which meant that he was classified as a Polish political prisoner. Dering was a typical example of a member of the modern pre-war *intelligentsia*. He was born on 6 March 1903 in Iwankowce, near Kiev in Russia, to Catholic parents Leopold and Maria. Dering's family, as he claimed, were

[91] Grabowski, *Znienawidzeni*, p. 55.
[92] A privileged prisoner who was assigned by the SS to supervise a kommando—group of working prisoners, *Kapo* could also carried out administrative tasks.
[93] Privileged prisoner who was put in charge of a block. This position was less beneficial than that of *Kapo*.
[94] Czech, 'The Auschwitz Prisoner Administration', p. 363.

immigrants from Great Britain.[95] He graduated from Warsaw Medical University on 28 May 1928 specialising in gynaecology and obstetrics. During his studies, Dering met another medical student, Krystyna Ossowska, who later became his wife. After graduation he worked at the University Gynaecological Clinic in Warsaw for nine years, and in the meantime, for a period of three years, he also gained experience in general surgery.[96] In addition to his hospital post, Dering ran a private surgery in his flat. Despite the overwhelming sense of danger caused by mass arrests of solicitors, teachers, priests and physicians during the first several months after the World War began, Dering's life was uninterrupted. He carried on practising medicine, which he was able to do thanks to signing the 'Aryan blood declaration' that was required from non-Jews who worked in the public sector.[97] In November 1939 after the failure of the *September Campaign*, Władysław Dering and his wife decided to join the underground movement *Tajna Armia Polska*[98] (the Secret Polish Army). Dering became a medical officer for the resistance, and, with the permission of his wife, he used their flat as a meeting-place for members of the organisation.[99] On 3 July 1940, Dering's good fortune ended when he was arrested during a random street roundup.[100] For a few weeks, he was brutally interrogated at the Pawiak prison in Warsaw before being sent to Auschwitz.[101]

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[95] Biblioteka Polska (Polish Library) (hereafter BP), Archiwum Emigracji (hereafter AE) (Emigration Archives), Kopertoteka 283 Władysław Dering.
[96] TNA, Treasury Solicitor and HM Procurator General's Department (hereafter TS) 58/744 Crown privilege: Dering v. Uris and others, request for disclosure of official documents relating to previous proceedings at Bow Street Magistrates Court for alleged libel, Władysław Dering: My Reply to the Accusations submitted on the 18.12.1947, p. 5.
[97] Biblioteka Lekarska (hereafter BL) (Medical Library), file 2/1/1388 Władysław Dering.
[98] Hereafter TAP.
[99] TNA, TS 58/744, Dr Krystyna Ossowska-Dering: Declaration 1 July 1947. Also see Kazimierz Malinowski, *Tajna Armia Polska. Znak. Konfederacja zbrojna: Zarys genezy, organizacji i działalności* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1986), pp. 230.
[100] TNA, Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 371/66574 Polish request for the arrest and extradition of Dr. Wladyslaw Dering, Draft of the Statement of Wladyslaw Dering.
[101] www.stankiewicz.com/pawiak/hazd.htm (Accessed on 12 January 2012)

Until spring 1942, Poles represented the majority at Auschwitz; thus, those who could speak German were able to obtain more important positions within the camp. Young Polish intellectuals and students were assigned to work as clerks. They were responsible, for instance, of keeping track of the incoming transports and death certificates.[102] Owing to materials gathered by those prisoners, information in regard to the experience of inmates at Auschwitz was retrieved after the Nazis destroyed the majority of camp documentation. At the beginning of his time at the camp, Dering did the same manual labour as other ordinary prisoners. As he explained after the war, he was afraid to reveal his profession because educated and highly skilled Poles had been specifically targeted by the Nazis.[103] However, about eight weeks after arriving at the camp, Dering fell ill with dysentery and was taken to the hospital, where he met two Polish male nurses. This meeting later resulted in him changing his work assignment.[104]

Auschwitz was located in occupied Polish territory; however, within a few years the prisoners were not only of various nationalities, but also members of different religious and political groups. Therefore, at Auschwitz, as in other concentration camps, organising various underground movements was a natural course of action. The first resistance organisation, the *Związek Organizacji Wojskowej*[105] (the Union of Military Organisation), was created in the autumn of 1940. At that time, the vast majority of inmates were Polish by nationality and imprisoned as political prisoners; thus, this organisation was formed by Poles, for Poles. Its precursor was Witold Pilecki, a member of the TAP, who in order to verify the situation at Auschwitz and to organise an underground movement at the camp, let

[102] Czech, 'The Auschwitz Prisoner Administration', p. 365.
[103] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, pp. 60-61.
[104] Garliński, *Fighting Auschwitz*, p. 41
[105] Hereafter ZOW.

the Nazis capture him under a false name.[106] Pilecki, along with several other prisoners, tried to introduce a strict confidentiality system, under which members of the organisation were divided into groups of five, thereby ensuring that the members of one group did not know either the membership or the responsibilities of other groups. This was meant to protect the movement from being denounced; however, the policy was ineffective and on 11 October 1943 fifty-four members were captured and shot by the SS. Nevertheless, the main aim of the Polish underground movement, which was to inform the Polish authorities in exile about conditions inside the camp, was achieved.[107] By the time prisoners of other nationalities grew in influence, the Polish underground had already an established position within the camp. The majority of lucrative posts in the office, hospital and kitchen were filled by Polish prisoners. Tension arose between 'experienced' Polish prisoners and newcomers who called the organisation of Poles 'the claque of Polish generals'.[108]

Dering played an integral role in the ZOW at Auschwitz. In fact, his and Władysław Surmacki's arrests, both important members of the TAP, were part of Pilecki's motive for arranging his own capture by the SS, so that Pilecki could be sent to Auschwitz to organise the underground movement.[109] Thus, Dering was among the five members of the first ZOW conspiracy, created by Pilecki. Thanks to Pilecki's contacts, Dering was hired at the hospital as a male nurse; however, soon after he was promoted to physician.[110] Apart from Dering, who was the commandant of the sick room, there were also other two doctors who were important for the underground—Dr Rudolf Diem, who ran the camp's underground health service; and

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[106] Pilecki was known at Auschwitz as Tomasz Sefarański. See Hermann Langbein, 'The Auschwitz Underground', in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, p. 487.
[107] Langbein, 'The Auschwitz Underground', p. 487.
[108] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Karl Sperber in Liverpool 21 March 1947, p. 2
[109] Adam Cyra and Wiesław Wysocki, *Rotmistrz Witold Pilecki* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen, 1997), p. 54.
[110] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Wladyslaw Dering, p. 3; also Garliński, *Fighting Auschwitz*, p. 41.

Czesław Jaworski, who was his deputy.[111] Dering's prime responsibility, as physician and underground movement member, according to his post-war recollection, was to save as many people as possible. Thus, he injected with fever those prisoners who were assigned to particularly hard tasks, in order to save them from probable injury. When the gas chambers were activated at the camp, he hid prisoners selected for death or changed their numbers, which, at that time, were written on their chest and could be easily washed off. When the tattooing policy was introduced, Dering, with the help of Poles hired as camp *Schreiber*[112], managed, on a few occasions, to swap the lists of people who were intended to be gassed with those that were already dead.[113] According to Garliński, Pilecki supplied Dering with a small radio to follow news from the Allied countries and the front. Dering hid the radio under the floor of Block 21 where he worked.[114] Thanks to his profession, Dering was able to contact people from outside the camp, which was crucial not only for the underground but also for the hospital and his patients, because on many occasions he smuggled medical supplies into the camp.[115]

In 1943, the *Auschwitz Fighting Group*, another powerful underground organisation, was formed. It drew together communists and socialists from several countries. The most influential among them were Hermann Langbein[116], an Austrian prisoner; Slavka Kleinowa, a member of the French resistance; Józef

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[111] Cyra, Wysocki, *Rotmistrz Witold Pilecki*, p. 121.
[112] The *Schreiber* was a prisoner who was assigned to keep various registers at the camp.
[113] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Wladyslaw Dering, pp. 2-3.
[114] Garliński, *Fighting Auschwitz*, p. 69.
[115] Ibid., p. 149.
[116] Hermann Langbein was born on 18 May 1912. He was an Austrian socialist who fought in the Spanish Civil War with the International Brigades against Francisco Franco. He was captured in France and sent to Dachau, then Auschwitz where he worked as Dr Wirths's secretary. After the war he was General Secretary of the International Committee. He was author of many publications. He died on 24 October 1995. See 'Hermann Langbein, 83, Aided Holocaust Victims', *The New York Times*, 1 November 1995.

Cyrankiewicz[117], a future Prime Minister of the communist government in post-war Poland and Alina Brewda[118], a Jewish doctor from Warsaw.[119] Regardless of common aims like support and solidarity among inmates, the political differences between the Polish resistance and the *Auschwitz Fighting Group* not only discouraged any potential for cooperation, but also, more importantly, created antagonism between the members of the two groups.[120] The fight for power between those groups contributed to creating a negative opinion about Dering, which shall be described later in this chapter.

**Women at Ravensbrück**

Although during the first months of the war Polish women were not particularly targeted by the Nazis, a considerable number of them were arrested randomly on account of their family connections. In other words, a familial link to a soldier or

[117] Józef Cyrankiewicz was born on 23 April 1911 in Tarnów. He studied at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. In the early 1930s, he became involved in the Socialist movement. He was arrested by the Gestapo in 1942, interrogated in Montelupich prison and then transferred to Auschwitz where he became a member of the international underground movement. He was liberated by the US Army in Mauthausen. After the liberation he became involved in politics. In 1947, he became Prime Minister excluding a two year break (1952-1954). He was head of the Communist Government until December 1970. In 1948, he was nominated First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party. Cyrakniewicz was held responsible for the brutal pacification of a student protest in March 1968 and killing striking shipyard workers in Gdańsk, Gdynia and Szczecin in December 1970. Cyrankiewicz died on 20 January 1989 a few months before the round table agreement. *Słownik biograficzny Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej XX wieku* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM. Instytut Nauk Politycznych PAN, 2004), pp. 219-221.

[118] Alina Brewda-Białostocki was born in Warsaw in 1905 to Jewish parents. In 1923, she graduated from high school and began medical studies which she completed in Warsaw in 1930. A year later she went to Paris where she worked for over a year. In 1936, she travelled to France and to Palestine. When the war broke out, she was back in Warsaw continuing her work. A few months later, Brewda's family had to move to the ghetto along with other Jews. As a Jew she was no longer allowed to treat non-Jews. During the suppression of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Brewda was transported to Majdanek where she worked as surgeon. On 21 September 1943, she was taken to Birkenau. Soon after, she was brought to Block 10 in Auschwitz. When the evacuation of the camp was in progress, Brewda was transferred to Ravensbrück where she was liberated by the Red Army. After the war she returned to Poland where she worked until 1947 when she went to London for an operation. However she never returned to Poland. She married Stanisław Białostocki in London in 1948. Alina Brewda-Białostocki died in London in 1986. See Minney, *I Shall Fear No Evil*, p. 226.

[119] Ibid., pp.146-149.

[120] Langbein, 'The Auschwitz Underground', p. 492.

member of the *intelligentsia* put women at risk of being arrested and persecuted.[121] After the failure of the *September Campaign*, the creation of the underground movement began. Many Polish women also joined the resistance. Meanwhile, the Gestapo carried out random arrests of those whom they perceived to be potential and actual female enemies of the Third Reich. Amongst captured 'criminals' were women who distributed illegal flyers, worked as couriers, as well as post office workers and farmers who owned a gun.[122] Consequently, large numbers were arrested, abusively interrogated and incarcerated in various detention centres.

The treatment that prisoners received, particularly upon arrival at the camp, depended on their nationality. Unlike other women, Jews had their heads shaved. Other nationalities, including Scandinavians, were classified as Aryans; therefore, their position within the camp was slightly better than that of the Polish women classified as Slavs, who represented the majority of prisoners at Ravensbrück. The first Polish inmates arrived at the camp in September 1939 from the Third Reich. They were 'activists' from the Polish minority in the Lubusz region, Westphalia, the town Opole in Silesia, from the border districts of Bytom and Lębork and also from East Prussia and from Berlin itself. This group contained eighty inmates; the vast majority of whom were released in 1940.[123] Meanwhile, arrests continued in the territories that were occupied by the *Wehrmacht* including Pomerania and Greater Poland. And, on 23 April 1940, a group of eighty teachers from a temporary camp in Działdowo in Mazovia were brought to the camp. Women involved in the Resistance movement began to be transported to Ravensbrück in August of the same year. The Polish prisoners who were later subjected to medical experiments, and who became

[121] See http://tajchert interia.pl/życiorysykrólików.htm (Accessed on 12 January 2012)
[122] Wanda Szymonowicz (ed.), *Beyond Human Endurance: The Ravensbrück Women Tell Their Stories* (Kraków: Prasowe Zakłady Graficzne RSW "Prasa", 1970), p. 180.
[123] Szymonowicz, *Beyond Human Endurance*, p. 8.

known as the *Rabbits*, came to the camp in two groups. The first arrived on 23 September 1941 and the second on 31 May 1942.[124] Polish women arrived at the camp in the greatest numbers between August and early October 1944. They were from Warsaw and were deported to the concentration camp after the failure of the Warsaw Uprising. Overall, 40,000 women from Poland were imprisoned at Ravensbrück.[125]

Approximately eighty per cent of Polish female inmates at Ravensbrück were classified as political prisoners. Moreover, according to post-war testimonies, a certain number of Polish women came to the camp with death sentences.[126] The vast majority of them experienced brutal interrogation in Gestapo offices and in prisons before they were sent to Ravensbrück. For instance, sixty-eight of the *Rabbits* were transported from Lublin, where they had spent months being questioned and beaten in a prison located inside Lublin Castle[127] and in the Gestapo head office called *Więzienie pod Zegarem*[128] (the Prison under the Clock). The remaining six *Rabbits* were transported to Ravensbrück from Warsaw where they had undergone

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[124] Szymonowicz, *Beyond Human Endurance*, pp. 8-9.

[125] Sybil Milton, 'Hidden Lives: Sinti and Roma', in Elizabeth R. Baer and Myrna Goldenberg (eds.), *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), p. 61.

[126] Helena Karolewska-Piasecka, testifying at the Hamburg Ravensbrück Trial, said that personally she never saw the written order for a death sentence. However, her mother had informed her that the Gestapo had confirmed that her daughter had received a death sentence. TNA, WO 235 Judge Advocate General's Office: War Crimes Case Files, Second World War, 305-306 Ravensbrück Case, Witness Testimony, Helena Piasecka, 30 December 1946.

[127] Lublin Castle was built in the 1820s as a prison on the grounds of a destroyed castle which dated from the Twelfth Century. The Nazis took it over in 1939. Approximately 40,000 people were interrogated in this prison that, next to Pawiak in Warsaw, Montelupich in Kraków, and Fort VII in Poznań, was one of the biggest prisons in occupied Poland. Thousands of inmates were executed or died as a result of torture, or were sent to Nazi camps. On 22 July 1944, the Nazis murdered 300 prisoners in the massacre at Lublin Castle. In August 1944, the Castle was transformed into a prison for opponents of the Communist regime. It held approximately 35,000 Poles, 333 were executed. In 1957, the Castle became a location for a state museum. For other information see Zygmunt Mańkowski, Róża Bieluszko-Świechowa (eds.), *Hitlerowskie Więzienie na Zamku w Lublinie 1939-1944* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1988).

[128] Więzienie pod Zegarem was built between 1928 and 1930 as the main building for the Land Office. Between 1940 and 1944 it was a prison. Thousands of Poles and Jews, mainly political opponents and members of the resistance movement, were interrogated and tortured there. It was called the Prison under the Clock because there is a clock above the main entrance to the building. See http://zamek-lublin.pl (Accessed on 12 January 2012)

interrogation at Pawiak prison. Zofia Kiecol and Helena Karolewska were heavily pregnant at the time of their arrest and delivered their babies at Lublin Castle prison. The newborns died.[129]

During the first few years, when the prisoners were predominantly of German nationality, the living conditions at Ravensbrück were reasonable. The food rations were sufficient considering the circumstances and the accommodation at first was bearable; everyone, with rare exceptions, had their own bed. Helena Dziedziecka, testifying at the Hamburg Ravensbrück Trial, mentioned that the situation at Ravensbrück worsened in December 1942 when the number of incoming prisoners began to increase. The number of inmates located in each block tripled, and up to six women had to share one bed.[130] Consequently, the food quality also deteriorated, which led to various illnesses and health conditions, including diarrhoea, often fatal in the camps. In addition, as Kiedrzyńska recollected after the war: 'Overcrowding made the already bad hygienic conditions simply dreadful'.[131] In these circumstances the diseases, such as typhus, typhoid and scabies began to spread at a terrifying rate, killing hundreds of women.[132]

The most important factor in surviving the camp was the way prisoners dealt with their incarceration. Polish women, as the largest group of prisoners, had among them members of every sphere of Polish society from farmers to university professors and members of the aristocracy. In the beginning, Polish women were randomly assigned to various tasks, from the highly skilled, including nursing and anaesthesia, to hard physical labour, such as unloading food transports or pulling the

[129] Helena Karolewska-Piasecka delivered twins. See http://tajchert. interia.pl/życiorysykrólików.htm (Accessed on 12 January 2012)
[130] TNA, WO 235/306, Witness Testimony Helena Dziedziecka, 9 December 1945.
[131] Szymonowicz, *Beyond Human Endurance*, p. 11.
[132] Ibid.

road roller.[133] All privileged posts were filled by German inmates. In the early 1940s, however, some positions of authority within the camp were taken over by prisoners of other nationalities.[134] As a result, due to their numerical predominance among inmates at the camp, Polish women were able to gain better jobs, as well as some privileges. Furthermore, some Polish *blockova's*[135], in order to achieve better treatment for their group of prisoners, changed their attitude towards the SS, becoming more compliant, an approach which was interpreted by some prisoners of other nationalities as submission. The effect was as planned. Due to this tactic, they were given lucrative positions within the camp. As Morrison noted, 'by 1942-1943 the Polish women had achieved an enviable level of power, and importance in the camp' and many of them were placed in charge of the blocks.[136]

[133] One of the key witnesses against Nazi doctors was Dr Zofia Mączka who worked as an anaesthesiologist and thanks to her medical knowledge was able to describe the medical experiments carried out by physicians at the camp.
[134] Szymonowicz, *Beyond Human Endurance*, pp. 30-31.
[135] Polish prisoners, due to their numbers, became elders of many blocks and therefore the Polish term *blockova* (the correct spelling of the word in Polish is blokowa) came to be used in the camp.
[136] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 92.

## 4. THE CONDITIONS INSIDE THE CAMPS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON PRISONERS' BEHAVIOUR

### Hunger as a Test for Priests' Vocation

Adjusting to conditions and life in the concentration camps caused enormous stress.[137] For Polish Catholic priests this new condition was particularly hard. During their first weeks at Dachau, the clergy, who were used to comfortable and spacious houses, had to learn how to sleep squashed with two other inmates on one bunk, and without any privacy. Furthermore, instead of the pastoral services that they were accustomed to delivering, Catholic priests were exploited as forced labourers. Yet malnutrition, which was the most common condition that caused the deaths of thousands of inmates, was the true test for their vocation.

Food was of paramount importance. Conversations about food were common among prisoners. Polish priests, most of whom had never experienced hunger before they were arrested, discussed which cuisine was tastier, and which dish was their favourite. Moreover, they made plans about what they would eat after they returned to their homes. Food was always present in their prayers and in their every thought. Therefore, they treated their food as 'treasure'.[138] That is how Father Grabowski (a malaria victim) described his food after his bread was stolen:

> When I was getting to bed, I was praying to God, as a naive child, for this tiny slice of bread to spread inside my stomach. I was dreaming about bread, about the best food. I was hoping that no one will take my bread out my locker. One morning I opened my locker. I looked inside and my bread was gone. I was hoping to have some of it with my morning coffee, and for lunch, and for dinner with my soup! I

[137] Elie A. Cohen, *Human Behaviour in the Concentration Camp* (London: Free Association Books, 1988), pp. 125-126.

[138] For further information on malnutrition at concentration camps see Zdzisław Ryn and Stanisław Kłodziński, 'Głód w obozie koncentracyjnym', *Przegląd Lekarski* 41 (1984), pp. 21-47; also same authors, 'Psychopatologia głodu w obozie koncentracyjnym', *Przegląd Lekarski* 42 (1985), pp. 41-55.

> couldn't believe it, I searched my locker but it was gone. I was devastated! I had tears in my eyes! I couldn't hold it in. I was so furious, cursing at the same time. Who could possibly hurt me that badly?![139]

Whoever had food, had power. Lack of food pushed people to commit crimes, such as stealing, cheating and even killing. At the beginning, food rations were bearable. However, within a few years, Dachau, like other camps, started expanding due to the increasing number of incoming prisoners. The focus of forced labour was the war effort; thus, providing food for the rapidly growing number of prisoners became a major issue.[140] As a consequence, food rations began to shrink. Prisoners began saying that the food they were given was 'too little for survival, and too much for starving to death'.[141] Clergy did not miss any opportunity to obtain extra food. In some cases, the desperation that they showed was astonishing, to the point where Germans showed compassion. For example, Father Hoffmann mentioned an episode where a German woman gave a pan of boiled potatoes, which she prepared for her ducks, to hungry begging priests.[142] On rare occasions, even SS men displayed sympathy towards starving clergy:

> On one occasion, an SS man had a bowl of leftovers from the kitchen meant for the guard dogs. In amazement, he looked at the Polish priest standing before him at attention with cap in hand, begging to be permitted to take some of the dog's food. The SS man, a young man looked in puzzlement at the man and the dog. He relented and pulled the dog away. The priest took a handful [...] other priests followed and soon the bowl was empty.[143]

[139] Grabowski, *Znienawidzeni*, p. 57.
[140] Wachsmann, 'The Dynamics of Destruction', pp. 26-28.
[141] Hoffmann, And *Who Will Kill You*, p. 121.
[142] Ibid., p. 124.
[143] Ibid., p. 125.

One of the ways to alleviate an empty stomach without bread was drinking large quantities of coffee. Some priests drank over two litres in the morning before going to work. Father Hoffmann believed that as long as priests had something in their stomachs, the hunger did not hurt as much.[144] The only proper nutrition given to inmates was bread. Until 1942 at Dachau, one loaf of bread had to be divided between four people. All four would gather around the table to measure the loaf using a knife or a stick. Firstly, the loaf was cut in half. Then all of them checked, making sure that each half was equal. Next, the two halves were themselves cut in half and the process of checking was repeated. The remaining crumbs were also equally divided. This process was essential because this quarter of a loaf had to be enough for breakfast, lunch and dinner served with a very thin soup.[145]

Constant hunger motivated priests to organise food wherever it was possible. Unfortunately, obtaining extra food was not easy for priests. Normally prisoners 'organised' food in a place of work. For those who worked in the kitchen or were servants of the SS, gaining food was easier. Unfortunately, priests were not given such lucrative posts and were not given the jobs that guaranteed additional food rations. The feeling of constant hunger pushed people to act in a way that in a previous time would have been seen as undignified. Priests, who were particularly affected by starvation, were forced to humiliate themselves in order to get food by, for instance, searching rubbish bins looking for leftovers. There was no such thing as pride or shame in gaining an extra portion of food, as Father Grabowski described:

> On my first day at the camp before lunch, one priest approached me saying: "remember, do not throw rotten potatoes that you won't like, leave them for me". As soon as I finished my meal, he was already

[144] Hoffmann, And *Who Will Kill You*, p. 122.
[145] Grabowski, *Znienawidzeni*, p. 57.

> beside me waiting patiently until I passed on my plate. Then, he took it off me, ran into a quiet place, and licked it clean. Later all of us were doing the same.[146]

Father Hoffmann mentioned in his post-war memoirs that hungry priests believed that any nutrition was edible, even bones or rotten food in rubbish bins:

> Even if it smelled unbearably, a discarded can of spoiled meat, [...], some of the hungriest would pick up slugs at noon and they would put them into hot soup and eat them. These were only the very hungriest trying to calm the cruel pain of hunger [...] everything was a delicacy for a starving priest [...]. Their hunger was a great force.[147]

As discussed above, from September 1941 Polish clergymen were excluded from the privileges that they had previously enjoyed; additional food rations were removed. They were given equal food portions to the other prisoners at the camp; however, unlike the secular prisoners they were not given any additional nutrition despite hard manual labour. Thus, their hunger was arguably worse in comparison to other inmates. An average day's food ration for priests was 'coffee for breakfast, a half-litre of watery soup for lunch, and a litre of watery soup and a piece of bread, or a small piece of thin sausage for dinner'.[148] It was not sufficient for people who did physical work for, on average, twelve hours a day. The year 1942 was particularly hard for priests and other prisoners at Dachau. Hundreds of clergy died because of severe malnutrition. Františ ek Bláha—a Czechoslovak pathologist, and prisoner at Dachau—testifying at the Dachau Trial in 1946, stated that in 1942 over twenty per

[146] Grabowski, *Znienawidzeni*, p. 60.
[147] Hoffmann, *And Who Will Kill You*, pp. 122-125.
[148] Nuremberg Trials Project a Digital Collection Harvard Law School (hereafter NTP) , PS-2428 Report of the Atrocities Committed at the Dachau Concentration Camp, Volume II., Exhibits 3 to 24, Testimony of Franz Blaha, pp. 79-80 (it is an open access online database, which contains non-trial evidence see http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu accessed on 12 December 2011)

cent of deaths among prisoners at Dachau were caused by malnutrition.[149] Some sources gave a total of 800 victims of starvation among the priests.[150] According to documentation collected by the International Tracing Service, in 1942 alone 641 deaths among Polish clergy were recorded.[151] The majority of these starved to death but a number of Polish priests were sent to the gas chambers with so-called 'invalid transports'.[152]

The starvation period at Dachau came to an end in 1943 when priests were allowed to receive parcels. Polish and German clergy were particularly privileged because they received packages not only from their families but also from parishioners. Constant deliberation about food ceased because hunger was not as distressing as before. An internal camp trade developed since priests had goods to exchange, such as food, cigarettes and money.[153] Additionally, despite the fact that distributing food to other prisoners was strictly prohibited, Polish priests shared the contents of their parcels with inmates who were not receiving them, for instance the Russians. However, there were also priests who, out of selfishness, allowed their extra portions of food to spoil instead of sharing them with hungry prisoners.[154]

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[149] NTP, Ibid, Exhibit 5. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)
[150] Adalbert Ludwig Balling and Reinhard Abeln, *Martyr of Brotherly Love: Father Elgenmar Unzeitig and the Priests' Barracks at Dachau* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) p. 58.
[151] International Tracing Service Digital Collection, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (hereafter ITS/USHMM), Collection 1.1.6.1 List material Dachau, List of Polish priests who died in Dachau.
[152] Naomi Baumslag, *Murderous Medicine: Nazi Doctors, Human Experimentation, and Typhus* (Washington DC: Baumslag, 2008), p. 59. For additional information on typhus as a major issue during World War Two see Weindling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe*. About experiments on typhus also see Thomas Werther, 'Menschenversuche in der Fleckfieberforschung', *Vernichten und Heilen*, pp. 152-177.
[153] Gędziorowski, *Dachau*, p. 57.
[154] Berben, *Dachau*, p. 151.

**Dering's Career at Auschwitz**

In the early stages of its existence, the camp hospital at Auschwitz was not set up to treat prisoners with serious ailments, but only to provide bandages and some medication to those who needed them. The lack of basic medical supplies and skilled German physicians meant that prisoners could receive only minor assistance.[155] The situation began improving between 1941 and 1942 for two main reasons: firstly, prisoners were perceived as valuable labourers; therefore, torture that led to serious injuries and sadistic killings were limited; secondly, more specialists in medicine were coming to the camp with the new transports.

As previously mentioned, Dering was assigned to work at the camp hospital as a result of Pilecki's influence. For several months he worked as a nurse, in spite of his qualifications and experience, because, at that time, prisoners were not allowed to work at the hospital as physicians. In July 1941, the situation changed due to larger transports of inmates coming to the camp, which meant that German physicians could not cope with the increasing numbers. As a result, prisoners began being assigned as medical doctors. In general, the conditions of prisoner-physicians in the concentration camps were slightly better than those of the average prisoner, as indeed was the case for engineers; there was a constant need for their skills. Later in 1941, the camp authorities decided to create a proper operating theatre, which was located at Block 21. At first, Dering and Tadeusz Gąsiorowski were the only two surgeons.[156] Dering was, therefore, determined to train other prisoner-physicians. In addition, he trained German doctors in surgery to—as he claimed after the war—prevent them from operating without the necessary knowledge or experience, which

[155] Tadeusz Paczuła, 'Szpital obozowy w Oświęcimiu w początkowym stadium istnienia', *Przegląd Lekarski* 1 (1963), p. 52.
[156] Kazimierz Hałgas, 'Oddział chirurgiczny szpitala obozowego w Oświęcimiu w latach 1940-1941', *Przegląd Lekarski* 1 (1971), p. 49.

could lead to the death of the prisoners operated on. A separate issue was the fact that these 'teaching sessions' were performed on healthy prisoners who Dering persuaded to volunteer by promising additional food portions. Although no fatal incidents were recorded, several prisoners developed post-surgical complications spending weeks at the hospital.[157] After a few months, Dering received his first promotion putting him in charge of Block 21. As a result of the dedication and hard work of prisoner-physicians, the surgical block became a professional and well-managed part of the camp hospital where a broad range of operations were performed from minor to very complicated ones.[158] In August 1943, Friedrich Entress, who was an SS physician at Auschwitz, put Dering in charge of the entire prisoners' hospital at Auschwitz; therefore, Dering did not perform as many operations as previously.[159]

Despite the extreme conditions inside the camp, Dering managed to improve his position and standard of living through his work. However, his position, along with his attitude towards other prisoner-physicians, Nazi physicians and patients was interpreted in various ways. Prisoner-physicians who worked side by side with him, or those who had the chance to watch him work, despite being aware of his impulsive nature and the fact that he was disliked by many people, always described him as an outstanding, professional and dedicated doctor.[160] Regardless of Dering's commitment, some inmates maintained an attitude of reserve towards him. Stanisław Kłodziński, an Auschwitz inmate whose medical studies were interrupted by the war, said that Dering did indeed help many prisoners. However, he qualified this

[157] Some of those operated upon were not worried by the health complications caused by the operation because staying longer at the hospitals meant better food and a bed at the post-surgical ward. See Hałgas, 'Oddział chirurgiczny szpitala obozowego w Oświęcimiu', pp. 49-50.
[158] Tadeusz Paczuła, 'Organizacja i administracja szpitala obozowego K.L. Auschwitz 1', *Przegląd Lekarski* 1 (1962), p. 65. Also Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, pp. 56, 61.
[159] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 61.
[160] TNA, TS 54/744, Testimony by Dr Jan Grabczyński, 22 January 1947.

comment by suggesting that this was only to the extent that '[Dering] did not put himself in danger'.[161] On the one hand, Dering was admired for his achievements but on the other, several people accused him of being cruel towards his patients. Józef Mężyk, for example, testified that he overheard that Dering slapped one of the patients and threw him out of the hospital.[162] Others said that Dering, instead of treating his patients, sent them back to their blocks. The fact is that he admitted to the *Krankenbau* only prisoners who were very ill, yet not in a fatal state; in other words, those who could still be saved. Dering defended his actions after the war saying that having hundreds of prisoners queuing up in front of the hospital every morning, he had to be rough towards those who were not in urgent need.[163] Many former prisoners, who felt grateful that he saved their lives, defended Dering against the post-war accusations made against him, by mentioning his heroic behaviour at the camp. For instance, Father Józef Bulak stated that Dering saved many people from being gassed by sending them back to their barracks, knowing that a selection for the gas chambers would take place on that day, an action that was wrongly interpreted by some prisoners as indifference to their health.[164] The former president of the Polish Council in Belgium, Jacek Kopczyński, mentioned that:

> The extension of the camp hospital, the securing of drugs and equipment and making medical service available on a large scale to prisoners in the camp, was to a considerable extent due to Dering, who with his extraordinary energy and efficiency, and often risking his own safety, managed to create conditions in which he was able,

[161] TNA, TS 54/744, Testimony by Stanisław Kłodziński before Dr Henryk Gawacki September 15, 1947, p. 1.
[162] In the same paragraph Mężyk said that he had never seen such behaviour during his stay at the camp, TNA, TS 58/744, Józef Mężyk: Protocol 10 February 1947, p. 1.
[163] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Władysław Dering.
[164] TNA, TS 58/744, Declaration by Rev. Józef Bulak Military Hospital No.5, 12 May 1946, p. 1.

> directly or indirectly, to save the lives of thousands, or to help them to recover their health.[165]

Dering's position within the camp was used against him. At first, Dering was treated as an ordinary prisoner. He experienced torment, hunger and hard labour just like other inmates. For example, as he later recalled, on his thirty-eighth birthday he received thirty-eight lashes as "a birthday present" and was also beaten up on many other occasions.[166] In 1941, when by German decree all medically skilled prisoners were discharged from physical work and were employed as doctors, his situation began to change.[167] He was given a place to sleep inside the hospital, wore a white physician's coat and was given better food than ordinary prisoners. Karl Sperber, who gave evidence on conditions at Auschwitz in 1945 and in 1947, stated that on many occasions he saw Dering 'cooking a good portion of meat on a stove in Block 21 or in the steriliser in the operating theatre'.[168] Sperber mentioned that Dering, thanks to his position, was indeed fed much better than other prisoners and other prisoner-physicians. He also said that Dering's privileged position was a consequence of his obsequious conduct to the SS.[169] Dering in his defence said that his actions were motivated by the fact that he was nonetheless a prisoner; therefore, in order not to give any excuse for the SS to persecute him, he fulfilled their orders. What Sperber did not mention was the fact that all medical staff in concentration camps were to some extent privileged since there was a constant need for them. The level of privilege varied according to the nationality of prisoner. In other words, the position of the Jewish doctors was indeed far worse than others. For example, they

[165] TNA, TS 58/744, Jacek Kopczyński: Statement on the question of Dr. Dering, Brussels, 27 January 1948.
[166] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 61.
[167] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Władysław Dering, p. 1.
[168] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Dr Karl Sperber in Liverpool 21 March 1947, p. 2.
[169] Ibid.

were forbidden from working as physicians until 1943. Therefore, even better qualified doctors were assigned as nurses. Sperber pointed out, that Dering was able to move freely around the camp, and even leave the camp occasionally. But he did not mention that, despite him being a Jewish prisoner, Sperber was also able to move between Auschwitz and Birkenau. Moreover, Sperber belonged to a very small group of people who were able to enter the experimental Block 10, which proves that he too held a privileged position.[170]

**Ravensbrück: Rules and Priorities for Polish Prisoners**

In general, the solidarity among prisoners in concentration camps built up between people of the same nationality, or those who spoke the same language. Inmates who did not understand each other were not able to comfort and support those who needed it.[171] Therefore, Polish women at Ravensbrück managed to develop a strong bond between each other, despite the frustrating fight for survival that created tensions and affected people's behaviour. This unique connection helped them to survive the worst moments of their incarceration. The mutual help involved many aspects of their life such as the basic, yet absolutely crucial, "organising" of extra food by prisoners who worked in the kitchen, to spiritual matters such as prayer.[172] Evidence shows that Poles established a unique system of friendship that consisted of 'camp families'. Several women created a small group to help and support each other, as if they were blood-related. Forming families was to some extent a calculated process. Women who worked in the kitchen or at the camp office were

[170] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Władysław Dering.
[171] Tzvetan Todorov, *Facing the Extreme: Moral Life in Concentration Camps* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996), p. 83.
[172] Todorov, *Facing the Extreme*, p. 83.

seen as a 'beneficial members of the family'. Prisoners fluent in German were perceived in the same way.[173]

The Catholic faith was one of the factors which united Poles (other than Polish-Jews).[174] Despite the fact that large gatherings for religious purposes were dangerous, as any sacred activity was forbidden at the camp, Polish prisoners managed to organise a mass nearly every Sunday that took place in their blocks.[175] Polish women were well known for their patriotism and their concern for their country, which had been attacked by two dictatorships in 1939. A general antipathy towards communists, caused by the Soviet invasion of Poland, meant that Poles tended neither to support nor condemn the efforts of communists at the camp to promote solidarity among prisoners. A Czech communist prisoner, Dagmar Hájková, stated after the war that the Poles' dislike for Marxism was caused by 'their general backwardness, particularly their low level of class consciousnesses'.[176] According to her observation, Polish women, to some extent, kept the pre-war Polish system where the villagers served the aristocracy at the camp just as they did back at home.[177]

Polish women created a code of conduct for prisoners at Ravensbrück. If there was an inmate who acted in a shameful way towards her compatriots, she was reminded that she might be put on trial after liberation before a Polish court.[178] There were also cases when prisoners took justice in their own hands by punishing another inmate. One such opportunity occurred in the winter of 1944, when several Polish women agreed to work as prostitutes in brothels in Germany instead of being held

[173] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 126.
[174] Ibid., p. 96.
[175] Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, p. 287.
[176] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 92.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid., p. 93.

prisoner at the camp. As a consequence, they had their heads shaved by fellow prisoners as punishment.[179] Moreover, it often happened that privileged Polish prisoners helped other Polish women with finding lighter work. As this help applied exclusively to the Polish women, it became a motive for many negative reactions and comments from prisoners of other nationalities who accused Poles of egotism and of submissive compliance.[180]

Other forms of social interaction that brought Polish women together at Ravensbrück were art and social events, such as poetry evenings, singing and, more importantly, education.[181] Targeting the *intelligentsia* in occupied Poland was particularly intense during the first year of the war resulting in the transportation of large numbers of teachers and academics to concentration camps. As early as April 1940, a group of eighty teachers was brought from Mazovia to Ravensbrück.[182] With new transports coming to the camp the number of highly educated prisoners rose. On the other hand, the amount of very young women whose education had been interrupted by the war also increased. Thus, classes were organised for those who were willing to continue their education. The person in charge was an experienced educator and a principal of a school before the war, Helena Salska, who took care of planning lessons and 'recruiting' teachers. The subjects taught involved Polish language and literature, but also physics, anatomy, European history, French, German, English, Latin and art.[183] There was always a great deal of interest in these courses among prisoners. Running the risk of punishment, students gathered together

[179] Urszula Wińska, *Zwyciężyły wartości: Wspomnienia z Ravensbrück* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1985), p. 310.
[180] Margaret-Anne Hutton, *Testimony from the Nazi Camps: French Women's Voices* (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 154.
[181] Some talented artists at Ravensbrück included: Maja Berezowska, Maria Hiszpańska and Jadwiga Simon-Pietkiewicz. See Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, p. 310.
[182] Szymonowicz, *Beyond Human Endurance*, p. 8.
[183] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 168. Also Walz, "*Und dann kommst du dahin an einem schönen Sommertag*", pp. 287-288.

to listen to a lecture during their limited spare time.[184] The *Rabbits*, who were victims of human experiments and still recovering after operations, were not able to attend any classes; thus, visits of 'camp teachers' were organised for them. Sylvia Salvesen, who became an English teacher at the camp, mentioned in her memoirs the extraordinary attitude of the *Rabbits* who despite their suffering stayed cheerful and were interested in learning a new language.[185] Gaining an education at the camp was unquestionably beneficial, as women were able to use this knowledge after the war. However, 'more significantly, these programs helped to give the Polish women a feeling of camaraderie, a sense of purpose, and an awareness of their self-worth that was vital to their survival'.[186]

[184] Lanckorońska, *Michelangelo in Ravensbrück*, p. 208.
[185] Salvesen, *Forgive But Not Forget*, p. 113.
[186] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 168.

## 5. CONCLUSION

All three camps that were described in this chapter were initially established to incarcerate opponents of the Nazi regime. However, the role of Auschwitz shifted from concentration to extermination camp due to ideologically-driven political decisions of the Nazis, whereas Dachau kept its original character as a model camp until liberation. Although only Ravensbrück was originally defined as a single-gender camp i.e. for women, despite the smaller male camp attached to it, both Dachau and Auschwitz remained strictly male camps until 1942.

As described in this chapter, the predominance of prisoners' nationalities played an important role in establishing hierarchy and social networks among inmates. And therefore, both at Auschwitz and Ravensbrück some Poles, as they were the majority, managed to gain better jobs, and in that way to improve their conditions inside the camp. Polish women at Ravensbrück, for instance, through a calculated if somewhat obsequious attitude towards the SS were able to gain small privileges. But more importantly, they deliberately strived for posts such as *Blockführer* in order to make life easier for their fellow prisoners. Another issue relates to creating groups among prisoners according to political views and religion. The factor that united Polish women at Ravensbrück was Catholic faith. This was motivated by antagonism to the strongly communist international movement that was created at the camp before 1941. The situation at Auschwitz was rather unique. First of all, between 1940 and 1941, prisoners held at the camp were Polish with minor exceptions. Secondly, most of these prisoners were soldiers, members of the *intelligentsia* or underground movement; therefore, within months Poles created various organisations, which were politically and military orientated. Władysław Dering, whose profile was briefly presented in this chapter, was one of the leading

members of the first underground movement at Auschwitz *Związek Organizacji Wojskowej*. Membership of this gave him an opportunity to be appointed at the camp hospital. The position of Polish Catholic priests at Dachau, however, was more complex. The fact that they were separated from secular Polish prisoners meant that they were not able to profit from better work assignments or larger portions of food, which some secular Poles were able to obtain. Moreover, the pattern based on national predominance did not work in the case of Polish priests. They were the largest group of clergy at Dachau, but were also the most mistreated by the SS. In addition, the separation from secular prisoners prevented Polish priests from either forming or joining any politically or military related groups at Dachau.

Another issue that was also highlighted in this chapter refers to extent to which the conditions inside those camps changed inmates' behaviour. Dering, who profited from membership in the ZOW, gradually built up his career as a camp physician. This was, claimed by Dering, mainly a result of his dedication to his profession and good medical skills; however, several prisoners accused him of taking advantage of his circumstances for his own benefit, and displaying an ambivalent if not servile attitude towards the SS, and mistreating sick inmates. The complex character of the camp, and also political, ethnic and national antagonisms between prisoners created paradoxical situations in which some inmates condoned, whereas others criticised, Dering's behaviour. Dering's harsh and impulsive nature was always under discussion amongst prisoners; however, his contribution in developing the health care system at the camp was acknowledged by everyone. Polish women at Ravensbrück managed to develop a unique relationship with each other, based on groups of support—called 'camp families'. This was meant to drag their attention away from the brutal reality of concentration camp. In addition, Polish women

punished what they deemed to be unethical and shameful acts performed by fellow prisoners. Consequently, certain values, such as compassion, commitment to education and, hardest of all in the circumstances, mutual respect were maintained. As Wanda Półtawska described:

> In Ravensbrück, the so-called 'luxury' camp, where [prisoners] kept their self-respect, and had cared more for books and learning than for soup, fighting over food had been unheard of.[187]

The situation of Polish priests was, again, more complicated. Although all clergy were mistreated at Dachau, Polish priests were particular targets of constant mental and physical abuse. They struggled with factors unfamiliar to them, such as hunger, manual work, as well as anticlerical attacks of the SS and secular prisoners. Most of the Polish clergy maintained their moral values, but there were also priests whose pain caused by hunger led them to steal food from others for which they were ruthlessly punished by fellow prisoners.

[187] Półtawska, *And I Am Afraid of My Dreams*, p. 155.

# PART II: NAZI MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the mid nineteenth century, the interest in medicine among German students increased due to improved state funding being allocated to university faculties, hospitals and, from 1883, to sickness insurance. This situation led to standardisation of medical training. First, every future physician had to obtain university education.[1] Second, German students and researchers were required to complete a research-based dissertation before being granted the degree of MD and at advanced level the *Habilitation*.[2] In other words, to receive full qualification as a medical doctor or medical academic one needed to conduct research, which in some cases required the use of living subjects, such as animals or humans. Therefore, by later nineteenth century, testing the efficacy of a trial treatment on themselves, students or family members became standard practice for German physicians.[3] However, there were also doctors who conducted non-consensual medical trials on their patients or in public institutions including prisons. One such physician was Albert Neisser, who in the 1890s injected several prostitutes and other female patients with syphilis spirochetes without formal consent.[4] Therefore, as described, occurrences when researchers placed patients' health and life in jeopardy took place long before the Nazis came to power. On 29 December 1900, the Prussian *Ministry of Spiritual and Educational* Affairs passed a decree stating

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[1] Thomas Neville Bonner, *Becoming a Physician: Medical Education in Britain, France, Germany and the United States, 1780-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 187-188.
[2] Paul Weindling, 'The Nazi Medical Experiments', in Ezekiel J. Emanuel (ed.), *The Oxford Textbook of Clinical Research Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 27.
[3] Marion Hulverscheidt, 'German Malariology Experiments with Humans, Supported by the DFG until 1945', *Man, Medicine, and the State*, p. 226.
[4] For more on this issue see Barbara Elkeles, 'The German Debate on Human Experimentation between 1880 and 1914', in Volker Roelcke and Giovasnni Maio (eds.), *Twentieth Century Ethics of Human Subjects Research: Historical Perspectives on Values, Practises, and Regulations* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), pp. 22-26; Wolfgang U. Eckart, Andreas J. Reuland, 'First Principles: Julius Moses and Medical Experimentation in the Late Weimar Republic', *Man, Medicine, and the State*, pp. 35-38; Jochen Vollmann and Rolf Winau, 'Informed Consent in Human Experimentation before the Nuremberg Code', *British Medical Journal* 313 (1996), pp. 1445-1447.

that consensual research can be conducted for diagnosis, healing or immunisation purposes only.[5] It was meant to protect patients in health institutions against non-consensual medical experimentation. This, however, did not indicate the level of competence required to make consent valid. As a result, children and patients in mental asylums, whose understanding of consent could be questioned, were subjected to various experiments.[6] In addition, the growing German eugenics movement openly condemned the unworthy elements of the society, which included the physically and mentally disabled.[7] On 28 February 1931, further guidelines for medical research were drawn up that introduced protection for children and the dying against medical experimentation.[8] Both decrees, from 1900 and 1931, were valid in Germany only.[9] It meant that German physicians could perform non-consensual research on humans overseas.[10] In the late 1920s, due to the establishment of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics, a number of influential German physicians and scientists intensified their interest in racial anthropology.[11] Klaus von Rosenstiel, for example, performed anthropological measurements of 300 Himalayans in the late 1930s.[12]

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[5] Eckart, Reuland, 'First Principles', p. 37.

[6] For example in 1920s Franz Sioli tested anti-malaria drugs on patients in a mental hospital in Düsseldorf-Grafenberg see Marion A. Hulverscheidt, 'The Scientist-Enterpreneur or Financing in Pharmaceutical Research: A Portrait of the Malariologist Werner Schulemann, 1888-1975', in Viviane Quirke and Judy Slinn (eds.), *Perspective on Twentieth Century-Pharmaceuticals* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 131.

[7] Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 141-155.

[8] Eckart, Reuland, 'First Principles', p. 46.

[9] The decree from 1900 was enacted in Prussia, whereas the document from 1931 was passed by the Reich Minister of the Interior.

[10] For Schilling's experiments in Tanganyika see Vondra, *Malariaexperimente*, pp. 106, 112; For Robert Koch's experiments on sleeping sickness see Wolfgang Eckart, 'Medical Experiments at the Colonial Periphery: the Fight Against Sleeping Sickness in German East Africa and Togo', *Twentieth Century Ethics*, pp. 65-83.

[11] Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics*, pp. 168-169, 462.

[12] Human research was often based on worthy or unworthy population eugenics theory and was combined with collecting plants for breeding. For detailed analysis see Susanne Heim, *Research for Autarky: The Contribution of Scientists to Nazi Rule in Germany* (Berlin: Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, 2001), pp. 12-15.

In the 1930s, after the NSDAP gained control over Germany, several racial and eugenically motivated laws were enacted, including a law for the compulsory sterilisation of individuals deemed to have hereditary illnesses (1933), followed by the initiation of *Aktion T4* (1939).[13] Furthermore, the outbreak of the war greatly affected German physicians' access to human experimental subjects. This topic, however, has been differently presented by various scholars. Paul Weindling believes that the war had a negative effect on the ease with which physicians could obtain animals and people who consented to research, and therefore, German doctors' attention shifted to prisoners in concentration camps.[14] According to Volker Roelcke, experimenting on concentration camp inmates was an opportunity for German physicians to expand their research, particularly because they did not need to obtain formal consent from 'unworthy' inmates, such as Jews, Sinti and Roma and political prisoners, whose civil rights were restricted.[15] Meanwhile, several war-related health issues were brought to the authorities' attention, such as the need to develop vaccines against fatal diseases and to improve the treatment of war injuries.[16] In addition, German officials, like Viktor Brack, sought to learn how to control the number of newborn "non-Aryans" more effectively.[17]

[13] For more information see Maike Rotzoll, Gerrit Hohendorf, Petra Fuchs, Paul Richter, Christoph Mundt and Wolfgang Eckart (eds.), *Die nationalsozialistische "Euthanasie"-Aktion "T4" und ihre Opfer: Geschichte und ethische Konsequenzen für die Gegenwart* (München: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010).

[14] Paul Weindling, 'Medicine: Germany', in Cyprian Blamires and Paul Jackson (eds.), *World Fascism: A Historical Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006), vol. 1, pp. 412-413.

[15] See Volker Roelcke, 'Human Subjects Research during the National Socialist Era, 1933-1945: Programs, Practices, and Motivations', *Twentieth Century Ethics*, p. 154.

[16] Roelcke pointed out that during the World War II new types of guns and bullets were used causing more severe wounds; therefore, the treatment of injuries needed to be improved. Ibid, p. 155.

[17] NMT 3/1729 Viktor Brack's letter to Heinrich Himmler concerning the x-ray sterilization proposal, 23 June 1942.

In general, the medical research performed by German physicians during the war was related to racial, ideological and military medical issues.[18] The location for experiments was chosen according to specific requirements, which was meant to increase the chances of achieving the desired results. For instance, Auschwitz-Birkenau, as the largest concentration camp complex, had a variety of prisoners with respect to nationality, gender and age. Whole Jewish families were brought to Birkenau (Auschwitz II); therefore, it became the place for Mengele's experiments on children, dwarves and twins.[19] Birkenau also had the largest number of Jewish prisoners in comparison to other camps; thus, hundreds of Jewish women and men were used as "human guinea pigs" in the fertility experiments performed at Auschwitz, the aim of which was to control the reproduction of future slaves of the superior race as stated:

> Among 10 Millions of Jews, in Europe are, I figure, at least 2-3 Millions of men and women, who are fit enough for work. Considering the extraordinary difficulties, the labour problem presents us with I hold the view that these 2-3 Millions should be specially selected and preserved. This can however only be done, if at the same time they are rendered incapable to propagate.[20]

Dachau camp, since located on swampy soil, was an ideal place for research on immunisation against tropical diseases. Ravensbrück, on the other hand, became the laboratory for sulphonamide and bone and muscle regeneration experiments purely for

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[18] For instance, experiments on infectious diseases, hypothermia, and research that involved drinking sea water, was designed to decrease loss of soldiers. Experiments on sterilisation, on the other hand, were meant to prevent "less superior" races, meaning Slavs, Sinti and Roma and Jews, from reproducing.

[19] For more information on the Mengele's experiments see Nyiszli, *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness account*; Yehuda Koren and Eilat Negev, *In Our Hearts We Were Giants: The Remarkable Story of the Lilliput Troupe: A Dwarf family Survival of the Holocaust* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004); also Lucette Matalon Lagnado and Sheila Cohn Dekel, *Children of the Flames: Dr. Josef Mengele and the Untold Story of the Twins of Auschwitz* (New York: Morrow, 1991).

[20] NMT 3/1729 .The first person who came out with this initiative was Adolf Pokorny who mentioned in his letter to Himmler that: 'the thought alone that the 3 Millions Bolsheviks, at present German prisoners, could be sterilized so that they could be used as labourers but be prevented from reproduction, opens the most far reaching perspectives'. NMT 2/86 Pokorny's letter to Heinrich Himmler proposing chemical sterilization experiments, October 1941.

convenience of the supervising research physician, Karl Gebhardt[21], who wished to be located within commuting distance to Hohenlychen where he worked.[22]

Nazi medical experiments were conducted in a highly unethical and, to some extent, inhuman manner. Victims were exposed to painful medical procedures, which were often numerously repeated causing stress, pain and permanent injuries. A large number of inmates experimented on were deprived of sufficient post-surgical care that consequently damaged their health. In addition, victims were viewed only as experimental subjects whose protests against further experiments were disregarded. The psychological impact of these experiences meant that the victims established new aims, such as mutual help, creating awareness regarding their suffering and gathering evidence of Nazi crimes, which were later used in putting their perpetrators on trials. In Dering's case, however, performing excision of gonads to check efficiency of the sterilisation experiments resulted in improving his position within the camp, yet his reputation among prisoners was permanently affected.

This part of my thesis describes the genesis and conduct of medical research forcibly performed on incarcerated prisoners, including immunisation against malaria at Dachau; experimental treatment of artificially created injuries and infections at Dachau and Ravensbrück and x-ray sterilisation of prisoners at Auschwitz. I will describe the experiences of the Polish participants in the Nazi medical experiments (priests,

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[21] Karl Gebhardt was born on 23 November 1897 in Haag in Germany. He served during First World War but was captured and sent to Scotland as POW (Prisoner of War). In 1919, he was admitted to the medicine course at the University of Munich. Gebhardt joined the NSDAP on 1 May 1933. Following his *Habilitation*, Gebhardt became the first professor of sports medicine in Berlin. In 1933, he was employed at the Hohenlychen clinic where he worked until the end of the war. In 1936, he was assigned as the head of the Medical Department of the Reich Academy for Physical Exercises as senior physician of the Olympic Games. The Hohenlychen clinic served as the main hospital for the German sport competitors. In 1937, he became chair holder for orthopaedic surgery at the Berlin University. In 1938, Himmler appointed him as his personal physician. In 1940, he became a Consulting Surgeon of the Waffen-SS, and part of his duties was rehabilitating wounded and injured soldiers at Hohenlychen. Between July 1942 and September 1943, Gebhardt supervised sulphonamide experiments at Ravensbrück. See JR. Silver, 'Karl Gebhardt (1897-1948): A Lost Man', *The Journal of the Royal College of Physicians* 41, 4 (2011), p. 366; Klee, *Das Personenlexikon*, p. 441.

[22] NARA, M 1019/20 Interrogation of Karl Gebhardt, 25 September 1945.

physicians and women) examining what impact it had on their behaviour, conditions and positions within the camp.

## 2. EXPERIMENTS AND PERPETRATORS

### Experimental Treatment of Infections of War Wounds and War Injuries at Ravensbrück and Dachau

In the early 1940s, particularly after the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazis discovered that commissioning research on the treatment of war wounds was necessary. Wound infections caused by new types of weapons and bullets had become a major issue that resulted in the loss of many soldiers on the front.[23] Before *Operation Barbarossa*, wounded German soldiers were brought back from the front and operated on in the Reich.[24] However, this was no longer possible when the *Wehrmacht* proceeded deeply into Eastern territory, and soldiers had to be treated on a battlefield.[25] Since operating involved the risk of contamination, the Nazis sought effective medicine to treat injuries and war related infections, including phlegmon.[26] While the need to find a new medical solution to this problem was acknowledged, the method to be applied became a source of dispute between the defence forces' medical service and the medical service of the Waffen SS.[27] The drugs that were often mentioned were the sulphonamides.

The first sulphonamide drug, *Prontosil*, was discovered in 1932 by a German bacteriologist and pathologist Gerhard Domagk.[28] Domagk's primary trials conducted

[23] National Archives and Record Administration (hereafter NARA), Collection M 1019 Nuremberg War Crimes Trials Interrogations, 1946-1949, Folder 20 Interrogation of Karl Gebhardt, 25 September 1945.
[24] Hahn, *Grawitz, Genzken, Gebhardt*, p. 404.
[25] NARA, M 1019/20 Interrogation of Karl Gebhardt, 25 September 1945.
[26] Phlegmon is a spreading, diffuse inflammatory reaction to infection with microaerophilic streptococci, which forms a suppurative or gangrenous and undermining lesion that may extend into deep subcutaneous tissues and muscles, creating multiple small pockets of pus.
[27] Angelika Ebbinghaus and Klaus Dörner, 'Kriegswunden. Die kriegschirurgischen Experimente in den Konzentrationslagern und ihre Hintergründe', in *Vernichten und Heilen*, p. 182. Also see Roelcke, 'Human Subjects Research', pp. 155-156.
[28] Gerhard Domagk was born on 30 October 1895 in Lagow in Brandenburg. He studied medicine at Kiel University. Later he volunteered to serve at the front during the First World War where he was wounded. After the war he began research on infections caused by bacteria. In 1932, he invented Prontosil for which he received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or medicine in 1939. Due to the Nazi regime he was not able to accept the award at that time. In 1947, he was finally able to receive the prize; however, without the financial portion. Later in his career he researched on treating tuberculosis. He died on 24 April 1964.

on animals were successful; thus soon after, he proceeded further with his research testing *Prontosil* on 1,000 people. The results revealed that sulphonamide also had antibacterial effect in treating infections of humans. At that point, many German physicians, including Karl Gebhardt, spoke negatively about sulphonamide discouraging Hitler from making funds avoidable for Domagk's further research. Meanwhile, the rest of the world considered Domagk's *Prontosil* as a miracle drug that proved to be successful in many aspects including decreasing childbirth's mortality rates.[29] Within a few years, other sulpha-based antibiotics were produced that were meant to treat war injuries if applied locally.[30] In 1942, the effectiveness of applying sulphonamide directly into wound in a form of powder and taking sulphonamide tablets as precautions against infections was already discussed in scientific magazines. Consequently, in the early 1940s, the Allies distributed sachets of sulphonamides to their troops as a standard first aid kit, which effectively decreased the number of their casualties.[31] Consequently, the issue about the potential use of sulphonamides in treating battlefield wounds of the *Werhmacht* soldiers became a key subject of discussions during the First Conference East of Consulting Specialists, which was held at Berlin's Medical Military Academy from 18 until 19 May 1942.[32] Between 22 and 25 May 1942, the debate regarding efficacy of sulphonamides was continued by several high ranking Nazi officials.[33] Those involved were: Heinrich Himmler, who favoured the homoeopathic

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http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/medicine/laureates/1939/domagk-bio.html (Accessed on 23 April 2011)

[29] For more information see unpublished MA dissertation by Benjamin Lee, *For What Reason were the Nazi Human Experiments into the Efficacy of Sulphonamides Undertaken and on What Grounds did the Nazis Attempt to Alleviate their Actions* (Newcastle University, 2011), pp. 19-22. Also see Thomas Hager, *The Demon under the Microscope* (New York: Harmony Books, 2006), p. 261.

[30] Lee, *For What Reason were the Nazi Human Experiments into the Efficacy of Sulphonamides Undertaken*, pp. 20-21.

[31] See Carl Dreter, 'Five Medical Miracles- the Sulpha Drugs', *Popular Science*, June 1942, p. 76; see also Frank Hawking, 'Effect of Sulphonamide Preparations on Experimental Infected Wounds', *Lancet* 2 (1942), pp. 507-510.

[32] NTP, Report on the First Conference East of Consulting Specialists at the Medical Military Academy. Chemotherapy of Wound Infections, from 18 until 19 May 1942. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)

[33] Mitscherlich, Mielke, *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit*, p. 132.

treatment of war wounds; Ernst Grawitz[34], who proposed testing sulphonamides; and Gebhardt, who was rather negative, towards both methods, as he was inclined to the view that none of those tactics were as good as surgery.[35] The result of numerous discussions was a decision to advance the research on sulphonamide from animal to human subjects.[36] Given that tests on people had already been performed by Domagk and the Allies, these talks did not produce any significant progress.[37] The death of one of the highest ranking Nazi officials made the issue of war wounds treatment urgent. On 27 May 1942, the Chief of the Reich Main Security Office, Reinhard Heydrich was assassinated by four Czech parachutists. Despite an apparently rather minor injury from a grenade, Heydrich died on 4 June 1942. His death was caused by infection of the wound with material from the seat of the car in which he has been driven.[38] Consequently, Himmler was under pressure, especially after the 1940 British announcement of the invention of penicillin, which proved that Allied medicine was more advanced. Thus, Himmler, who, despite having a very limited medical knowledge

[34] Dr Ernst-Robert Grawitz was born on 8 June 1899. His father was a professor in medicine. He joined the SS in 1931 and the NSDAP in 1932. On 1 January 1937, he became the president of the German Red Cross. He committed suicide along with his wife and children in 1945. For more information see Klee, *Das Personenlexikon*, p. 198. Also Hahn, *Grawitz, Genzken, Gebhardt*.

[35] Hahn, *Grawitz, Genzken, Gebhardt*, p. 405; also Ebbinghaus, Dörner, 'Kriegswunden: Die kriegschirurgischen Experimente in den Konzentrationslagern und ihre Hintergrüde', p. 196.

[36] Roelcke, 'Human Subjects Research', p. 156.

[37] For tests performed by the Americans see John E. Lesch, *The First Miracle Drugs: How the Sulfa Drugs Transformed Medicine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 207-211; Lockwood, John S., 'War-time Activities of the National Research Council and the Committee on Medical Research; with Particular Reference to Team-work on Studies of Wounds and Burns', Annals of Surgery 124, 2 (1946), pp. 314-327. For tests conducted by the British see Major GA Mitchell, Major NJ Logie and Major RS Handley, 'Observations on Casualties from the Western Desert and Libya Arriving at A Base Hospital', Royal Army Medical Corps Journal 77, 2 (1941), pp. 561-570 and Frank Hawking, 'Blood Concentrations Following Local Application of Sulphonamide Compounds to Wounds', British Medical Journal 4187, 1 (1941), pp. 511-512.

[38] For details see Callum MacDonald, *The Killing of SS Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich* (New York: Free Press, 1989).

and being given contradictory advice, decided to stick to his initial plan, which involved testing both homoeopathic and sulphonamide methods in treating war infections.[39]

Grawitz, ironically a sulphonamides treatment supporter, was delegated to Dachau to perform research on the use of homoeopathic substances in treating artificially created sepsis and phlegmon, a severe type of infection common on battlefield, only eleven days after the death of Heydrich.[40] The decision regarding the location for the phlegmon experiments was most likely motivated by the fact that Dachau had necessary medical facilities since other experiments, which included research on malaria and the physiological effects of high-altitude, had been conducted at the camp since February 1942. The homoeopathic method of healing, which is also called a "biochemical" treatment, was based on Wilhelm Schüssler's theory from the 1850s. Schüssler claimed that diseases were based on an insufficiency of inorganic salts; thus, if the potential patient was supplied with the missing salts—in the form of either powder or tablets—he ought to recover.[41] This method of curing began being tested at Dachau camp on 15 June 1942. Letters sent by Grawitz to Himmler prove, however, that the homoeopathic specifics were ineffective.[42] Grawitz supervised the first two series of the experiment, but eventually he let other physicians continue the research. Thus, in late October 1942, Heinrich Schütz[43] was assigned to conduct and to

[39] For further analysis of the scientific and ethical justification of the Nazi research on sulphonamide see Volker Roelcke, 'Die Sulfonamid-Experimente in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern: Eine Kritische Neubewertung der epistemologischen und ethischen Dimension', *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 44 (2009), pp. 42-60.
[40] Hahn, *Grawitz, Genzken, Gebhardt*, p. 405.
[41] Bundesarchiv in Koblenz, B 141, 12 Ks 1/72, Urteil SS Schütz (Schütz's Trial) Der Tod von Geistlichen im Konzentrationslager Dachau aufgrund von Phlegmone- und Sepsisversuchen, pp. 15-16.
[302] BArch, B 141, 12 Ks 1/72, Biochemische Behandlung von Sepsis etc. mit biochemischen Mitteln, 29 August 1942.
[43] Heinrich Schütz was born on 12 April 1906 in Bad Schmiedeberg. After completing the humanistic gymnasium in 1925 he enrolled in the Medicine Faculty at Munich University. He received his practical training in Paris and in Leipzig. In 1932, he defended his doctoral thesis on *The Pathology and Treatment of Aortic Insufficiency* (German title: *Zur Pathologie und Therapie der Aorteninsuffizienz*). In 1936, Schütz joined the NSDAP. He also volunteered for the Luftwaffe. Two years later, he left active service. During his interrogation in 1975, Schütz claimed that he became a reservist because it was necessary to avoid joining the Waffen-SS. In late 1938, he opened his own surgery. In September 1939, while on

supervise the final series of phlegmon experiments at Dachau, which, apart from homoeopathic methods, also involved applying sulphonamide, which was used by Gebhardt in corresponding experiments at Ravensbrück.

Meanwhile, in July 1942, Himmler and the SS Criminal Police chief Arthur Nebe ordered medical experiments on the treatment of artificially created war wounds and war injuries to be carried out at Ravensbrück, and Gebhardt was assigned to supervise this research.[44] In 1947, during his interrogation, Gebhardt tried to convince the Nuremberg Medical Trial prosecutors that he agreed to perform the experiments at Ravensbrück to satisfy Himmler who blamed him for Heydrich's death.[45] Scholars, including Ray J. Defalque, regarded this justification as highly doubtful. As Defalque pointed out, friendly letters exchanged in July-August 1942 between Himmler and Gebhardt prove that Heydrich's death had no negative effect on Gebhardt's reputation, regardless of the fact that he refused to apply sulphonamides and perform further surgery on the injured Heydrich.[46] The importance or irrelevance of Heydrich's death regarding the sulphonamide experiments at Ravensbrück has been a theme of dispute among scholars. Recent studies allow one to question whether the experiments wholly resulted from the assassination of Heydrich.[47] However, as the important measures regarding experiments with the use of sulphonamides were taken very quickly within less than a month after the assassination, one can presume that, while Heydrich's death

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holiday, Schütz was called up to active service in the Luftwaffe as the war began. He fought in Czechoslovakia and in the Soviet Union. In early 1942, Schütz fell ill with hepatitis and spent over two weeks in hospital. He did not return to the front after his recovery. In March 1942, he was appointed camp doctor at Dachau. It was a result of a personal recommendation from Grawitz, whom Schütz had previously met in Berlin. Officially, he was employed as a camp physician. See BArchv, B 141, 12 Js 15/70 Anklageschrift SS Schütz, 1975, p. 6-13; Klee, *Das Personenlexikon*, p. 564.

[44] See Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, p. 12.

[45] Alexander Papers (hereafter APD), Durham List 4/35, The motives of the sulfonamide experiments, 5 March 1947.

[46] See Ray J. Defalque, 'The Puzzling Death of Reinhard Heydrich', *Bulletin of Anaesthesia History* (2009) 27 (1), pp. 3-7.

[47] See Roelcke, 'Die Sulfonamid-Experimente in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern', p. 45. Also see Volker Roelcke, 'Forschritt ohne Rücksicht: Menschen als Versuchskaninchen bei den Sulfonamid- Experimenten im Konzentrationslager Ravensbrück', in Insa Eschebach and Astrid Ley (eds.), *Rasse und Geschlecht in der NS-Medizin* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2012), pp. 101-114.

did not initiate those experiments, it speeded up decision making, as well as causing the involvement of Himmler.

Choosing the place for the sulphonamide experiments involved long deliberation. The first location for experiments anticipated by Himmler was the clinic in Hohenlychen. Gebhardt, however, was opposed to the suggestion because, as he recalled after the war: 'Hohenlychen was a private enterprise [whose] special reputation consisted [...of] being the foremost European installation for reconstructive surgery'.[48] Thus, in the end it was decided that research was to be carried out at Ravensbrück.[49] The location was not surprising, given that Gebhardt requested to be situated within a commutable distance from the Hohenlychen clinic where he held a permanent position as chief physician.[50] In addition, the private sport clinic in Hohenlychen had a special character due to the fact that many high ranking SS officials and members of their families received confidential treatment. Among them were Rudolf Hess, Hitler's architect Albert Speer and Himmler's mistress Häschen Potthast.[51] Moreover, the Hohenlychen clinic was closely associated with the Red Cross; thus, Gebhardt—as he claimed—was reluctant to involve the clinic in medical experiments.[52] Evidence shows that this statement was false, as several experiments were indeed performed at the Hohenlychen clinic.[53] Himmler's final decision to establish the research centre at Ravensbrück was also influenced by the fact that there was a personal connection between him and Gebhardt, which resulted from a long lasting friendship between their

[48] During the Second World War it had between 1,000 and 1,100 beds and hired civilians, as well as military and SS physicians. See NARA, M 1019/20 Interrogation of Karl Gebhardt, 18 October 1945.
[49] NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fischer, 21 September 1945.
[50] The distance between the clinic in Hohenlychen and Ravensbrück camp was 12 km.
[51] NARA, M 1019/20 Interrogation of Karl Gebhardt, 18 October 1945; also see Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, p. 13.
[52] NARA, M 1019/20 Interrogation of Karl Gebhardt, 25 September 1945
[53] One of experiments performed by Gebhardt and Fischer at Hohenlychen clinic was amputation and transplant of limbs see Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Wiederstandes (hereafter DÖW), 50104/ 56a Medical Experiments in Ravensbrück. In addition, Friedrich Brunner, who worked as a surgeon at the Hohenlychen clinic, testified after the war that Gebhardt ordered him to test various drugs on patients at Hohenlychen. See NTP, NMT 4/2960 Affidavit by Dr Friedrich Brunner, 14 March 1947.

families. In the summer of 1942, facilities including a professional operating theatre and an x-ray room were organised at the camp.[54] Apart from work placement at Ravensbrück, Gebhardt was tied up with other commitments such as: his aforementioned position as chief of the Hohenlychen clinic; his teaching post at the Berlin Military Medical Academy and his occasional inspection of frontline operating facilities.[55] Therefore, Fritz Fischer[56], an assistant surgeon at the Hohenlychen clinic and a subordinate of Gebhardt, who could be at the camp on a daily basis and report regularly on progress with regard to the research, was assigned to perform experimental operations.[57] He arrived at Ravensbück on 12 July 1942.

The importance of the medical research carried out at Ravensbrück resulted in the involvement of several other physicians, notably Herta Oberheuser[58], Rolf Rosenthal[59] and Gerhard Schiedlausky.[60] In addition to sulphonamide research,

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[54] Mączka, 'Operacje doświadczalne w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', p. 124.
[55] NARA, M 1019/20 Interrogation of Karl Gebhardt, 25 September 1945
[56] Fritz Fischer was born on 5 October 1912 in Berlin. He studied medicine firstly in Bonn, later in Berlin and Leipzig, to finally graduate in Hamburg where he passed the state medical exam in 1936. From January 1937, Fischer was employed as an assistant-physician at the Georg Hospital in Leipzig. Later, between August 1937 and November 1939, he worked at the Pathological Institute of the Rudolf Virchow Hospital in Berlin. In 1934, during medical studies, Fischer joined the SS. In 1937, he joined the NSDAP. He completed his doctorate in 1938. On 1 November 1939, Fischer was assigned to the Waffen-SS of the SS-Department of the Hohenlychen Sanatorium as a physician and SS Second Lieutenant. He left Hohenlychen clinic in 1940 to work as a troop physician for the SS Division *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler*. However, a year later, he returned wounded from the front. After recovery, Gebhardt offered Fischer an assistant surgeon position at the Hohenlychen clinic. In late July 1942, he was delegated to Ravensbrück to perform medical experiments supervised by Karl Gebhardt. See NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fischer, 21 November 1945; Schäfer, *Zum Selbstverständnis von Frauen im Konzentrationslager das Lager Ravensbrück*, p. 130.
[57] NARA, M 1019/20 Interrogation of Karl Gebhardt, 25 September 1945.
[58] Herta Oberheuser was born on 15 May 1911 in Cologne. From 1931 to 1933, she studied medicine in Bonn and later from 1933 to 1937 in Düsseldorf where she graduated with a doctorate. Afterwards, she completed special training at the Skin Clinic of the Düsseldorf Medical Academy and, in 1940, received her license to practice as a specialist for skin and sexually transmitted diseases. She joined the NSDAP in May 1937. Meanwhile, she joined the Bund Deutscher Mädel (The League of German Girls), NS-Ärztebuds (NS Physicians Association) and NS-Luftschutzbund (NS Air Raid Protection Association). In 1940, she applied for a job at Ravensbrück concentration camp where she took part in sulphonamide and bone experiments. In July 1943, she began working as an assistant-physician at children and women ward of the Hohenlychen clinic where she remained until her escape in April 1945. See NARA, M 1019/50 Interrogation of Herta Oberheuser, 31 October 1946; Silke Schäfer, *Zum Selbstverständnis von Frauen im Konzentrationslager das Lager Ravensbrück* (Berlin, 2002) Unpublished doctoral dissertation, p. 126; Klee, *Das Personenlexikon*, p. 441.
[59] Rolf Rosenthal was born on 22 January 1911 in Brauschweig. In 1928, he joined the *Hitlerjugend*. A year later, he joined the NSDAP then the SA and finally, in 1932, the SS. However, in April 1936, he left

Gebhardt also supervised research on the regeneration of bones and muscles, which involved fractures and amputations performed by Ludwig Stumpfegger.[61] One may think that having assigned six promising physicians should have guaranteed a successful conduct of experimental operations without major complications. However, as shown in the following, this was not the case.

**Sterilisation Experiments at Auschwitz: Horst Schumann**

After the Second World War broke out, new issues, as well as opportunities, for German physicians arose, leading to racial research on prisoners in concentration camps. The Nazi ideology viewed Aryans as representatives of the Master race, leaving other anthropological types, such as Jews, Sinti and Roma and Slavs in a much lower position in society. As it was later revealed, the Jews were to be entirely exterminated. And, the destiny of Sinti and Roma was intended to be the same. According to the *Generalplan Ost*[62], only a few million Slavs were supposed to be spared as sterilised

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the party to join the Navy. He completed his medical studies in 1937. In October 1939, he was mobilised for service. In January 1942, he was employed at Ravensbrück, where he took part in the suplhonamide experiments and applied fatal injections to at least thirty TB patients. See TNA, WO 235/307, Interrogation of Rolf Rosenthal, 21 January 1947; Schäfer, *Zum Selbstverständnis von Frauen im Konzentrationslager das Lager Ravensbrück*, p. 138.

[60] Gerhard Schiedlausky was born on 14 January 1906 in Berlin. After gymnasium, he was admitted to a medicine course at the Berlin University. He joined the NSDAP shortly before graduating with MD in 1931. Schiedlausky joined the SS twice: in December 1932 but left in July 1933 to work as a medical assessor for the police, he then returned rejoined the SS in 1936. From the 21 March to the end of September 1941, he worked as a doctor at the concentration camp Mauthausen. In addition, he worked temporarily as a camp doctor in concentration camps: Dachau, Oranienburg and Flossenbürg. In December1941, he was assigned as physician at Ravensbrück where he assisted during experimental operations until August 1943. See TNA, WO 235/308, Interrogation of Gerhard Schiedlausky, 27 January 1947.

[61] Ludwig Stumpfegger was born on 11 July 1910 in Munich. In the 1930s, he worked under Gebhardt in Hohenlychen and also at the Olympics Games in 1936. From 1942 until August 1943, he carried out medical experiments at Ravensbrück. In 1944, he was assigned as Hitler's personal surgeon. A year later, he began working in Hitler's bunker. He died on 2 May 1945; however, there are two different scenarios of his death. There has been a dispute among historians whether Stumpfegger was killed or committed suicide. See Stumpfegger's publications include his MD dissertation *Beiträge zur funktionell-genetischen Liquorforschung* (Würzburg: Triltsch Verlag, 1938); and his *Habilitation* dissertation that was based on his activity at Ravensbrück *Die freie autoplastische Knochentransplantation in der Wiederherstellungschirurgie der Gliedmaßen Erfahrungen Ergebnisse* (Würzburg: NP, 1944).

[62] The Generalplan Ost was a secret Nazi plan of genocide and ethnic cleansing to be undertaken in the territories occupied by Germany in Eastern Europe during World War Two, see Andrzej L. Szcześniak,

slaves of the superior race.[63] Effectively, it meant death for millions of Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Slovaks and others. In order to be able to proceed, an effective method of mass sterilisation had to be developed.

In October 1941, Adolf Pokorny proposed to Himmler an initiative method of chemical sterilisation using an extract from the *caladium seguinum* plant.[64] Initially Himmler promoted breeding among Aryans. However, when he realised that the SS organisation *Lebensborn*[65] was not as successful as anticipated, he concentrated on decreasing the number of unworthy newborns by finding an effective technique of non-surgical birth control.[66] Meanwhile, the primary tests conducted on animals were successful; therefore, Pokorny sought to test this non-surgical sterilisation technique on people.[67] Despite the great interest attached to this study, Pokorny failed to produce sufficient results. Apparently *caladium seguinum*, which grows naturally in South America, loses its effectiveness when grown in 'hot houses'.[68]

In late 1942, despite this initial fiasco, Himmler assigned two doctors to undertake further sterilisation research. The effects of this were two different sets of experiments testing two different methods of sterilising people. The first technique that

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*Plan zagłady Slowian: Generalplan Ost* (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2000); Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Hitlers Ostkrieg und die deutsche Siedlungspolitik* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1991); also see Mechthild Rössler, 'Konrad Meyer und der "Generalplan Ost" in der Beurteilung der Nürnberger Prozesse', in Sabine Schleiermacher (ed.), *Der "Generalplan Ost". Hauplinien der nationalsozialistischen Planungs- und Vernichtungspolitik* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993).

[63] Donald Bloxham and Dirk Moses, 'Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing', in Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth (eds.), *Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 116.

[64] NMT 2/86.

[65] For comprehensive study on Lebensborn organisation see Georg Lillienthal, *Der "Lebensborn e.V.": Ein Instrument nationalsozialistischer Rassenpolitik* (Stuttgart: Gustav Fischer, 1985); Catrine Clay and Michael Leapman, *Master Race: The Lebensborn Experiment in Nazi Germany* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995); also see Larry V. Thompson, 'Lebensborn and the Eugenics Policy if the Reichsführer-SS', *Central European History* 4, 1 (1971), pp. 54-77.

[66] Previously, in 1940, Prof. Carl Clauberg tried to gain Himmler's support in order to establish a centre for both sterilisation and fertility treatment of women. At that point he was unsuccessful. For more information see Appendix 4.

[67] Pokorny based his theory on research conducted by Dr Gerhard Madaus. For more information see Michael G. Kenny, 'A Darker Shade of Green: Medical Botany, Homeopathy and Cultural Politics in Interwar Germany', *Social History of Medicine* 15, 3 (2002), pp. 481-504.

[68] NMT 4/5922 Closing Brief for the United States of America against Adolf Pokorny, 16 June 1947.

was tested at Auschwitz was chemical sterilisation of women, which involved caustic injections into the uterus to induce scarring that would block the Fallopian tubes. [69] It was practised by Professor Carl Clauberg.[70] The other method that will be closely analysed in this chapter was conducted by Horst Schumann[71] and involved destroying gonads by the use of x-rays.[72]

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[69] This proves that the Reich policy in regard to sterilisation methods changed, as in 1930s the use of a chemical substance in sterilising was forbidden; however, at that time it concerned mentally retarded Germans and not Jews. See Royal Society of Medicine, 'Discussion on the Sterilisation of Women', p. 960.

[70] Carl Clauberg was born on 28 September 1898 in Wupperhof. He was mobilised and then transferred to the *Infanterie Regiment 86* in Flensburg in 1916. In the same year he was captured and imprisoned by the British. Clauberg returned to Germany in 1919 and shortly after he was admitted to the medicine course in Kiel, and later in Hamburg. In April 1925, he officially received his medical licence, and a month later he enrolled for his MD at the medical faculty of the Christian-Albrechts-University of Kiel. Being already a member of the SA, Clauberg joined the NSDAP in 1933. When World War Two began he was appointed military doctor for the *Wehrmacht*. In 1940, he was offered a senior position at the women's clinic in Königshütte where he was officially employed until January 1945. From late 1942 until early January 1945, Clauberg carried out his non-surgical sterilisation experiments on women at Auschwitz. See DÖW, 6470; Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, p. 114; Ernst Klee, *Das Personenlexikon*, p. 152. Carl Clauberg published several articles and monographs. Among them: 'Zur Physiologie und Pathologie der Sexualhormone, im besonderen des Hormons des Corpus luteum. 2. Mitteilung: Der artefizielle', *Zentralblatt für Gynäkologie* 8 (1931); *Sexualzyklus am Uterus des kastrierten reifen Kaninchens Die weiblichen Sexualhormone in ihren Beziehungen zum Genitalzyklus und zum Hypophysenvorderlappen* (Berlin: J. Spinger, 1933); *Innere Sekretion der Ovarien und der Placenta* (Leipzig: O. W. Barth Verlag,1937).

[71] Horst Schumann was born on 1 May 1906 in Halle. After graduating from high school, in 1925, he decided to study medicine in Leipzig. After passing preliminary examinations, he continued his education at Innsbruck University. However, the final exam (*Staatsexamen*) he took in his hometown, Halle. In 1933, he completed his MD. Schumann joined the NSDAP party as early as 1930. In 1932 he became a member of the SA. Schumann was assigned as an expert for the Hereditary Court in Halle; thus, his responsibilities involved deciding who would be forcibly sterilised. From September 1939, he worked as a physician for the Luftwaffe. However, a few months later Schumann accepted Victor Brack's offer and became involved in the *Aktion T4* euthanasia program. His first post was at the killing centre in Grafeneck where during his time alone 1,239 people were killed. In April 1940, Schumann was transferred to another euthanasia centre in Sonnenstein-Pirna. In December 1941, Schumann was sent to Russia to help in setting up the Todt program for forced labour. He occupied this post until April 1942. In November 1942, Schumann arrived at Birkenau to carry out x-ray sterilisation experiments, which he completed in April 1944 and then left Auschwitz. See Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, p. 151; Irena Strzelecka, 'Medical Crimes: The Experiments in Auschwitz', *Voices of Memory* (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Muzeum in Oświęcim, 2008), vol. 2, p. 44.

[72] This method of sterilisation was officially legalised in the Reich in 1936 as a result of deaths caused by surgery; however, at that time it was employed rather irregularly and mainly as a therapeutic measure. The first case of a woman who was sterilised by radiation was presented in 1936 in Arthur Gütt, Ernst Rüdin and Falk Ruttke, *Zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses: Gesetz und Erläuterungen* (München: Lehmanns Verlag, 1936), pp. 340-342. This issue was also mentioned in other publications: Marie E. Kopp, 'Legal and Medical Aspects of Eugenic Sterilization in Germany', *American Sociology Review* 5 (1936), p. 769; Horst Biesold, *Crying Hands: Eugenics and Deaf People in Nazi Germany* (Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1999), p. 141; and Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism*, p. 531.

The first person to suggest the x-ray technique of sterilising people was Viktor Brack, an official in the Führer's Chancellery, who, in March 1941 stated:

> [The] experiment at this stage has been finished. The following results can be presented as undoubted and scientifically supported. If some people should be permanently infertile, so it can be done with a high dose of radiation, which will cause castration with all its consequences. High doses of radiation destroy the internal secretion of ovaries and testicles. Lower doses caused temporary infertility only. The consequences that could be pointed out are: missing menstruation, changes in metabolism, losing hair etc [...] the dose for males should be between 500 and 600 and for females between 300 and 350 and it should last for males about 2 minutes and for females about 3 minutes. It should be also mentioned that if the X-raying is carried without necessary care it could cause visible burns on the human body.[73]

At that time, his plan was rejected. However, a year later, Brack found an influential supporter in Heinrich Himmler, who became the biggest proponent of sterilisation on a mass scale. In July 1942, Himmler received a letter which outlined Brack's proposal:

> Among 10 Million Jews, in Europe are, I figure, at least 2-3 Millions of men and women, who are fit enough for work. Considering the extraordinary difficulties the labor problem presents us with, I hold the view that these 2-3 Million should be specially selected and preserved. This can, however, only be done if at the same time they are rendered incapable to propagate. About a year ago I reported to you that agents of mine have completed the experiments necessary for his purpose. I would like to recall these facts once more. Sterilization, as normally performed on persons with hereditary diseases, is here out of the question, because it takes too long and is too expensive. Castration by x-rays, however, is not only relatively cheap, but can also be performed on many thousands on the shortest time. I think that at this time it is already irrelevant whether the people in question become aware of having been castrated after some work or months once they feel the effects.[74]

[73] NTP, NO-204 Viktor Brack letter to Heinrich Himmler and report concerning the x-ray sterilisation experiments, 21 March 1941. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)
[74] NMT 3/1729.

In August 1942, Brack's new method of sterilisation was finally approved.[75] The establishment of the research area at Birkenau, including obtaining the Siemens x-ray apparatus, proceeded swiftly. Horst Schumann, who, despite having no experience in radiology or gynaecology, was chosen to supervise this research. The selection of Schumann raises questions as to whether the x-ray technique was simply viewed as an alternative to the chemical sterilisation experiments, or whether Brack was under the impression that x-ray sterilisation was rather uncomplicated and thus did not require a specialist in radiology. Another explanation could be the fact that Brack knew Schumann as an ambitious and subservient SS doctor, and the new post was most likely a reward for his extensive service in the 'T4' centres. Regardless of the motivations behind the decision, the x-ray experiments were commenced by Schumann at Birkenau in late 1942 and lasted until the middle of 1944.

**Malaria Experiments at Dachau: Claus Schilling**

Malaria is known as the most common tropical disease. It is caused by eukaryotic protist of the genus *Plasmodium* that is spread by female *Anopheles* mosquitoes. There are four forms of malaria: *Plasmodium falciparum*, *Plasmodium vivax, Plasmodium malariae* and *Plasmodium ovale*. The most common are *Plasmodium vivax, which causes malaria tertiana*—typically an easily curable type of malaria characterised by fever attacks every three days—and *Plasmodium falciparum,* which causes *malaria tropicana*—the most dangerous for humans with symptoms including irregular fever attacks and the possibility of coma and death, if not treated within 24 hours.[76] The majority of deaths caused by malaria have taken place in Africa since this disease is commonly associated with tropical climate and poverty. Moreover, scholars

[75] Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, p. 155.
[76] Hulverscheidt, 'German Malariology', p. 221.

observed, that war conditions often resulted in disturbance of distribution or even shortage of malaria and anti-malaria drugs, which also caused a faster spread of malaria fever.[77]

During the First World War, the German army suffered heavy losses due to malaria. This led to involvement of the German pharmaceutical companies like IG Farben in research on malaria. Consequently, by the 1930s, IG-researchers launched two new malaria drugs—*Atebrin* and *Plasmochin*.[78] Although, German scholars had already studied different forms of treatment against malaria decades before the war, the Nazi government decided to support and expand this research, as late as 1941, when they discovered that it would benefit the war effort.[79] This decision was motivated by the fact that, in 1941, malaria, again, decimated German soldiers who engaged the Allied troops in Northern Africa. At that point, the symptoms of malaria could be pharmacologically treated; however, other issues were addressed, including recurring malaria attacks that continued to be problematic. Thus, Professor Claus Schilling's[80] experiments on immunisation against malaria gained the attention of the Reich's Ministry of Interior. Schilling, as a recognised researcher, was associated with prestigious organisations including the Robert Koch Institute where he held the position of director of the tropical diseases division between 1905 and 1936. Between July 1938

[77] Leo Barney Slater, *War and Disease: Biomedical Research on Malaria in the Twentieth Century* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009), p. 84.
[78] Vondra, *Malariaexperimente*, p. 19.
[79] Hulverscheidt, 'German Malariology', pp. 222-223.
[80] Claus Karl Schilling was born on 5 July 1871 in Munich. In 1895, he graduated with MD. Then, he practised medicine as a governmental doctor in the German African colonies of Togo and Cameroon. Later, between 1899 and 1900, he conducted research on tropical diseases in Tanganyika. After several years, his knowledge of tropical medicine was recognised; and, in 1905 he was appointed the first-ever director for the newly created tropical medicine division of the Robert Koch Institute. The main focus of the Robert Koch Institute's tropical medicine division was finding a cure for *trypanosomiasis*and for malaria. After approximately thirty years, on 1 October 1936, Schilling retired from his position; however, he continued his research on immunisation against malaria in his private laboratory, at the hospital at Wittenau, as well as, at the Herzberge mental hospital. From July 1938 until May 1941, Schilling conducted experiments on malaria immunisation in San Niccolò di Siena and at the psychiatric asylum in *Ospedale Psichiatrico* in Voltera in Italy. He used mentally ill patients as guinea pigs. Between February 1942 and April 1945, he performed experiments on camp inmates at Dachau. See Hulverscheidt, 'German Malariology Experiments', p. 225; and Vondra, *Malariaexperimente*, pp. 106, 112-139.

and May 1941, he conducted his research in mental asylums in Italy; however, he found experimenting on psychiatric patients rather exhausting. Therefore, in the early 1940s, he took first measures to disseminate aims of his research in order to attract influential supporters and, that way, to further develop his research methods. In March 1941, Schilling still being in Italy wrote a letter to the German counsellor in Rome in which he stated:

> In Greece and Bulgaria malaria exists in a particularly severe form, it has harmed our troops and our enemies in the war 1914-1918 and it is difficult to spare our soldiers in the upcoming season of the year in spite of prophylactic medication. Any opportunity to protect our soldiers against it must be exercised. My research has shown such possibility. I feel obligated to draw [the] attention of the supreme command of the German army to this.[81]

This letter gained the attention of the Reich Health Führer Leonardo Conti, who sought an opportunity to eliminate the danger of malarial infection among German soldiers.[82] The decision, in regard to Schilling's offer, was under consideration for several months. Finally, on 18 November 1941, during their first official meeting at the German Embassy in Rome, Leonardo Conti asked Claus Schilling if and when the results of his research would lead to the development of a viable treatment against malaria. As a result of this conversation, Schilling was ordered to return to Berlin. Meanwhile, Conti contacted Gerhard Rose, who knew Schilling personally and was aware of his approaches, asking for an evaluation of Schilling's research techniques. Schilling claimed that his experiments on immunisation against malaria were effective and harmless to his experimental subjects. Rose, however, knew that this claim could not be

[81] Vondra, *Malariaexperimente*, p. 113.

[82] Marion Hulverscheidt and Anja Laukoetter have stated that it was Schilling who first introduced himself to Conti with a potential research proposal. It was caused by further difficulties that he experienced in Italy; see Hulverscheidt, 'Die Beteiligung von Mitarbeitern des Robert Koch-Instituts an Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit', p. 118.

supported, as one of Schilling's students had been admitted to a hospital due to severe malaria attacks. Consequently, Rose produced a rather negative assessment with key remarks addressing the outdated research methods of the elderly Schilling.[83] This report, however, had little effect on the decision that Conti made by the end of January 1942. Schilling's new post was Dachau concentration camp, which was surrounded by a swampy area with plenty of mosquitoes, including the malaria carrying *Anopheles*; therefore, it was an ideal location to perform research on immunisation against malaria.[84]

[83] Hulverscheidt, 'German Malariology Experiments', pp. 227- 228; also Hulverscheidt, 'Menschen, Mücken und Malaria', p. 119.
[84] Ernst Klee, *Auschwitz, die NS-Medizin und ihre Opfer* (Frankfurt: S.Fischer, 1997), p. 115; Vondra, *Malariaexperimente*, pp. 113-115.

## 3. PARTICIPATION IN EXPERIMETNS

### 'Hunting' for Priests

- **Selection for Malaria Experiments**

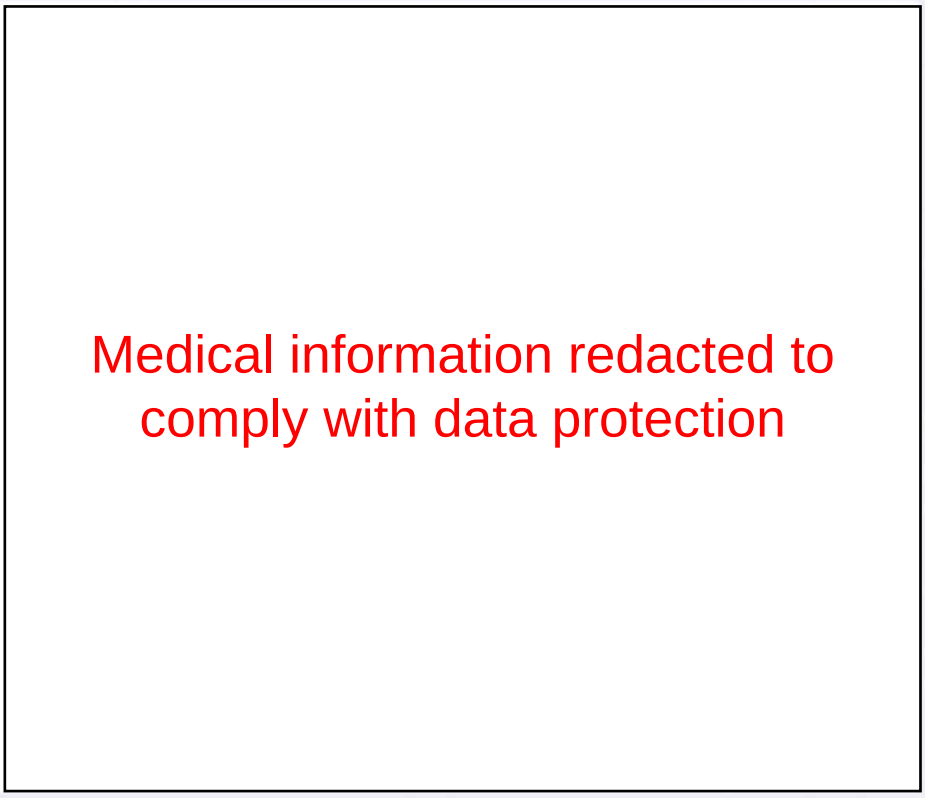
On 23 February 1942, Schilling came to Dachau to begin his work at the specially created malaria station where he remained until late April 1945. His research received generous support from the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Society) and the help of the Robert Koch Institute that provided malaria infected-*Anopheles*, and of IG Farben, which sent him drugs to treat malaria symptoms.[85] Schilling practised three methods of infecting people with malaria. The first method concerned placing a box with *Anopheles* mosquitoes between person's thighs or below the arm pits.[86] This process often had to be repeated because not all victims would fall sick at the first attempt. The second infection technique involved inserting the mosquitoes' *Sporozites*[87] under the skin of the patient. The last method used by Schilling was to inject victim with infected blood. The description of malaria experiments given by Schilling during the Dachau Trial was as follows:

> [After these patients were infected] the body temperature was examined every three hours and the blood every two or three days. After the mosquito bite, incubation took about fourteen days. If I injected the patient into the vein, incubation was only one day. The parasites were to be seen in the blood usually one or several days later [...] one group of my patients was only used to keep up the strains. In order to produce the infection from human being to human being, or from human being to

[85] NTP, NO-1752 Letter to Rose by Claus Schilling requesting mosquitoes, 4 April 1942. (Accessed on 12 December 2011) The person who was responsible for sending malaria infected-Anopheles was Rose see Hulverscheidt, 'German Malariology Experiments', p. 228.
[86] Klee, *Auschwitz medycyna*, p.115.
[87] Sporizoite are one of the minute elongated bodies resulting from the repeated division of the oocyst during sporogony. In the case of the malarial parasite, it is the form that is concentrated in the salivary glands and introduced into the blood by the bite of a mosquito; it enters the liver cells (exoerythrocytic cycle), whose progeny, the merozoites, infect the red blood cells to initiate clinical malaria. From online medical dictionary at http://www.mondofacto.com/dictionary (Accessed on 12 December 2011)

> mosquito to human being again, I used several strains of malaria [...] I tried to achieve immunisation.[88]

In order to produce immunity, Schilling infected his "human guinea pigs" with malaria *Tertiana*. In addition, the malaria strains he used came from different parts of the world, including Ilmensee, Ukraine, Crete, Madagascar, Finland, Moscow and Greece.[89]




*Malaria Card of Father* [Redacted] *Source ITS Digital Collection USHMM, 1.1.6.1 List Material Dachau.*[90]

Moreover, Schilling tested various existing medicaments, such as *Quinine*[91], *Atebrine*[92], and *Neosalvarsan*, and new drugs, like Stimolol, Pyrifer and "B 2516" (see image

[88] Greene, *Justice at Dachau*, pp. 87-88.
[89] Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter BAB), Records of the former Berlin Document Center (BDC), Vierteljahrsbericht der Malariastation im K.L. Dachau, 1 January 1943.
[90] As it can be seen on the photo, on 23 November 1942 [Redacted] was injected with 1cm of infected blood of another prisoner and died on 9 December 1942.

above).[93] According to Bláha, Schilling also applied different dosages of *Pyramidon* that had a fatal effect on several inmates.[94]

Schilling requested for the "human guinea pigs" to be selected among POWs who were not undernourished and did not come from chronically malaria-infested regions.[95] In the end, Schilling was allowed to use criminal and political prisoners instead. He was not personally involved in selecting experimental subjects; prisoners were, in some way, delivered to his research station. The first of several groups were chosen from among German 'so-called' criminals. On average, every week, twenty of them were sent to the *Revier*[96] where they underwent medical examination before being sent to the malaria station.[97] Soon after, Schilling requested more experimental subjects, who had to be selected out of other categories of prisoners. Thus, Polish Catholic priests were also selected for the experiments.[98]

During the first stage of the experiments, Schilling was provided with strong and healthy prisoners; however, this situation changed over time due to malnutrition that

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[91] Quinine is an alkaloid isolated from cinchona bark. Used as an antimalarial. It is believed to act by raising the pH of endocytotic vesicles and inhibiting internal membrane fusion processes. See www.mondofacto.com/dictionary (Accessed on 12 January 2012)

[92] Atebrine also known as Quinacrine is indicated as a primary agent in the treatment of giardiasis caused by *Giardia lamblia.* Quinacrine is also indicated for patients with metronidazole-resistant giardiasis and patients who should not receive or cannot tolerate metronidazole. Rare resistant cases of giardiasis may require a combination of quinacrine and metronidazole. Quinacrine has been also used in treating malaria and as a method of female sterilisation in India and Vietnam. Read more www.drugs.com (Accessed on 11 April 2011)

[93] Hulverscheidt, 'Die Beteiligung von Mitarbeitern des Robert Koch-Instituts an Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit', p. 122.

[94] According to Eugene Ost's list and the original malaria cards, ten prisoners died directly as a consequence of malaria experiments. These deaths resulted in sentencing and executing Claus Schilling as a war criminal on 28 May 1946. See Kenneth Mellanby, 'Medical Experiments on Human Beings in Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany', *British Medical Journal* 1 (1947), p. 126.. For testimony by Bláha see NMT 3/432. Also see Richard Overy, *Interrogations: The Nazi Elite in Allied Hands, 1945* (New York: Viking, 2001), p. 375.

[95] He claimed that mentally ill patients whom he previously used for his research were too unstable see Hulverscheidt, 'German Malariology Experiments', pp. 227- 228; also Hulverscheidt, 'Menschen, Mücken und Malaria', p. 119.

[96] *Revier* as an infirmary.

[97] Eugen Kogon, *Der SS-Staat: Das System der Deutschen Konzentrationslager* (München: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 1991), p. 196.

[98] Adam Kozłowiecki, *Ucisk i utrapienie: Pamiętnik więźnia, 1939-45* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Apostolstwa Modlitwy, 1967), p. 340.

escalated in 1942 and epidemics of typhus and tuberculosis, which had a high incidence among prisoners in the years that followed. Therefore, Schilling's constant requests of large groups of prisoners became problematic, and some SS officers viewed Schilling's experiments as a 'useless waste of manpower'.[99] As a result, he experienced several difficulties in obtaining prisoners for the purpose of his research. In the summer of 1943, Schilling informed Berlin that he planned to infect human subjects with malaria by inserting the mosquito *Plasmodium* underneath the skin, and, for that reason, he needed a new group of prisoners. Berlin granted him thirty prisoners a month.[100] To receive his "human guinea pigs" Schilling was required to present the camp commandant with a list of prisoners' names who had previously been examined by his assistants. Those inmates had to be approved by the camp doctor and by the commandant before they were sent to the malaria station. The answer was often negative; therefore, the practice had to be repeated.[101]

The selection process for Schilling was a part of the research; however, for the prisoners it was a traumatic experience. Father Adam Kozłowiecki reflected in his memoirs that Polish clergymen tried to escape. Instead of reporting to the hospital as ordered the day before, they went to work as usual. The majority, however, were captured, punished and sent to Schilling's malaria station anyway.[102] The selection process was described by the survivors in various ways. According to Father Marian Dąbrowski[103], a victim who testified at the Dachau Trial in 1945, names of selected

[99] Vondra, *Malariaexperimente*, p. 118.
[100] This has been confirmed by collected data. See International Tracing Service (hereafter ITS), Collection Konzentrationslager Dachau, folder. 267.
[101] On 10 December 1945, Martin Gottfried Weiss, who was a commandant of the Dachau camp from March 1942 until November 1943 testified during the Dachau trial that as commandant his duty was to approve prisoners that were requested by Schilling. However, he claimed that the selections were ordered from Berlin and that these could not be disobeyed. He also stated that he had no idea that those prisoners were used as guinea pigs for malaria experiments which is of course highly unlikely. See Greene, *Justice at Dachau*, pp. 68-71.
[102] Kozłowiecki, *Ucisk i utrapienie*, p. 410.
[103] His first name also appears as Marion. For biographical information see Appendix 8.

priests were read out of lists, which in most cases were firstly compiled at the camp office, approved by commandant, and then sent to the block *Schreiber* who sent them to Schilling. This statement confirms Schilling's description of selections. Father Stanisław Grabowski[104], in contrast, described the selection process as being more direct:

> They [male nurses] called out for priests who were between 20 and 30 years old. Some spoke out immediately, others sensed danger and remained silent. If there were not enough people stepping forward they would ask our age individually. The priests dissimulated, made up excuses. Some tried to leave the room but the doors were guarded. Finally, when they had a list of 10 to 20 people they looked for those between 30 and 40 years old. The hunt continued.[105]

The discrepancy between Father Dąbrowski and Father Grabowski's statements might be explained by the different periods to which they referred. Events described by Father Grabowski took place between July and September 1942 when the selections were possibly more random and choosing Polish priests was not as frequent. Towards the end of 1942, the selection process became, as mentioned earlier, less flexible. Hence, Father Dąbrowski did not mention any direct contact with Schilling's staff prior being sent to the malaria station that in his case took place on 19 December 1942. In addition, according to Father Dąbrowski, Polish priests were chosen for malaria experiments because the victims' lists were created by German communists who worked in the camp office, and who due to their political views disliked clergymen.[106] Taking the testimony

[104] Father Grabowski only witnessed the selection process, yet he was not experimented upon.
[105] Grabowski, *Znienawidzeni*, p. 160.
[106] NMT 2/471 Affidavit of Marion Dobrowski, 13 May 1945. (note that both the first name and surname are misspelled as it should be Marian Dąbrowski)

as credible does not give an explanation as to why prisoners of other nationalities also became victims of malaria experiments.[107]

Polish priests for decades were considered to be the only group of victims of Schilling's malaria experiments. This assumption could be explained by the fact that they were actively involved in the trials of war criminals, the files from which have long been a primary source for historians. In 2007, the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen opened its collections. Therefore, a number of previously unknown documents revealed new facts and figures. Prosecutors at the first Dachau Trial (1945) suggested that the number of malaria victims reached as many as 2,000 prisoners. However, Eugene Ost's List, which was submitted to the ITS on 16 March 1968, states that the number of victims was most likely, yet not definitely, 1,091.[108] Ost made several contradictory observations. For instance, he claimed that Schilling began his experiments on 23 February 1942; however, later in his report he mentioned two German prisoners who were experimented upon on 10 February 1942. Nevertheless, that source demonstrates that the largest group of malaria experiments victims by nationality were people who came from Soviet territories, including Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians and others—a total of 337 persons. Most of them came to Dachau relatively late and, in some cases, just a few months before the liberation. The second largest group by nationality was comprised of Germans—308, including six German priests—of whom nearly ninety per cent were exposed to malaria-infected mosquitoes and blood injections in 1942. Poles accounted for the third largest group of malaria guinea pigs—in total 291. The majority of the Polish research victims were Catholic priests—172.

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[107] Schilling experimented on Poles, Germans, Italians, Yugoslavs, Czechs, French, Spaniards and people from Soviet territories.

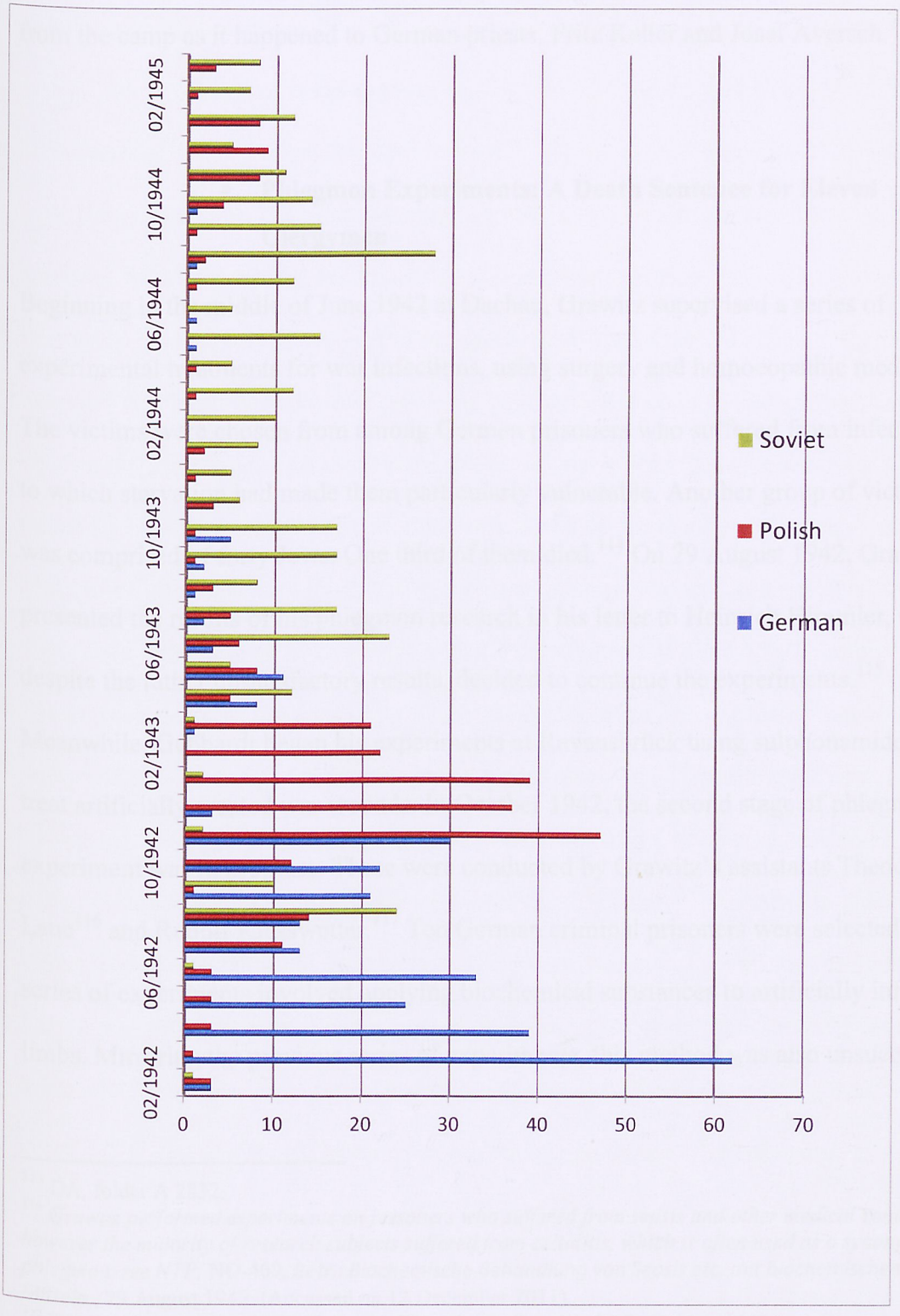
[108] The full list is held at the ITS. See ITS, Col. Konzentrationslager Dachau, folder. 267. Eugene Ost worked as prisoner physician in the malaria station in Dachau; see Teodor Musioł, '"Służba zdrowia" w Dachau', *Przegląd Lekarski* 1 (1972), p. 115.

The first priest, Father [Name redacted] [109] from Poznań, was selected on 9 July 1942. During the first half of 1942, the number of Polish priests selected for the experiments, despite previously mentioned published sources, was marginal. From November 1942 until March 1943, the quantity of Polish clergymen in the malaria station staidly rose. During that five months period, 135 Polish priests were experimented on. The last priest, Father [Redacted] [110], was selected on 16 November 1944 (for a complete list of subjected to malaria experiments Polish Catholic priests see Appendix 1). Selection of the secular Poles, however, continued until March 1945. (See chart below).

Polish Catholic priests, despite being a relatively small group of malaria victims (172 out of an overall number 1,091), deserve special attention. Although Polish clergy were not the only priests infected with malaria (names of one Czech and six German priests appear on Ost's List under August 1942), their number was disproportionally higher, and thus proves that they were deliberately selected for this experiment, and resulted in deaths of Father [Name redacted] and Father [Name redacted] who died due to overdose of *Pyramidon*.[111] The six German priests who were subjected to malaria experiments were sent to the camp due to their subversive activity against the Third Reich, unlike Polish priests most of whom were incarcerated solely based on the fact that they were clergy of Polish nationality.

[109] There is a misspelling on Ost's List because his actual name was [Redacted] . For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[110] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[111] ITS, K.L. Dachau, folder 267. For biographical information see Appendix 8.

**The chronological comparison of the three largest groups of malaria victims: Soviets, Germans and Polish priests. Graph produced from data collected for the AHRC project on 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism'.**[112]




[112] This graph contradicts Hulverscheidt's theory that Schilling experimented on POWs as among victims were German criminals and Polish political prisoners. See Hulverscheidt, 'German Malariology Experiments', p. 228.

. In addition, none of the Polish clergy who were experimented on were released from the camp as it happened to German priests, [Redacted] and [Redacted] .[113]

- **Phlegmon Experiments: A Death Sentence for Eleven Clergymen**

Beginning in the middle of June 1942 at Dachau, Grawitz supervised a series of experimental treatments for war infections, using surgery and homoeopathic medicines. The victims were chosen from among German prisoners who suffered from infections, to which starvation had made them particularly vulnerable. Another group of victims was comprised of forty Jews. One third of them died.[114] On 29 August 1942, Grawitz presented the results of his phlegmon research in his letter to Heinrich Himmler, who, despite the rather unsatisfactory results, decided to continue the experiments.[115] Meanwhile, Gebhardt began his experiments at Ravensbrück using sulphonamide to treat artificially created war wounds. In October 1942, the second stage of phlegmon experiment was in progress. These were conducted by Grawitz's assistants Theodore Laue[116] and Rudolf Kiesswetter.[117] Ten German criminal prisoners were selected. This series of experiments involved applying biochemical substances to artificially infected limbs. Mirroring the previous series of experiments, this method was also unsuccessful

[113] DA, folder A 2832.
[114] *Grawitz performed experiments on prisoners who suffered from sepsis and other medical conditions however the majority of research subjects suffered from cellulitis, which is often used as a synonym of phlegmon, see NTP,* NO-409, *Betr.: Biochemische Behandlung von Sepsis etc. mit biochemischen Mitteln.*, 29 August 1942. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)
[115] BArchv, B 141, 12 Js 15/70, Letter by Himmler to Grawitz, 30 September 1942.
[116] Theodore Laue was born on 1 March 1893 in Bremen. He became a chief of the police in Bremen in 1933. In 1943, he was promoted to SS Oberführer. He died in 1953. See Klee, *Das Personenlexikon*, p. 359.
[117] Rudolf Kiesswetter was a biochemist born on 3 January 1901 in Karlsbaden. He received his MD degree in 1929. Ibid., p. 308.

and seven victims died.[118] As a result, the next attempt in finding a treatment for artificially caused phlegmon involved the use of both sulphonamide and a combination of homoeopathic materials.[119]

The last phase of the phlegmon experiments at Dachau took place on 10 and on 26 November 1942.[120] Grawitz, who was not in favour of the homoeopathic treatment from the outset, managed to be discharged from further experiments and left the camp; however, he was still informed about the course of the research. To 'replace' him and strengthen the research team, Heinrich Schütz, the Chief of the SS hospital and an internist, was hired. Shortly after receiving the authorisation of the camp commandant, he initiated the selection of subjects for his experiment. Schütz was looking for relatively healthy inmates. New victims were chosen from among the strongest and the healthiest Catholic priests.[121] Out of two groups of twenty of selected subjects, thirty eight were Poles (the other two were Dutch Pastor [Name redacted] [122] and a Czech priest [Name redacted] [123]). They were further randomly divided into two groups of ten—*A* and *B*. Members of each group received a different treatment. On 10 November 1942, the priests in group *A* were injected with 1 cc of pus collected from the phlegmon of sick prisoners or those who were already dead.[124] Prisoners in group *B* were injected into the same parts of body; however, this series called for the injection of 3 cc of pus, which the Nazi doctors called *Purolin.* All victims were left without any treatment for the first four days. On the fourth day, participants in group *A* received high doses of *Tibatin* or *Albucid* in forms of injections and tablets.[125] Participants in group *B*,

[118] BArchv, B 141, 12 Js 15/70, Testimony by Heinrich Stöhr, pp. 25-32.
[119] Ebbinghaus, Roth, 'Medizinverbrechen vor Gericht', p. 150.
[120] There were two experiment start dates. The first twenty priests were infected on 10 November and the second group of twenty on 24 November. The experiment's conduct was the same.
[121] Kozłowiecki, *Ucisk i utrapienie*, p. 392. Also Grabowski, *Znienawidzeni*, p. 86.
[122] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[123] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[124] They received the injection on the inside of their right or left thigh.
[125] Both drugs are sulphonamides.

on the other hand, were given only homoeopathic tablets. In some cases surgery, was also conducted to clean the wound of pus.[126] After several days, group *A* received a second injection of 3cc of *Purolin*. In addition, measurements of temperature and samples of blood and urine were taken on a daily basis.[127] As Father Majdański[128] described it:

> [The] illness was progressing very fast [and his] leg swelled. [He] was given pills. [...] After the operation, [his] right leg was covered in bandages and was also put in a splint. [...] Pus was draining from the wound all the time. The pain was horrible [...]. This state lasted until January 1943 by that time [he] was operated on three times. Immediately before the third operation, [he] received his last rites, which was illegally performed by a German priest.[129]

The official treatment of Father Majdański, as a participant of the experimental group *B*, was limited to homoeopathic products and surgery. He also received a *Tibatin* injection administered by the German male nurse Heinrich Stöhr, who thus endangered himself and sabotaged the experiment in order to save Majdański's life.[130]

In a similar manner to the previous series of experiments, the homoeopathic method of treating phlegmon proved to be unsuccessful. Eleven priests of out twenty from groups *B* died in horrible pain (see table below). Some of them could have been saved if drugs had been administered on time, as in Pastor [Redacted] 's case. By the time his body was practically covered in abscesses, the only way of saving him would have been to switch to medically tested methods, but [Redacted] was a member of group *B* and therefore did not receive sufficient help and was left to die. The first

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[126] Ebbinghaus, Roth, 'Medizinverbrechen vor Gericht', p. 151.
[127] *See detailed report of the phlegmon experiments victim* [Redacted] *See NMT 3/863-877 Diagnosis Artificial Abscess on Left Thigh and Right Apper Arm, 10 November 1942- 12 April 1943.*
[128] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[129] Kazimierz Majdański, *You Shall Be My Witnesses : Lessons Beyond Dachau* (Garden City Park, NY: Square One Publishers, 2009), pp. 89-92.
[130] Teresa Bojarska, *Cierniowa mitra* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PAX, 1969), p. 291.

victims were Father [Redacted] and Father [Redacted] ., whose immune systems were the weakest, and they died shortly after they were infected.[131] Seven priests out of eleven died in December 1942.

**List of priests who died as a result of phlegmon experiments. Table produced from data collected for the AHRC project on 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism'[132]**

This table has been redacted to comply with data protection

The last one to die was [Redacted] , on 20 April 1943.[133] The average age of the selected victims was thirty-six. The oldest among Schütz's "human guinea pigs" was Father [Name redacted] , who was fifty-three when the experiment began; the youngest was [Name redacted] , who was twenty-six.[134]

[131] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[132] For completed table of victims see Appendix 3.
[133] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[134] Kazimierz Majdański was the only victim of phlegmon experiments whose memoirs, *Będziecie moimi świadkami*, were published. For biographical information on [Redacted] and Majdański see Appendix 8.

The results of the experiments using sulphonamides presented some improvement. One of the victims who survived was Father [Redacted]'[135], whose files were used against Nazi doctors at the post war trials in Hamburg and Nuremberg:

Summary

> After injection with Purolin an abscess formed in the left thigh. Likewise formed an abscess on the right upper arm after an i.v. Purolin injection. Both abscesses were opened. On the left thigh large and deep-seated necroses developed. Blood vessels were destroyed. There were strong haemmorrhages; ligation of the venna saphena magna had to be performed to bring about a stoppage. The wounds continued to discharge pus for several weeks. Internally large doses of Albucid and Tibatin were administrated. The cleaning of the incisions progressed comparatively quickly as compared to that of bio-chemically treated patients. The patient recovered fully and is again available for work.[136]

Presenting the issue of phlegmon experiments at Dachau is extremely difficult. The number of primary war-time sources is very limited. The above case of Father [Name redacted] [137] is revealing; however, it only gives information regarding one participant in the experiments from group *A*. Consequently, it is impossible to compare these results with those of group *B*. Similarly, in reference to post-war primary sources, the situation is no different. The list of survivors made by the officers of the ITS in 1962 does not include victims who died during the experiment.[138] The Schütz Trial collection, which was deposited at the Federal Archives in Koblenz, gives valuable information regarding Schütz's biography; however, it lacks a description of the course of experiments, the fatal cases in particular.[139] Furthermore, several errors can be

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[135] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[136] NTP, NO-994 Diagnosis Artificial Abscess on Left Thigh and Right Upper Arm, p. 9. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)
[137] NTP, NO-994. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)
[138] See ITS, Col. KL Dachau, folder 153, Namentliche Liste von Personen, an denen im KL-Dachau und anderen Konzentrationslagern medizinische Versuche vorgenommen wurden 1942-1944 (Nachkriege-Aufstellung), pp. 25, 35, 49.
[139] Heinrich Schütz's trail began on 15 October 1975. Over the course of sixteen days, Schütz's responsibility for the deaths of eleven victims of phlegmon experiments was unquestionably proved. The Federal German Court sentenced him to ten years of imprisonment. The trial's verdict, however, was

detected in the testimonies of witnesses. For instance, the evidence given by Heinrich Stöhr—the German male nurse who worked at the experimental block—is very confusing. Stöhr believed that priests of all nationalities were used as guinea pigs, which is clearly inconsistent with other sources. Moreover, Stöhr claimed that victims who did not receive any medicine recovered faster than others who were treated with drugs.[140] At the Dachau Trial, František Bláha—a Czech prisoner who worked as pathologist at Dachau—mentioned that the number of victims used for phlegmon experiments was close to 600. According to his statement, the majority of them died.[141] Published secondary sources are also contradictory. Bedrich Hoffmann, in his book *And Who Will Kill You*, not only gives the wrong date for the beginning of the phlegmon experiment, but also cites an inaccurate total of victims—twenty instead of forty. Additionally, Hoffmann's description of the experiments does not match either [Redacted]'s report or Kazimierz Majdański's evidence.[142] According to Volker Roelcke, three groups of twenty inmates were subjected to phlegmon experiments.[143] Furthermore, in *Cudem ocaleni*, Father Ernest Chowaniec[144] stated that nineteen out of forty victims died during the phlegmon experiments.[145]

All told, eleven priests died in agony during the phlegmon experiments at Dachau camp. A few others died shortly after the war. Among them were priests

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declared invalid and the case had to proceed to the court of appeal. In the interim, Schütz was not only a free man, but he also continued working in his private practice. Because the Federal German legal system operated rather slowly, it took several more years to reach a final decision, which declared that Schütz's age and state of health rendered him unfit to serve a prison sentence. See BArchv, B 141, 12 Js 15/70.

[140] Mitscherlich, Mielke, *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit*, p. 159.

[141] NTP, PS-2428 *Report of the Atrocities Committed at the Dachau Concentration Camp Volume II*, Exhibit 5, 13 May 1945. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)

[142] Hoffmann, *And Who Will Kill You*, pp. 163-165.

[143] Volker Roelcke, 'Tiermodell und Menschenbild: Konfigurationen der epistemologischen und ethischen Mensch-Tier-Grenzziehung in der Humanmedizin zwischen 1880 und 1945', in Brigid Griesecke, Marcus Krause, Nicolas Pethes and Katja Sabisch (eds.), *Kulturgeschichte des Menschenversuchs im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2009), p. 33.

[144] For biographical information see Appendix 8.

[145] Chowaniec, *Cudem ocaleni*, p. 16.

[Redacted] , [Redacted] and [Redacted] .[146] Those, whose immune systems managed to beat the disease, struggled with health problems for the rest of their lives. Several of them became invalids, like Father [Redacted] [147]

**The Description of Schumann's Experiments and Dering's Role as 'Castrator'**

The experimental use of x-ray radiation to sterilise human beings began at Birkenau in November 1942 after the thirty-five year old Schumann arrived at the camp.[148] Upon his arrival, Block 30—a wooden barrack located at the women's camp at Birkenau—was designated as the first location for his experiments.[149] Block 30 contained a waiting room, two rooms for conducting experiments and a living area for prisoners who were employed at the block.[150] Schumann's research, like other Nazi coerced medical research, were top secret; therefore, people who were not involved in the experiments were not allowed to enter the block without special permission—a rule that also applied to high ranking SS officers. All staff had to sleep inside the block. Both staff and the victims did not know what the nature of Schumann's research was. Sometimes prisoners were given false information that they were selected to take part in typhus research.[151]

In late 1942, an epidemic of typhus broke out at Birkenau, which greatly impacted on the x-ray sterilisation research, as both Schumann and his assistant Sonja

[146] For their biographical information see Appendix 8.
[147] Majdański, *Będziecie moimi świadkami*, p. 194; also Annas, *The Nazi Doctors and the Nuremberg Code*, p. 77.
[148] Despite a very short career in the army (he joined Luftwaffe in 1939), he always wore a Luftwaffe uniform, which became one of his most recognisable features. See Danuta Czech, *Kalendarz wydarzeń w KL Auschwitz* (Oświęcim: Wydawnictwo Państwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu-Brzezince, 1992), p. 275.
[149] Ironically, Schumann research centre was organised in the same block as his rival Carl Clauberg who experimented on chemical method of sterilisation of women. Even when Schumann was moved to Auschwitz again he shared a block with Clauberg. See Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, pp. 117-121.
[150] DÖW, folder 6470 Testimony re Clauberg (unknown author, date not given). Also Stanisław Kłodziński, 'Sterylizacja i kastracja promieniami Rentgena', in Jerzy Rawicz (ed.), *Okupacja i Medycyna: czwarty wobór artykułów z Przeglądu Lekarskiego - Oświęcim'z lat 1963 - 1978* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1979), vol. 4, p. 49.
[151] Kłodziński, 'Sterylizacja i kastracja promieniami Rentgena', p. 49.

Fischmann[152] fell ill and had to leave the camp for several weeks. In early 1943, he returned to Birkenau to discover that the majority of his victims (approximately 350) had been gassed or had died of typhus; therefore, he had to start his experiments from the beginning. Shortly after, in February 1943, he moved his station to Auschwitz, and Block 30 was consequently transformed into a dental surgery.[153] At first, Schumann was based at Block 21 but afterwards he moved to Block 10, which was known among SS men and prisoners as the experimental block where Clauberg, Schumann and Eduard Wirths[154] performed their experiments on women.[155]

The process of choosing subjects for sterilisation has been described by historians in different ways. Stanisław Kłodziński, in his article 'Sterylizacja i kastracja promieniami Roentgena', has quoted Sonja Fischmann, who testified that neither Schumann nor his assistants were personally involved in the selection of prisoners. Instead, a request was sent to the camp *Schreiber* to assign a number of prisoners, which was previously agreed upon by Schumann and the camp authorities. The selected inmates were brought to the block the next day.[156] On the other hand, according to Ruth Weinberger, Schumann personally selected the experimental subjects. Weinberger also

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[152] Sonja Fritz, neé Fischmann, was born on 25 November 1925, in Vienna, Austria, as a child of a mixed marriage. In July 1942, Sonja Fritz was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned for three months. After intervention by three lawyers, Ms. Fritz was finally released only to be imprisoned in another jail. The last jail before her transport to Auschwitz was in Prague, which is why she arrived as part of a Czech transport on 11 November 1942. At the concentration camp she received the number: 242530. Because of her mixed marriage, only toward the end of her incarceration in Auschwitz, was the Star of David added to her number—apparently because they finally decided to treat her as a 'Geltungsjüdin'. Sonja Fritz worked as Schumann's assistant from 25 November 1942 until February 1943. See Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, p. 247.

[153] Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, p. 156.

[154] Eduard Wirths was born in 4 September 1909 in Geroldshausen in Bavaria. He studied medicine at the University of Würzburg from 1930 until 1935. In 1933, he became a member of the Nazi party and the SA. In 1939, he was admitted to the Waffen SS. He fought at the front in Finland and in the Soviet Union. After a heart attack he was assigned to the post of chief doctor at Neuengamme concentration camp. In September 1942, Wirths was promoted and transferred to Auschwitz. He was involved in human experiments on typhus and also conducted cancer research on the cervix. After the war, Wirths was detained by the Allies. He hanged himself in his cell on 20 September 1945. For more information see Ulrich Völklein, *Der "Märchenprinz": Eduard Wirths: Vom Mitläufer zum Widerstand. Als SS-Arzt im Vernichtungslager Auschwitz* (Giessen: Haland &Wirth im Psychosozial-Verlag, 2006).

[155] AŻIH, Collection Obozy, 209 Auschwitz, folder 72, Tajny Raport z Bloku 10; also Czech, *Kalendarz wydarzeń*, p. 276.

[156] Kłodziński, 'Sterylizacja i kastracja promieniami Roentgena', p. 49.

mentioned that Schumann was particularly interested in 'the youngest and prettiest girls for his experiments'.[157]

Subjects chosen for the experiment were young healthy prisoners of both genders and of a variety of nationalities, although the majority of them were Jews who were selected upon arrival at the camp or shortly thereafter. The number of persons experimented upon has been a matter of dispute among historians. The source of the problem lies in the interpretation of witnesses' testimonies, which often gave contradictory information. For example, Schumann recalled that, by the end of 1942, he had sterilised 350 male prisoners, whereas Fischmann mentioned 1,500.[158] On the other hand, Danuta Czech, using the existing original registers of the camp, estimated that the number of Schumann's victims was approximately 200.[159] The number of women exposed to radiation is even harder to estimate. However, from what can be discerned from the available sources, it is evident that the quantity of females was substantially smaller. Until 1943, this number was marginal, but it steadily increased when Schumann moved to Auschwitz. Alisa Barouch, who was transported to Birkenau in April 1943 from Salonika, testified that she was sent to Block 10 along with ninety-eight women a week after she arrived at the camp.[160] Another witness—[Redacted]—testified that she was among fifty Jewish women who were selected at Birkenau and sent to Block 10 in July 1943.[161]

The experimental procedure was rather quick, but its effects lasted a lifetime. Upon arrival, prisoners were ordered to undress in the waiting room while their age, nationality and other important information were registered. After that, they entered the room in which Schumann was already waiting in the metal cabin operating the Siemens

[157] Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, p. 157.
[158] Ibid., p. 158.
[159] Czech, *Kalendarz wydarzeń*, p. 309.
[160] APMAB, Col. Testimonies, Witness statement by Alisa Barouch, 29 March 1967.
[161] APMAB, Col. Testimonies, Witness statement by [Redacted], 28 March 1967.

x-ray machine.[162] Due to anatomical differences, the process of x-raying females and males was dissimilar. Men were asked to put their scrotum on a metal plate, and women were ordered to stand in between two metal plates that covered the back and the front of their abdominal area. The radiation process could last between two and fifteen minutes. The aim was to achieve the most effective results; thus, Schumann tested various doses of radiation.[163] In some cases prisoners were irradiated twice, particularly females whose menstrual cycles continued after the first application of x-rays, as was the case with Alisa Barouch.[164] The male victims were sent back to Birkenau immediately after the radiation. However, 'during the course of the next few days the majority of prisoners suffered from a festering of the sex organs and had great difficulty in walking. But they had to work, until exhaustion. Those who broke down were gassed'.[165] Women, on the other hand, were kept for several days at Block 10, and, after they recovered, they were also sent back to work.[166] In some cases women were sent back to Birkenau before they fully recovered.[167]

The effects of radiation varied depending on the dosage applied. The most common symptoms that occurred amongst women were vomiting and dizziness. Male prisoners observed swellings, pain and blackness of their scrotum. Many victims felt constantly ill, and several of them died, especially those who underwent irradiation at extremely high doses in the first group.[168] Prisoners whose severe burns did not heal were unable to meet the demands of work at Birkenau; and, as a result, some of them

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[162] APMAB, Collection Proces Rodolfa Hössa, vol. 2, p. 82.
[163] At the beginning of the experiments, Schumann used very high dose of radiation, and, as a result, all women from the first group died. See IPN, NTN, GK 196/142, Witness Testimony by Illona Vochryzkowa, (translated and submitted as evidence) 12 May 1947.
[164] APMAB, Testimonies, Witness statement by Alisa Barouch, 29 March 1967.
[165] NTP, NO-819 Chaim Balitzki Affidavit, 22 November 1946. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)
[166] For more information regarding female victims of Schumann's experiments see Hans-Joachim Lang, *Die Frauen von Blok 10: Medizinische Versuche in Auschwitz* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2011).
[167] APMAB, Col. Testimonies, Witness statement by [Redacted] 28 March 1967.
[168] BArch, B 126, 61085, Berichte über die Prozesse gegen Rudolf Hoess und Erhard Milch (Menschenversuche); Kłodziński, 'Z zagadnień ludobójstwa', p. 108; Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, pp. 162-163.

committed suicide or were killed within days or weeks after the experiment.[169] For those males who survived the post-radiation period, the suffering continued. To check the results of x-raying, male prisoners were exposed to an abusive treatment, which consisted of brutal massaging of their prostate with a wooden stick.[170] Jehoshua Cohen, a victim, recalled:

> We were all brought to a Block. There each one of us was called into the room, in which a doctor dressed in civil uniform was waiting [...] He places a crank handle into my rectum, it hurt, then the doctor collected some drops of sperm on a piece of glass and the next one in our row was up.[171]

The purpose of this procedure was to produce semen, which would undergo microscopic analysis to determine, based on the presence or absence of motile spermatozoa, whether the radiation was effective. If no motile spermatozoa were detected in a semen sample, the radiation was effective.

The final stage of Schumann's experiments was the excisions of ovaries and testicles to be sent to Breslau for examination. Victims were operated on between two weeks and eleven months after their exposure to radiation.[172] Schumann had minimal experience in surgery; therefore, he assigned several Polish prisoner-physicians to carry out operations. Selected inmates had already proven to be skilled while working at Block 21, the site of the operating theatre at Auschwitz. One such prisoner-physician was Władysław Dering.

Dering's position in the prisoner medical hierarchy changed over the course of his imprisonment at Auschwitz. He began as a male nurse and then was promoted to the

[169] Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, p. 165. Also see Kłodziński, 'Sterylizacja i kastracja promieniami Roentgena', p. 52.
[170] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, pp. 148-149.
[171] Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, p. 167.
[172] Czech, *Kalendarz wydarzeń*, pp. 582-583.

function of an ordinary physician, before he became a leading surgeon at Block 21. By the end of his incarceration at the camp, he achieved the position of chief of the whole prisoner hospital complex at Auschwitz I. One decision, however, forever changed the way he was seen by his fellow prisoners. As Dering testified after the war: 'Dr Schumann had appeared in the theatre one day in [his] Luftwaffe uniform and had been told [by another Nazi physician] that Dr Dering was a surgeon [at his] disposal'.[173] During this short conversation, Dering was initiated into Schumann's sterilisation experiments using radiation. He learned that Schumann was planning to remove the x-rayed gonads so as to determine if the applied dosage of radiation was high enough to make a person infertile.[174]

The first group of fifteen male Jewish prisoners of various nationalities to undergo surgical procedure arrived at Block 21 on 6 May 1943.[175] They were transported for that purpose from Birkenau. The men were called in individually and entered the operating theatre having already showered and undressed. The doctor on duty received instructions from Schumann as to which testicle (left or right) was to be removed.[176] Dering, who was assisted by Zenon Ławski, operated on seven men removing their left testicle. The same day eight additional prisoners underwent the same surgery, which was conducted by Jan Grabczyński[177] with the assistance of Zbigniew

[173] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 64.
[174] Minney, *I Shall Fear No Evil*, p. 130.
[175] ITS, Collection KL Auschwitz, folder 157, Abschrift des Operationsbuches der Chirurgischen Abteilung der Haeftlingskrankenbaues, Block 21 des KL Auschwitz.
[176] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 65.
[177] Jan Grabczyński qualified as a physician in 1932. He was arrested in 1942 and brought to Auschwitz in December the same year. He worked at Block 21 with Dering. He was released from the camp to work at the hospital outside. He returned to Auschwitz after the liberation to treat former prisoners who were kept there because of a threat of a typhus epidemic. Later he worked in a hospital for railwaymen in Kraków.A brief biography can be found in Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, pp. 119-120. For Grabczyński's dedication to saving prisoners after liberation of Auschwitz see Józef Bellert, 'Praca polskich lekarzy i pielęgniarek w szpitalu obozowym PCK w Oświęcimiu po oswobodzeniu obozu', *Okupacja i medycyna*, vol. 3, pp. 263-271.

Sobieszczański.[178] Each selected for operation prisoner received an anaesthesia injection in the spine and then was 'strapped onto the operating table [that was] tilted as much as 30 degrees'.[179] On average, the excisions of gonads were performed three days a month. However, the majority of operations, sixty-eight in number, including ten ovariectomies, were conducted in November 1943.[180] Several male prisoners were operated on for a second time, losing the second testicle. Between 15 September and 15 November 1943, 99 prisoners were operated on. Sixty-nine men lost one testicle, twenty men were completely castrated, and ten women in total had one of their ovaries removed.[181] The vast majority of victims were anxious and unaware of the purpose and consequences of the operations, as evidenced below:

> In October 1943, 7 males from our group were taken to Auschwitz block 21. I got a spine injection after which the lower part of my body felt dead. Both my testicles were removed. I could watch the operation in reflection on the lamp. No one asked me to sign any agreement. Frankly, I wasn't aware what will happen to me.[182]

The number of women who were operated upon in comparison to men was disproportionately smaller. The first women were operated on at Block 10 by Maximilian Samuel[183], and, according to a former nurse who worked at Block 10, Zofia

[178] ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.
[179] There were differences in opinion where patients received their spinal injections. Dering and Grabczyński testified that all injections were made at the actual theatre on the operating table. Dering described patients as in a bent over position and held by one of his assistants. Victims, on the other hand claimed that injections were made outside the operating room in a corridor in a very cruel manner, many times by Dering himself. See Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 71.
[180] ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.
[181] APMAB, Process Rudolfa Hössa, vol. 6, folder 86.
[182] Kłodziński, 'Z zagadnień ludobójstwa', p. 108.
[183] Maximilian Samuel was a German Jew born in 1880. Before the war, he worked as a professor of gynaecology in Cologne. In 1938, he immigrated to Belgium and then to France. Arrested in 1942, he was sent to Auschwitz in August 1942. Firstly he was imprisoned in Monowitz and then transferred to Block 10 in Auschwitz to assist Dr Wirths in his research on cancer. He was eventually killed probably in 1943. The opinions expressed in regard to Samuel's activities at Block 10 were varied and changed in tenor over the years. Brewda, for instance, called him a 'crazy old man'. His surgical skills were criticised by other doctors in Block 10. Years after the war his person was glorified and involvement in the medical experiments was to some extent exonerated. For negative opinion look AŻIH, Col. 209 Obozy, box 72

Pleszowska, all procedures went well and led to a quick post-operative recovery.[184] Ten young Jewish women from Greece underwent operations performed by Władysław Dering and Jan Grabczyński at Block 21 on 10 November 1943.[185] Eight of them had their left ovary removed and the remaining two lost the right ovary.[186] Two of them died from post-operative complications.[187]

The vast majority of excisions of irradiated testicles and ovaries were conducted between February and November 1943. These procedures were mainly performed by Polish political prisoners-physicians, among whom were Władysław Dering, Jan Grabczyński and Zbigniew Sobieszczańki.[188] Several other Polish inmates among them Zenon Ławski, Aleksander Górecki and Klebanowski were also involved as they assisted during these operations (see table below).[189] In August 1943, Dering was promoted; he therefore, did not appear as frequently in the operating theatre as previously.[190] Overall, between 6 May and 11 November 1943, he performed seventy-

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Auschwitz, Block 10, Tajny raport Blok 10; Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, pp. 227-228 . For more positive views see Benno Müller-Hill, 'Der gute Dr. Samuel', in Helgard Kramer (ed.), *NS-Täter aus interdisziplinärer Perspektive* (München: Martin Meidenbauer Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2006), pp. 231-241; Daniel Nadav, 'Ärzte in Zwangslagen: Dr. Maximilian Samuel (1880-1943)', in Albrecht Scholz and Caris-Petra Heidel (eds.), *Sozialpolitik und Judentum*, vol. 5, *Medizin und Judentum* (Dresden: Union Druckerei, 2000), pp. 135-139.

[184] Pleszowska mentioned four women being operated by Samuel. Aliza Barouch, on the other hand, named five victims (Bella, Gilda, [Redacted] Aliza Barouch and Forforca). For Pleszowska's testimony see IPN, OBBZHwK, GK 174/183A, Dochodzenie w sprawie dr Władysława Dehring, byłego więźnia obozu oświęcimskiego- funkcyjnego lekarza tego obozu 1946-47,Testimony of Zofii Pleszowskiej, 24 October 1946. For Barouch recollection see Lore Shelley, *Criminal Experiments on Human Beings in Auschwitz and War Research Laboratories: Twenty Women Prisoners' Accounts* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1991), p. 82.

[185] Two women, Gilda and Bella, were previously operated by Samuel losing their left ovary see Shelley, *Criminal Experiments on Human Beings*, p. 82.

[186] The two women who had their right ovary removed had been priviously operated by Samuel who performed excision of their left ovary. ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.

[187] Minney, *I Shall Fear No Evil*, p. 137.

[188] Zbigniew Sobieszczański was born on 28 April 1914 in Radomsko. He graduated from Warsaw University. During the war he worked in Warsaw and then in Krakow. Later he was arrested and sent to Auschwitz. He worked in Kraków after the war. BL, 2/1/167.

[189] ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.

[190] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 64.

six operations on seventy inmates of which twelve were Polish Jews and assisted in a further forty-one similar procedures.[191]

**Table of performed and assisted operations of gonad removal at Auschwitz by Polish prisoner physicians between May 1942 and November 1943. Table produced from data collected for the AHRC project on 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism'**

| Name | | Excision of one testicle | Excision one ovary | Excision of both testicles | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dering** | performed | 68 | 5 | 3 | 76 | 117 |
| | assisted | 32 | 5 | 4 | 41 | |
| **Grabczyński** | performed | 66 | 5 | - | 71 | 84 |
| | assisted | 8 | 5 | - | 13 | |
| **Sobieszczański** | performed | 13 | - | - | 13 | 73 |
| | assisted | 57 | - | 3 | 60 | |
| **Ławski** | performed | - | - | - | 0 | 51 |
| | assisted | 51 | - | - | 51 | |
| **Klebanowski** | performed | - | - | - | 0 | 17 |
| | assisted | 17 | - | - | 17 | |

According to the surgical register of Block 21, 147 males had at least one testicle removed.[192] The same source mentions only ten women. Surgical removal of testicles is a quick, and, from a medical point of view, it is a relatively safe operation because it is done externally. However, if one takes into account the hygienic conditions at the camp

[191] In addition, Dering also performed several sterilisations, and castrations motivated by medical condition or a court order. See ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157. For a name list of operated by Dering prisoners see Appendix 4.
[192] ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.

and the shortage of medical supplies, in addition to the fact that it was conducted forcibly, it is clear that, at Auschwitz, operations of this kind put prisoners' lives in danger. The situation for women was even more traumatic. Removal of an ovary was a more complicated procedure involving invasive surgery; therefore, the risk of infection was much higher. The sources also reveal that the surgical removal of ovaries were conducted too quickly and caused the death of at least two victims.[193]

On 29 April 1944, following a decree issued by Philipp Bouhler Reichsleiter of Hitler's Reich Chancellery, the experiment with x-rays as a form of sterilisation was abandoned. Both Schumann and Himmler realised that this form of birth control was too expensive.[194] Surgical sterilisation was much cheaper, more effective and faster, because the average operation lasted no more than 10 minutes.[195]

It is very difficult to deduce exactly why Dering, who knew the consequences of those operations on their victims, obeyed Schumann's orders. His enemies claimed that it was a perfect opportunity to gain the trust of the SS doctors, as he later profited by his liberation from Auschwitz.[196] Dering, on the other hand, justified his actions claiming that as a prisoner he could not refuse to participate in Schumann's research. This argument, however, was juxtaposed with Adélaïde Hautval's heroic behaviour. She is believed to have refused to assist in excision of gonads and was not punished for it.[197] Moreover, Dering declared that he expressed his doubts in regard to the removal of x-rayed testicles and ovaries to other fellow physicians at the camp. This was confirmed by Jan Grabczyński.[198] Moreover, Dering tried to convince the jury during the libel trial in 1964 that according to his medical knowledge and experience it was in the patients'

[193] Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, p. 176.
[194] 'Prozesse Schumann: Unbekannter Mann', *Der Spiegel* 39 (1970), p. 76.
[195] IPN GK 196/119, NTN, Akta w sprawie karnej byłych członków załogi SS obozu koncentracyjnego Oświęcim-Brzezinka.
[196] TNA, TS 58/744, Copy of the Statement by Dr Karl Sperber, December 1945, p. 3.
[197] Her activity at Auschwitz will be analysed further in this dissertation.
[198] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 120.

interest to have their sexual organs extracted since they were already destroyed by the radiation and could cause more harm if not removed.[199] According to the newest research an x-ray exposure indeed may affect fertility, and a high dosage of radiation may also cause serious health problems including cancer.[200] This was confirmed by one of Schumann's victims Aliza Barouch who stated:

> Most of the Greek women, who had been irradiated by Dr. Schumann in Auschwitz and who survived the camp, developed cancer. Many of them had to undergo colostomies and were living with a 'sakit' (plastic bag for feces).[201]

**The Ravensbrück *Rabbits***

The establishment of the research station at Ravensbrück, which served as the site of experiments to test the effectiveness of sulphonamides in treating war wounds, proceeded rapidly. Only a month after Gebhardt accepted Himmler's offer, the first tests were in progress.[202] Ravensbrück was primarily a camp for women; however, first tests were conducted on male prisoners. According to Fischer's interrogation report, the first four groups, each containing five prisoners, were selected from among inmates who were brought for that purpose from Sachsenhausen.[203] Against this, the recently discovered testimony of the former male Ravensbrück inmate Johannes Kartsch states that thirty victims were selected at the adjacent male camp of Ravensbrück for

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[199] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 65.
[200] Amanda L. Ogilvy-Stuart and Stephen M. Shalet, 'Effect of Radiation on the Human Reproductive System', *Environmental Health Perspectives Supplements* 2 (1993), pp. 109-116, further reading see National Research Council (U.S.), *Health Risks from Exposure to Low Level of Ionizing Radiation* (Washington DC: The National Academies Press, 2006) , vol. 2, p. 2.
[201] Shelley, *Criminal Experiments on Human Beings*, p. 85.
[202] The start date of sulphonamide experiments at Ravensbrück given by Gebhardt was 20 July 1942. See NTP, NO-2734 Subject: 1. Experiments by SS-Brigadefuehrer Gebhardt on the Combating of Gas-Gangrene 2. Experiments on the Treatment of Sepsis by bio-chemistry, 29 August 1942. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)
[203] NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fischer, 21 November 1945; Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, p. 13. Also Mant, 'The Medical Services in the Concentration Camp Ravensbrück', p. 106.

sulphonamide experiments.[204] In addition, the two testimonies present different information regarding the number of fatalities that the experiment caused; therefore, establishing facts at this time is impossible, as this matter requires further research.

The first series of experiments involved the insertion of gangrenous bacterial cultures into an incision on the experimental subjects' legs. Fischer, who performed these operations, described how 'the wound was then closed and the limb encased in a cast which had been prepared, which was lined in the inside with cotton, so that in the event of swelling of the affected member, the result of the experiment would not be influenced by any other factor other than the infection itself.'[205] Gebhardt was not present at the camp at that time; thus, Fischer conducted all procedures and did not record any fundamental problems. However, soon afterwards, unexpected problems occurred. According to Fischer, the camp commandant announced that no further groups of male prisoners would be assigned to this research; this resulted in the selection of women for a further series of experiment.[206] Fischer's statement could have been truthful. Fischer's testimony in regard to the sulphonamide experiments conducted at Ravensbrück was given under the pressure of interrogation; therefore, he may have made this statement so as not to incriminate himself by revealing any connection to the decision to select women for the operations he later performed. Consequently, for a further series of painful experiments relatively healthy women were chosen. They became known as the *Rabbits*.[207] The selection of these women began in late July 1942.

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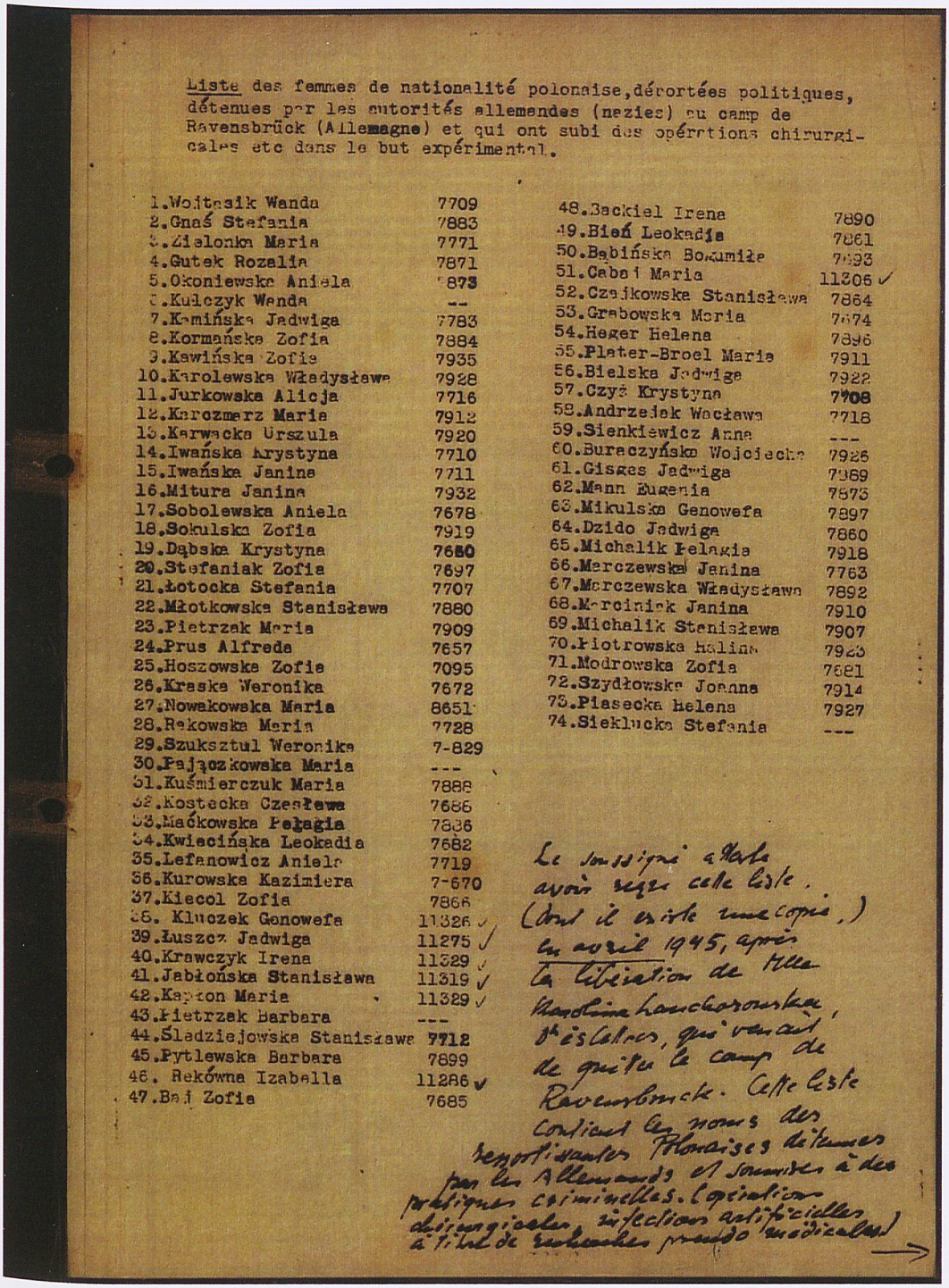
[204] This testimony has been deposited at the Ravensbrück Memorial Archives. It has not been catalogued yet, which explains the lack of reference number.
[205] NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fischer, 21 November 1945.
[206] Ibid.
[207] According to several testimonies, the nickname *Rabbits* was given to the Polish victims from Ravensbrück by their fellow inmates in late 1942. After a year the *Rabbits* adapted to the new nickname finding it accurate and from that point they began identifying themselves with this term, which has been commonly used in the historiography. For more information see Smoleń, *Aby świat sie dowiedział*, p. 66, see also Szymonowicz, *Beyond Human Endurance*, pp. 441, 119.

All of them were Poles who came to the camp on 23 September 1941 and on 31 May 1942.



Liste des femmes de nationalité polonaise, déportées politiques, détenues par les autorités allemandes (nazies) au camp de Ravensbrück (Allemagne) et qui ont subi des opérations chirurgicales etc dans le but expérimental.

| | |
|---|---|
| 1.Wojtasik Wanda | 7709 |
| 2.Gnaś Stefania | 7883 |
| 3.Zielonka Maria | 7771 |
| 4.Gutek Rozalia | 7871 |
| 5.Okoniewska Aniela | 7873 |
| 6.Kulczyk Wanda | -- |
| 7.Kamińska Jadwiga | 7783 |
| 8.Kormańska Zofia | 7884 |
| 9.Kawińska Zofia | 7935 |
| 10.Karolewska Władysława | 7928 |
| 11.Jurkowska Alicja | 7716 |
| 12.Karczmarz Maria | 7912 |
| 13.Karwacka Urszula | 7920 |
| 14.Iwańska Krystyna | 7710 |
| 15.Iwańska Janina | 7711 |
| 16.Mitura Janina | 7932 |
| 17.Sobolewska Aniela | 7678 |
| 18.Sokulska Zofia | 7919 |
| 19.Dąbska Krystyna | 7680 |
| 20.Stefaniak Zofia | 7697 |
| 21.Łotocka Stefania | 7707 |
| 22.Młotkowska Stanisława | 7880 |
| 23.Pietrzak Maria | 7909 |
| 24.Prus Alfreda | 7657 |
| 25.Hoszowska Zofia | 7095 |
| 26.Kraska Weronika | 7672 |
| 27.Nowakowska Maria | 8651 |
| 28.Rekowska Maria | 7728 |
| 29.Szuksztul Weronika | 7-829 |
| 30.Pajączkowska Maria | --- |
| 31.Kuśmierczuk Maria | 7888 |
| 32.Kostecka Czesława | 7686 |
| 33.Maćkowska Pelagia | 7836 |
| 34.Kwiecińska Leokadia | 7682 |
| 35.Lefanowicz Aniela | 7719 |
| 36.Kurowska Kazimiera | 7-670 |
| 37.Kiecol Zofia | 7866 |
| 38. Kluczek Genowefa | 11326 ✓ |
| 39.Łuszcz Jadwiga | 11275 ✓ |
| 40.Krawczyk Irena | 11329 ✓ |
| 41.Jabłońska Stanisława | 11319 ✓ |
| 42.Kapłon Maria | 11329 ✓ |
| 43.Pietrzak Barbara | --- |
| 44.Śledziejowska Stanisława | 7712 |
| 45.Pytlewska Barbara | 7899 |
| 46. Rekówna Izabella | 11286 ✓ |
| 47.Baj Zofia | 7685 |
| 48.Backiel Irena | 7890 |
| 49.Bień Leokadia | 7861 |
| 50.Bąbińska Bogumiła | 7893 |
| 51.Cabaj Maria | 11306 ✓ |
| 52.Czajkowska Stanisława | 7864 |
| 53.Grabowska Maria | 7674 |
| 54.Heger Helena | 7896 |
| 55.Plater-Broel Maria | 7911 |
| 56.Bielska Jadwiga | 7922 |
| 57.Czyż Krystyna | 7708 |
| 58.Andrzejak Wacława | 7718 |
| 59.Sienkiewicz Anna | --- |
| 60.Buraczyńska Wojciecha | 7926 |
| 61.Gisges Jadwiga | 7869 |
| 62.Mann Eugenia | 7873 |
| 63.Mikulska Genowefa | 7897 |
| 64.Dzido Jadwiga | 7860 |
| 65.Michalik Pelagia | 7918 |
| 66.Marczewska Janina | 7763 |
| 67.Marczewska Władysława | 7892 |
| 68.Marciniak Janina | 7910 |
| 69.Michalik Stanisława | 7907 |
| 70.Piotrowska Halina | 7923 |
| 71.Modrowska Zofia | 7681 |
| 72.Szydłowska Joanna | 7914 |
| 73.Piasecka Helena | 7927 |
| 74.Sieklucka Stefania | --- |

Le soussigné atteste avoir reçu cette liste. (dont il existe une copie,) en avril 1945, après la libération de Mlle Karolina Lanckoronska, Dr ès Lettres, qui venait de quitter le camp de Ravensbrück. Cette liste contient les noms des ressortissantes Polonaises détenues par les Allemands et soumises à des pratiques criminelles. (opérations chirurgicales, infections artificielles à titre de recherches pseudo médicales) →

*List of the Rabbits submitted to the ICRC by Karolina Lanckoronska. Source ITS, Collection KL Ravensbrück, Folder 54.*

It is unclear who designated these particular groups. During his interrogation after the war, Gebhardt claimed that only German prisoners condemned to death were supposed to have been used for experimentation; thus, it came as a surprise to him that Polish women became "human guinea pigs".[208] Fischer, on the other hand, stated that it was Gebhardt who agreed with the camp commandant which prisoners should be used for his research.[209] Oberheuser, in addition, testified that she received a list of female prisoners to be examined from Schiedlausky.[210]

In July 1942, over 100 Polish political prisoners were gathered on the roll call square for an informal medical examination.[211] On 24 July, seventy-four randomly selected Polish women were called to the camp office where they were met by commandant Koegel and camp doctors—Schiedlausky, Rosenthal and Oberheuser.[212] Each prisoner's personal data were recorded, and then their health history was checked. Particular interest was given to the state of the skin on their legs.[213] Although most of them had spent almost a year at the camp, their health was still in good condition. After doctors had collected the desired information, they sent the women back to their block. During the next few days the women were gathered several times during the roll call without receiving any explanation. On 28 July 1942, the first group from among the seventy-four selected Polish women was taken to the *Revier*, where they were

[208] NARA, M 1019/20 Interrogation of Karl Gebhardt, 25 September 1945. Also TNA, Records of the National Archives (hereafter RW), 2/5 John da Cunha Papers: Ravensbrück War Crimes Trials, Arthur Keith Mant, Report on the Medical Services, 'Human Experimentation and other Medical Atrocities committed in Ravensbrück Concentration Camp'.
[209] NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fischer, 21 November 1945.
[210] NARA, M 1019/50 Interrogation of Herta Oberheuser, 31 October 1946.
[211] Mączka, 'Operacje doświadczalne w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', p. 124.
[212] Mitscherlich, Mielke, *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit*, p. 141. Also TNA, WO 235/306, Testimony by Helena Piasecka, 30 December 1946.
[213] Szymonowicz, *Beyond Human Endurance*, p. 88; also see Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 246.

undressed, bathed and had their legs shaved by a nurse. The operations, however, were delayed several days.[214]

Existing secondary literature commonly suggests that Polish women became victims of two types of experiments at Ravensbrück: a) research with the use of sulphonamides, and b) experimental operations on the regeneration of bones, muscles and nerves. In turn, the sulphonamide tests can be divided into three stages, each of which was performed in several series.[215] The first phase involved an incision on the calves and the introduction of bacterial cultures into the wounds. The second stage featured the introduction of other materials (e.g. piece of wood) into the wound in addition to the bacteria cultures. The final phase of the infection experiments utilised specific cultures of gangrene-inducing bacteria. The second type of experiment involved: fractures, transplants and bone grafting, along with the excision of parts of muscles and nerves. All experimental operations were performed with the use of a general anaesthetic—either *Evipan* or *Ether*.[216]

On 1 August 1942, the first experimental operations on six of the *Rabbits* began.[217] As in the case of first series of tests performed on male experimental subjects, infecting the victims' wounds with bacteria did not bring about the expected results. Thus, Gebhardt decided to consult Grawitz in Berlin about further steps. His inquiry prompted a conference in Hohenlychen for the express purpose of deciding how to proceed with the experiments. After several discussions Gebhardt, Grawitz and Himmler reached the consensus that the previous series of experiments did not reflect

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[214] NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fischer, 21 November 1945; also Mączka, 'Operacje doświadczalne w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', p. 124.
[215] For division according to applied drugs see Roelcke, 'Tiermodell und Menschenbild', p. 33.
[216] Mączka, 'Operacje doświadczalne w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', p. 124.
[217] The number of the *Rabbits* who were exposed to each series of experiments has been differently estimated by scholars. The difficulty comes from contradictory figures being given by defendants at the Nuremberg Medical Trial. Estimates given in this dissertation are based on testimony of Zofia Mączka and her medical report, 'Operacje doświadczalne w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', published in 1946.

actual battlefield conditions. Consequently, Gebhardt ordered the simulation of common combat injuries and then to induce infections.[218] Three new series of experiments called for the introduction of various materials, in addition to bacterial cultures, into artificially created wounds. Each of these series involved three women. The participants in the first group were infected with bacterial cultures and additionally fragments of wood were inserted into the wound. The second group featured the introduction of both bacteria and glass fragments into the wound. The final group of three *Rabbits* received the bacterial culture and a mixture of glass and wood shards.[219]

Two weeks after the beginning of the second stage of sulphonamide experiments, Grawitz visited Ravensbrück to assess both the conditions under which the experiments were conducted and the experimental findings. He was not pleased with what he observed because he believed that the absence of casualties signified that the experiments failed, yet again, to reproduce sufficiently the conditions at the front.[220] He pointed out that to achieve accurate results victims should be wounded with a shot gun. Both Gebhardt and Fischer strongly disagreed with this suggestion and tried to find other solutions to continue the research.[221]

In late September and beginning of October 1942, another experimental series was in progress, which unlike previous attempts caused the death of several victims. In contrast to simple incisions, protocol for these experiments stipulated that the doctors were to inflict damage to muscular tissue. Fischer explained:

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[218] NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fischer, 21 November 1945.
[219] TNA, RW 2/5. Also, Hans Waltrich, *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Heilanstalten Hohenlychen (1902 bis 1945)* (Blankensee: Strelitzia, 2001).
[220] NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fisher, 21 November 1945. Also Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross* (New York: Carrol & Graf Publishers, 1999), p. 469.
[221] NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fisher, 21 November 1945.

> The normal flow of blood through the muscle is cut off. The muscle is nourished by the flow of blood from either end. When this circulation is interrupted, the affected area becomes a fertile field for the growth of bacteria; the normal reaction of the tissue against the bacteria is not possible without circulation. This interruption of circulation usual in battle casualties could be simulated by tying off the blood vessels at either end of the muscle.[222]

This series of experiments was divided into two groups. The first group of ten women was experimented upon on 30 September. The further twelve *Rabbits* were operated on a week later, on 7 October. The first group was infected with the same bacterial cultures that were used in previous experiments. The women in the second group were infected with gangrene-inducing cultures, such as *Streptococci* and *Staphylococci*. Gebhardt decided to omit glass and wood. Of the ten victims who had the gangrene-inducing bacteria inserted into the artificially created wounds, eight developed severe infections within 24 hours. Members of the second group, however, showed signs of infection within 72 hours. The sulphonamides were applied when the infection occurred, with the exception of two victims who served as the experimental controls and thus received no medication at all.[223] Attempts to treat the women's infections failed in five cases.[224] Weronika Kraska was infected with tetanus on 7 October 1942; she died within a few days (she was 30 years old). Kazimiera Kurowska (23) died in the middle of October, the same year from an infection caused by gas bacilli Aniela Lefanowicz (45), Zofia Kiecol (35) and Alfreda Prus (22) died within a week of being infected with bacteria that produced malignant oedema.[225]

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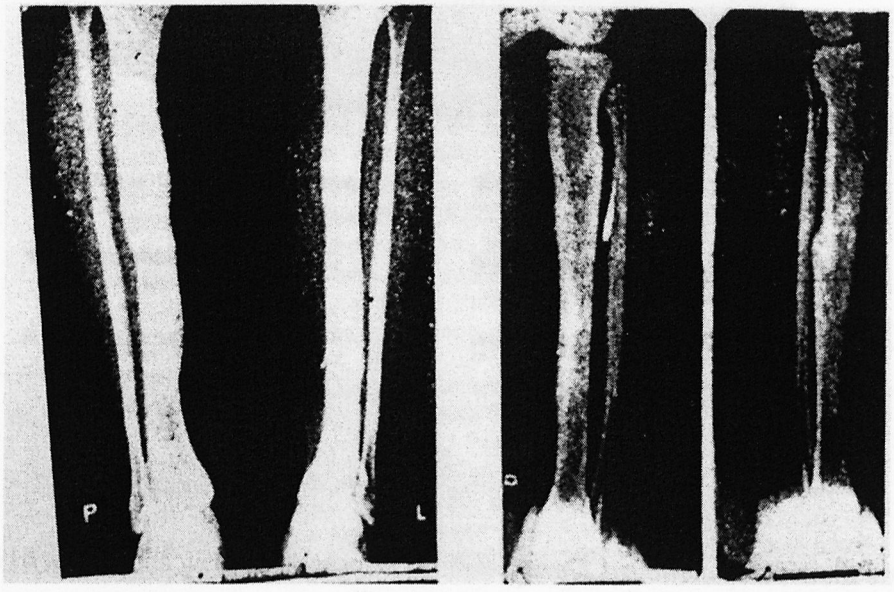
[222] NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fisher, 21 November 1945.
[223] Ibid; also Mączka, 'Operacje doświadczalne w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', pp. 142-147; Mitscherlich, Mielke, *Doctors of Infamy*, p. 56.
[224] Mant, 'The Medical Services in the Concentration Camp of Ravensbrück', p. 109.
[225] DÖW, 50104/56A, Bericht über die Wissenschaftliche Versuche F.K.L. Ravensbrück von Milka Skbkova, Inka Katnerova, Isa Siczinska, Jola Krzizanowska, and Krisza Iwanska (correct spelling Krystyna Iwańska), 27 May 1945. Also Mitscherlich; Mielke, *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit*, p. 1.

The Ravensbrück experimental station also housed experiments involving operations on muscles, bones and nerves. Given that these required a plastic surgeon, Ludwig Stumpfegger arrived at the camp in the autumn of 1942.[226] The central purpose of these procedures was to test whether injured bones, muscles and nerves could regenerate. Stumpfegger and Fischer performed several muscle operations involving the lower leg, thereby damaging the fibula and tibia bones of several victims (see photo below). Overall, twenty-two *Rabbits* were used for the bone experiments.[227] The operations resulted in tremendous pain, and weakness due to loss of muscle mass and nerve damage, which hampered the victims' walking abilities.

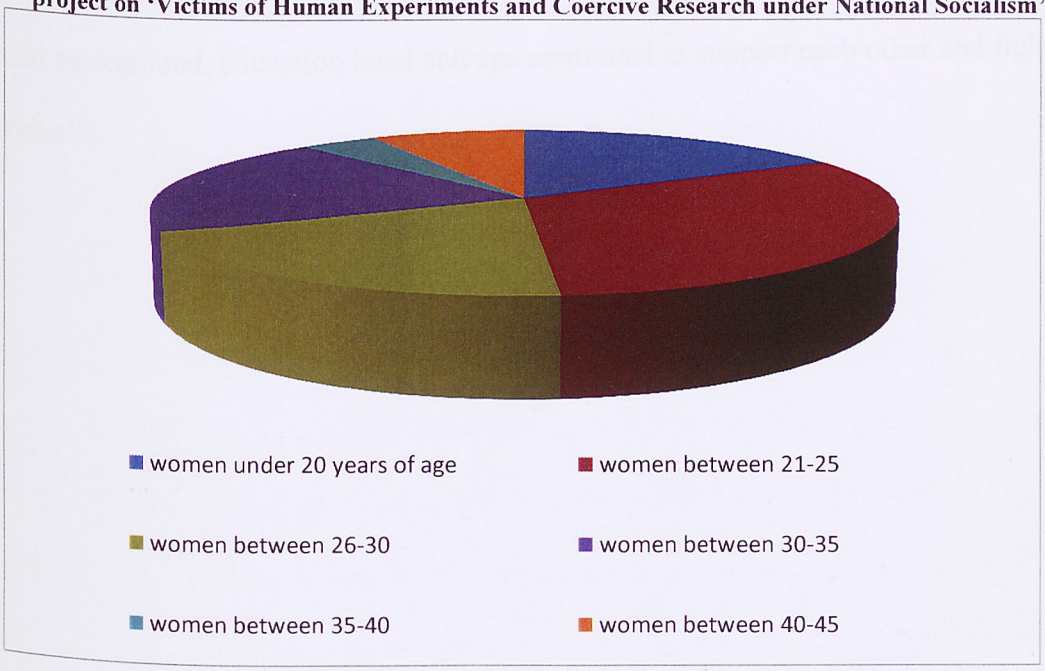



*X-ray films of two victims of bone experiments at Ravensbrück. Source IPN Warsaw. Leonarda Bień (left) and Janina Marczewska (right) underwent their first experimental operations on 4 November 1942 and 3 December 1942, respectively. The films provide evidence of multiple tibial fractures in both women. Images taken in November 1945 at the Gdańsk Medical Academy.*

[226] Hahn, *Grawitz, Genzken, Gebhardt*, p. 458; also Mant, 'The Medical Services in the Concentration Camp Ravensbrück', pp. 109-110.
[227] The figure given by Fischer was 15 but he was mistaken see NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fischer, 21 November 1945.

The *Rabbits*—seventy-four Polish women—experienced suffering and were left with horrendous scars and damaged health. Many of them were operated on several times, particularly the victims of bone regeneration experiments. Forty-six such procedures were conducted on a group of twenty-two prisoners. In addition, seventeen muscle regeneration procedures were performed on four *Rabbits*.

**Age of the Rabbits at the time of experiment. Chart produced from data collected for the AHRC project on 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism'**




Overall, 116 operations were performed.[228] Władysława Karolewska underwent six operations. Barbara Pietrzyk, who practised gymnastics before the war in the hope of fulfilling her dream of becoming a ballerina, ended up as a cripple from five bone regeneration operations.[229] Leonarda Bień-Dymska[230] was also operated on five times. When the war began, forty-seven of the *Rabbits* were in their twenties, and sixteen were

[228] See Appendix 2.
[229] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[230] For biographical information see Appendix 8.

still in school. The youngest victim was sixteen at the time of her first procedure, and the oldest was forty-five (see graph above).

Regardless of the fact that the research team, as well as, facilities for the sulphonamide experiments at Ravensbrück were well organised, the careless conduct meant that the results of those trials brought no medical breakthrough but physical pain and often irreversible injuries to the victims. Nonetheless, the mutual experience of suffering as "human guinea pigs" bonded the *Rabbits*, who despite the differences like social background, education level and age continued to support each other and fight for survival.

## 4. THE INFLUENCE OF EXPERIMENTS ON PRISONERS' BEHAVIOUR AND IMAGE

### Polish Priests Helping Prisoners Ill with Typhus at Dachau: Vocation Maintained

In general, it is expected that vocation should be manifested in priests' behaviour regardless of circumstances. On the other hand, the conditions inside Nazi concentration camps that Polish priests and other inmates faced were extremely difficult and incomprehensible for people who did not experienced incarceration and related to it mistreatment. Therefore, endangering life for another prisoner inside Nazi concentration camp required an extraordinary strength of character and compassion for other human being.

The position of Polish Catholic priests at Dachau was particularly difficult. They were given some of the worst work assignments and were objects of constant chicanery, humiliation and hatred because of their profession and nationality. In addition, priests of twenty-one nationalities were imprisoned at Dachau, but only Polish priests in large numbers were deliberately used as "human guinea pigs" in medical experiments.[231] The constant struggle with hunger, and physical, as well as mental abuse meant that priests, just as any other prisoners, were driven by survival instincts; thus, for a number of them, the struggle to remain alive was placed above all the values and principles that they had cultivated in their pre-camp life.[232] As Gustaw Morcinek, a prominent Polish writer, noted:

> Amongst [priests, there] were people who would have been good shoemakers, dressmakers or other craftsman, but a lot of them chose wrong a path in their career as they became priests to satisfy their

[231] For tables of priests selected for medical experiments see Appendix 1 and 3.
[232] For an extensive description of malnutrition in Dachau and its effect on the physical and psychological health of inmates see Henri Rosencher, 'Medicine in Dachau', *British Medical Journal* 12 (1946), pp. 953-955.

parents. For others it was a calculated decision because, at the end of the day, it is an easy job.[233]

According to the research of the Franco-Bulgarian philosopher, Tzvetan Todorov, 'it occurs that heroes who stood out under pressure were ordinary persons who did not present those qualities in normal circumstances'.[234] One can view the honourable act of Father Maximilian Kolbe, who sacrificed his life for another prisoner at Auschwitz, as a proof of Todorov's theory. Yet, these admirable acts were conducted mainly by individuals who, through their extraordinary behaviour, were able to inspire others. Similarly, at Dachau, mutual heroic actions, such as helping prisoners at the typhus block, grew out of individual initiative rather than joint effort. The conduct of the vast majority of Polish priests was honourable. Helping others gave them a sense of high purpose. In other words, they were able to retrieve their damaged dignity by serving prisoners in need.[235] It became their personal mission, thus helping them to keep their minds occupied, which was a key survival strategy.

In their efforts to help fellow prisoners, Polish priests put their own health in danger, when they cared for inmates who were infected with typhus.[236] The first epidemic of typhus at Dachau started in winter 1942/43.[237] The second, which cost more lives, began at the end of 1944 and lasted on till the liberation of the camp.[238] Several factors account for the rapid spread of epidemics at Dachau. The 1943 influx of prisoners from camps located in Eastern Europe produced significant overcrowding, which, in turn, led to a pronounced decline in the camp's hygienic conditions. Some of

[233] Gustaw Morcinek, *Listy spod morwy*, p. 69.
[234] Todorov, *Facing the Extreme*, p. 54.
[235] Ibid., p. 65.
[236] Typhus as Fleckfieber.
[237] In some publications there is mistaken information that it was not Fleckfieber (a louse-borne infection of a rickettsial pathogen) but typhoid (an abdominal infection from a bacterial pathogen) see Majdański, *Będziecie moimi świadkami*, p. 113.
[238] Tadeusz Gędziorowski, *Dachau* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1961), p. 128.

the prisoners were in such bad physical condition that they were not able to take a bath or use a toilet without the help of fellow inmates. In the beginning, prisoners were able to take a bath once a week. In the years that followed, this luxury was reduced to once a month.[239] Making matters worse, upon arrival, prisoners received lice-ridden clothing, ensuring that lice would become a major issue for inmates in nearly every block. Additionally, inmates were given only one set of clothes, which they could not wash after work because they would have nothing else to wear at night.

The medical service for prisoners at Dachau was appalling. The hospital was not able to accommodate a greater number of inmates. Crowding meant that ill prisoners were sleeping with healthy ones on the same bed, infecting them at the same time. The extremely rapid spread of typhus among prisoners demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the SS officials' attempts to fight typhus epidemics. In May 1945, Father Marian Dąbrowski, who was brought to Dachau as a political prisoner in July 1942, reported that 'many [prisoners] died in the blocks, and they received no drugs and medical aid whatsoever, so to say, because there was no medicine available'.[240] As the US Army Major Rene Guirand, who was imprisoned at Dachau stated: 'In any estimation, we did not have enough medical supplies to do any good. We had enough to tease the disease.'[241]

In 1944, during the second wave of epidemics, camp officials tried to eliminate the disease by quarantining prisoners in blocks 17, 21, 23, 25 and 30. When the situation appeared to be under control, the isolation order was lifted, and the third wave of typhus struck the camp on 15 January 1945. The number of deaths rose to 100 per day. As usual, the hospital was not able to admit all the sick inmates. According to

[239] NTP, PS-2428 *Report of the Atrocities Committed at the Dachau Concentration Camp Volume II, Exhibit* 5, 13 May 1945. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)
[240] NMT 3/458 Affidavit of Marion Dobrowski, 13 May 1945.
[241] NTP, PS-2428. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)

prisoner-physicians, there were days when 300 people applied to be admitted to the hospital, but only forty could be taken because of lack of room. By February 1945, 786 deaths caused by typhus were registered at the camp. The lack of an effective campaign to fight the epidemics meant that the death rates rose steadily. During the peak period, over sixty casualties were recorded daily.[242] All those ill with typhus were placed in a single block. They were left there to die without any medical supplies and assistance. Clergy, among them Poles, Italians and Germans decided to help ill inmates. As Hoffmann recalled:

> When Polish priests came to the infected block they found a horrible disorder. [...] they found corpses two or three days deceased [...]. The patients lay on slats; the straw mattresses had been burned because they were full of lice.[243]

The only thing the clergymen could do was to make the last days of the sick patients more comfortable by bathing them, feeding them, listening to confessions and performing mass.[244] Priests desperately tried to protect themselves against typhus by regular check-ups and by searching for lice on each other's bodies and on their clothing.[245] Unfortunately, for some of them, these precautions were not enough. Several Polish priests lost their lives helping inmates in the typhus block. They became sick and, just like the other severely ill inmates, had no chance of surviving. 'Father Paweł Januszewski from Krajenki died twenty days after infection in March 1945 [...] Father Józef Zapłata, born 5 March 1904 in Jerka [...] died in February 1945'.[246] A

[242] NTP, PS-2428. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)
[243] Hoffmann, *And Who Will Kill You*, p. 184.
[244] Ibid., p. 185.
[245] Bernadac presents the story of Abbot Béran, the future archbishop of Prague who was responsible for the louse inspection at Block 28, *Witches of God*, p. 239.
[246] Walerian M. Moroz and Andrzej Datko (eds.), *Męczennicy za wiarę 1939-1945* (Warszawa: Michalineum, 1996), p. 428.

number of them lived until liberation but sadly died soon thereafter, as their bodies were no longer able to fight the disease.

As mentioned earlier, Polish priests were not spared from brutality in the concentration camp but even more likely to be mistreated due to their nationality and profession; thus, some of them were driven by survival instinct abused fellow prisoners.[247] The events described above demonstrate that some priests were also extraordinary individuals, who were unconcerned for their own lives, continued to provide help and religious service to those in desperate need. As it will be stressed in the next part of this dissertation, after the war, Polish priests, many of whom were abused by the medical research at Dachau, sustained this image as clergymen who were devoted to their compatriots both in Poland and abroad.

**Dering Wins his Release from Auschwitz**

The position of Władysław Dering within the camp changed rapidly in the summer 1943. The number of prisoner transports arriving at Auschwitz steadily increased; as a result, more inmates required medical assistance. Consequently, the Nazis began to rely more extensively on prisoner-doctors' experience. By that time, Dering had already established an impressive record as prisoner-physician. He was engaged in establishing a professional surgical theatre in Block 21; helping in setting up a hospital in Birkenau; performing thousands of operations and training other physicians—including several Nazi doctors—in surgery. His achievements and dedication earned him the trust of the elderly SS physician Entress. Therefore, in late August 1943, Dering was promoted chief of the entire prisoners' camp hospital at Auschwitz I.[248] This promotion, along with other responsibilities, brought certain advantages such as a better quality of food

[247] See Majdański's autobiography *Będziecie moimi świadkami.*
[248] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 64.

and a higher standard of living at the camp. His situation continued to improve, as he was introduced to various high-ranking SS doctors. The most significant introduction came in the autumn of 1943, when he met Schumann's rival Carl Clauberg, the physician involved in chemical sterilisation experiments of women at Auschwitz.[249] Clauberg subsequently arranged for Dering to work in a civilian hospital securing Dering's release from Auschwitz.[250]

On 25 January 1944, a full year before the liberation of Auschwitz, Dering was summoned by chief garrison physician Wirths announcing that Professor Clauberg, after several months of negotiations, had managed to persuade the authorities of the camp that Dering was needed at the Obstetrics and Gynaecological Department of the Miners Hospital in Królewska Huta (Königshütte) in Silesia. Dering was ordered to pack his belongings, and he left the camp the same day. According to Dering's testimony, Clauberg 'borrowed' him from Auschwitz for one year.[251] With the partial evacuation of the Miner's hospital in September 1944, Dering was transferred to the Municipality of Jastrzębie Zdrój.[252]

Dering's roughness and impulsive nature had a very negative effect on his reputation at Auschwitz. In addition, his affiliation with Schumann and Clauberg, who were both involved in human experiments, meant that he was seen as partially responsible for their crimes.[253] As a result, Dering had numerous enemies among prisoners who spread false accusations about him. For instance, several Auschwitz survivors claimed that Dering was engaged in selecting inmates for the gas chambers.[254]

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[249] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 65.
[250] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Władysław Dering, p. 3. (no date given)
[251] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 66.
[252] TNA, FO 371/71585, Władysław Dering: My Reply to the accusations submitted on the 18.12.1947, 28 December 1947, p. 9. Also TNA, TS 58/744, Certificate of Dr Jan Zaczynski Jastrzębie Zdrój, 2 May 1947.
[253] Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, p. 222; Weinberger, *Fertility Experiments*, p. 253.
[254] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Dr Karl Sperber, Liverpool 21 March 1947, p. 5.

However, these accusations were so conjectural that they do not merit further consideration. Selections for the gas chambers were carried out exclusively by the German doctors employed at the concentration camps.[255] Moreover, the episode in reference to his release was interpreted in various ways by other prisoners. Many of them linked Dering's engagement in removing gonads with his discharge from the camp. Karl Sperber, for instance, claimed that 'Dering registered on the *Volksdeutsche Liste*[256] and was taken out of Auschwitz camp as a personal assistant to Prof. Clauberg in his private clinic at a maternity centre near Katowice'.[257] However, Dering's release was not an isolated case, given that Dr Edward Lawkowicz and Dr Jan Grabczyński were also sent to work outside the camp.[258] These three assignments establish that there was a shortage of physicians in civilian hospitals, which precipitated the recruitment of prisoner doctors for medical work beyond the barbed wire.[259] Dering always denied registering on the *Volksdeutsche Liste*; moreover, on numerous occasions he stated that he was hired as a prisoner and remained on the Auschwitz inmates' list until the liberation of the camp.[260] Whether he was telling the truth or not it is hard to tell, as there are no documents that could prove it. Regardless of his understanding of events, Dering's conditions at the Jastrzębie Zdrój spa-hospital were incomparably better than those of the prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

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[255] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 62.

[256] During World War II, Polish citizens of German ancestry, who often identified with the Polish nation, were confronted with the dilemma of registering in the Deutsche Volksliste. Many ethnic Germans had families who had lived in Poland for centuries; even the more recent immigrants had arrived 30 years or more before the war. They faced the choice of registering and being regarded as traitors by other Poles, or not signing and being treated by the Nazi occupation as traitors to the Germanic "race". TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Dr Karl Sperber, Liverpool 21 March 1947, p. 5.

[257] Ibid.

[258] Dr Lawkowicz was sent to a hospital in Wieluń and Dr Grabczyński to hospital in the town of Auschwitz. See TNA, FO 371/71585, Władysław Dering: My reply to the accusations submitted on the 18.12.1947, 28 December 1947, p. 5.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 101.

## Crippled *Rabbits* Fight for their Lives

The bond between Polish female prisoners at Ravensbrück was strong; however, the relationship that developed among the *Rabbits* went beyond friendship. The common experience of pain and the feelings of injustice and violation that they shared resulted in powerful bonds based upon mutual understanding, compassion and assistance in the provision of care. Among the *Rabbits* were university-educated women, who came from eminent families, as well as those with limited schooling (see chart below). However, for the *Rabbits* boundaries, such as education, background or age, did not exist. They looked after each other by feeding those who were too weak to eat by themselves or changing bandages. This solidarity applied particularly to the *Rabbits* who were in the first group of victims, as they did not receive any medical help from either the Nazi doctors or the German nurses.[261]

The unique relationship among the *Rabbits* had a great influence in developing mental strength, courage and determination, qualities which enabled them to establish fundamental aims, such as surviving the camp and informing the outside world about the crimes committed at Ravensbrück. Such actions the priests apparently did not attempt.

Initially, the *Rabbits* were intimidated by the Nazi physicians and the SS; however, the situation changed on 11 February 1943, when they discovered that two of the group members had been executed. These two killings were not unprecedented, as the execution of political prisoners at Ravensbrück began in 1941/1942.[262]

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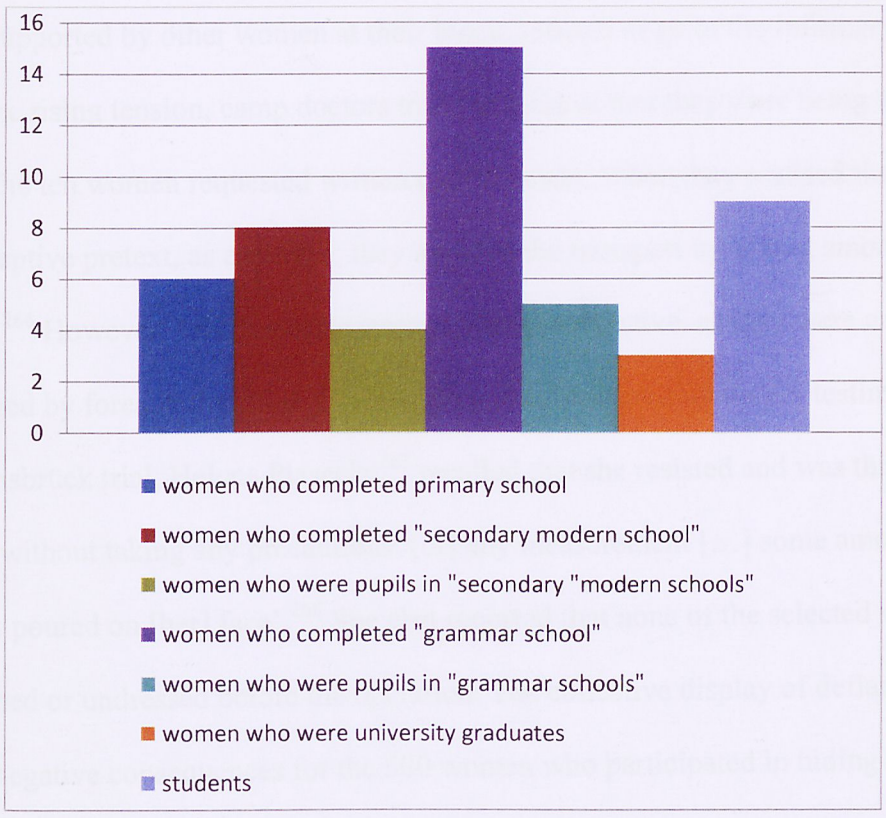
[261] The prisoner nurses did not assist during the experimental operations but were also not allowed to help any of the *Rabbits*. See Lanckorońska, *Michelangelo in Ravensbrück*, p. 205.

[262] The first executed Polish prisoner was Wanda Maciejewska on 1 February 1941. However, starting from 1942 several prisoners at a time were taken. The last execution of Poles took place in 1945. For more information on that matter see Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, pp. 163-186.

**The education at level of the Rabbits. Chart produced from data collected for the AHRC project on 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism'**




At that point, they realised that they had nothing to lose, because they most likely were also destined for liquidation. Thus, in early March 1943, over sixty crippled victims of medical experiments—many on crutches or being carried by fellow prisoners—organised a march to the camp commandant demanding to know why they had been operated on.[263] Their aim was to promote awareness among the other prisoners that the *Rabbits* had not agreed to any experimental operations, regardless of what the SS claimed. According to post-war recollections, the following day, the *Rabbits* sent a letter to the commandant inquiring as to whether the experimental operations were part of their death sentences.[264] They did not receive any answer.[265]

[263] Based on testimonies by Leokadia Kwiecińska, Pelagia Maćkowska and Eugenia Mikulska-Turowska. For detailed descriptions see Szymonowicz, *Beyond Human Endurance*, pp. 91-92,123, 133.
[264] Ibid.

In September 1943, ten *Rabbits* were ordered to go the hospital. The message was clear; they were to undergo more operations. As a further sign of protest, the *Rabbits*, supported by other women at their block, refused to go to the infirmary. Sensing the rising tension, camp doctors told the *Rabbits* that they were being sent to a factory. The ten women requested written confirmation. When they realised that it was just a deceptive pretext, as expected, they avoided the transport by hiding among other prisoners.[266] However, this desperate attempt was not effective, as they were captured and dragged by force to the *Bunker*, where they were operated on. In her testimony at the Ravensbrück trial, Helena Piasecka[267] recalled that she resisted and was thrown on a bed and 'without taking any precautions, [or] any measurement [...] some amount of ether was poured on [her] face'.[268] She also reported that none of the selected women were bathed or undressed before the operation. The collective display of defiance brought negative consequences for the 500 women who participated in hiding the *Rabbits*. As a punishment, they were locked in Block 24 for three days with very limited supplies of water and food.[269]

The strong conviction of injustice and the awareness that their chances of surviving the camp were very small caused the *Rabbits* to undertake a mission to disseminate information about the crimes committed by the Nazis at Ravensbrück. The increase in the number of executions of Polish political prisoners in the camp in 1943 catalysed this action.[270] According to Kiedrzyńska, prisoners established several ways of contacting the world outside of the camp. First of all, they passed information to

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[265] Wińska, *Zwyciężyły wartości*, pp. 304-305; also Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, p. 211.
[266] Walz, "*Und dann kommst du dahin an einem schönen Sommertag*", pp. 301-303.
[267] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[268] TNA, WO 235/306, Testimony by Helena Piasecka, 30 December 1946.
[269] Wińska, *Zwyciężyły wartości*, pp. 306-307.
[270] On 28 September 1943, Rosalia Gutek, Maria Zielonka, Stanisława Śledziowska and Apolonia Rakowska were shot. For additional information see Jarek Górecki's website http://individual.toronto.ca/jarekg/Ravensbrück/ (Accessed on 15 November 2010)

French POWs who worked near Hohenlychen, and who managed to inform the French underground about the situation at the camp.[271] Additional contacts were Polish forced labour workers and Polish officers who worked in Neustrelitz, 28 kilometres from Ravensbrück. The information provided was very precise and included details about operations, including the number performed and the number of subsequent deaths, as well as information regarding executions. In the *Rabbits*' opinion, it was absolutely crucial for those letters to be preserved in their original format as testimonies so they could be used as evidence in case if none of them survived.[272]

The *Rabbits* also found another way to inform members of their families about the true conditions at the camp. In general, the inmates' correspondence was strictly censored; however, the *Rabbits* managed to pass on details regarding the experimental operations performed on them in letters written using 'funny ink'—a euphemism for urine.[273] Moreover, it is believed that an American-Polish prisoner Aka Kołodziejczyk, who was released from the camp in late 1942, took with her a list of experimental victims, which she later handed over to the Polish government-in-exile.[274] The publicity around the *Rabbits* resulted in the cessation of further executions of "human guinea pigs" at Ravensbrück.

In late September 1944, another opportunity to gather evidence of the Nazi crimes committed in Ravensbrück arose when one of the women transported from Warsaw traded her camera for a piece of bread. Joanna Szydłowska, also a victim, agreed to take photos of three of the *Rabbits*—Maria Kuśmierczuk, Bogumiła Bąbińska

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[271] Kiedrzyńska based her observation on Agnieszka Glinczanka who translated many of those letters into French. See Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, p. 276.
[272] ITS /USHMM, 1.1.35.1 List Material Ravensbrück, Briefe an Häftlinge des Männer Lagers über die Untergrundtätigkeit im Lager, medizinische Versuche und Exekutionen 1942/43. There is an error in the description of the folder. These are letters written by Polish women in Ravensbrück. Several of those letters were published. See Smoleń, *Aby świat sie dowiedział*, pp. 66-109.
[273] Families on the other hand hid replies in food parcels which were sent to the camp starting from December 1942. Ibid., p. 53. Several of those letters have been displayed at the Lublin Museum 'Under the Clock'.
[274] Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, p. 212.

and Barbara Pietrzyk.[275] In sum, five photos of the *Rabbits* were taken on Sunday, 1 October 1944.[276]

The photo images presented below contain very important information in regard to the conditions of the *Rabbits* at Ravensbrück. A good place to begin the analysis of these images is with the circumstances under which they were taken. Namely, the victims were hiding at the back of the block, imbuing the photos with a clandestine character. The absence of crutches communicates that the women's wounds had healed well and no longer significantly impaired their ability to walk. An analysis of the women's appearance yields several insights into aspects of camp life. For example, the victims had long hair, which communicates that the position of the Polish prisoners was higher than that of the Jews, whose heads were completely shaved upon arrival. The fact that they were not dressed in camp uniforms could come across as rather odd. One may think that they dressed up for the occasion; however, it would draw attention to the women and thus jeopardise the mission. In reality, there was a shortage of camp uniforms; therefore, inmates were allowed to wear civilian clothes that were marked with a cross on the back and also had their prisoner number sewn on to their coats. The first photo of the series below might be confusing to the reader, as Pietrzyk smiled for the camera; therefore, the scars on her legs may be overlooked. Pietrzyk was one of the youngest of the victims. She died of TB shortly after the war at the age of twenty-two.[277]

[275] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[276] Apart from the five photos of the *Rabbits* the negative film also contained two pictures of Polish women who were transported to Ravensbrück after the failure of the Warsaw Uprising. See USHMM Photo Archives photo 69337 and 69338.
[277] http://tajchert. interia.pl/życiorysykrólików.htm (Accessed on 10 January 2012)

*C*
*l*

*andestine photograph of a Polish political prisoner and medical experimentation victim in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Pictured is Barbara Pietrzyk. Her prisoner number patch is visible on the sleeve of her coat. Maria Kuśmierczuk is standing in the background. Photo was taken by Joanna Szydłowska on 1 October1944. Source USHMM Photo Archives, Photo 69342.*

The next two images, on the other hand, clearly achieve their purpose—drawing attention to the women's wounds. Bąbińska, photo 69343, not only refrained from smiling, but also lifted her skirt to show scars on her legs caused by experimental operations. Similarly, Kuśmierczuk, photo 69341, who can be seen in previous photos in the top-left corner waiting for her turn, also exposed her right leg without looking directly into the camera.[278]

[278] For detail analysis of photos of the *Rabbits* see Aleksandra Loewenau, 'Die "Kaninchen" von Ravensbrück: Eine Fotogeschichte', in Insa Eschebach and Astrid Ley (eds.), *Rasse und Geschlecht in der NS-Medizin* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2012), pp. 115-139.

*Clandestine photograph of a Polish political prisoner and medical experimentation victim in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Pictured is Bogumiła Bąbińska (Jasiuk). Photo was taken by Joanna Szydłowska on 1 October 1944. Source USHMM Photo Archives, Photo 69343.*

*Clandestine photograph of a Polish political prisoner and medical experimentation victim in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Pictured is Maria Kuśmierczuk. Photo was taken by Joanna Szydłowska on 1 October 1944. Source USHMM Photo Archives, Photo 69341.*[279]

By the end of 1944 it seemed that the *Rabbits* had achieved the desired goal—their safety in the camp. The experiments were concluded and the executions of the

[279] The negative was kept by the *Rabbits* at Ravensbrück until April 1945 and then was given to Germaine Tillion, who sent it back to the *Rabbits* in Poland after the liberation. Władysława Karolewska was then in possession of the negatives, until she gave them to Anna Jarosky, who deposited it at the USHMM. See USHMM Photo Archive, Photos 69339, 69340, 69341, 69342, 69343.

*Rabbits* were halted. However, shortly before the liberation the SS attempted to cover up their crimes. Thus, the *Rabbits* once again found themselves in great danger. On 2 February 1945, the information that the *Rabbits* would be liquidated was spread among the prisoners. On 4 February, all sixty-three surviving experimental victims were ordered to stay in their block after the morning roll call. After long deliberation the *Rabbits* decided that they would not give up and would try to escape and hide. It was an extremely difficult task because many of them could barely walk, and their prisoner numbers began from 7,000; therefore, they were easily recognisable among other inmates. This time, however, saving the lives of the *Rabbits* became a joint action of prisoners of various nationalities. When the Gestapo surrounded their block, the Soviet prisoners who worked in the electrician commando turned the power off; as a result, several *Rabbits* were able to jump out of the window.[280] When the remaining women were gathered in front of Block 24, suddenly a group of Sinti and Roma prisoners deliberately began shouting and running around creating confusion, which provided an opportunity for the rest of the *Rabbits* to escape. On many occasions while the search for the *Rabbits* was in progress, prisoners of other nationalities offered their coats, so the *Rabbits* could hide their prisoner numbers. Despite the inherent danger, inmates offered to hide them in their blocks.[281] Thus, some of the *Rabbits* were hidden in the typhus block, whereas others found a place in the *Revier* among the ill and dying.[282] However, a number of women whose scars were too visible could not be hidden. As Wanda Półtawska described, how they 'took a spade and dug themselves in underneath the block, armed with stolen blankets and a little food. For seven days and seven nights they stayed buried in that cold, dark hole.'[283]

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[280] Lanckorońska, *Michelangelo in Ravensbrück*, p. 273.
[281] Wińska, *Zwyciężyły wartości*, pp. 311-313.
[282] Szymonowicz, *Beyond Human Endurance*, p. 54.
[283] Półtawska, *And I Am Afraid of My Dreams*, p. 151.

Even when the situation of the *Rabbits* was at its most dramatic, the women still managed to inform their families and the Polish underground about their struggle. As a result, details about experiments performed on them once again reached the Polish government-in-exile in London. Subsequently, on 6 March 1944, the government-in-exile issued a report describing the situation in various camps, including Ravensbrück, in order to alert the Allies.[284] As the unethical treatment of the *Rabbits*/political prisoners had been already exposed, the SS were forced to change their tactics.[285] They tried to convince several women to sign documents, which stated that the scars on their legs were effects of accidents at work.[286] The more gentle approach of the camp commandant towards the *Rabbits* was an evident sign that the Nazis were aware that information in regard to the experiments conducted at the camp, had become known abroad; thus the *Rabbits*, being slightly more confident, categorically rejected the Nazis' 'reconciling gesture'. Moreover, their action brought an improvement regarding the hunger issue, as the *Rabbits*, in addition to other prisoners, began receiving food parcels that were sent by the International Committee of the Red Cross.[287]

As described above, the informing action of the *Rabbits* was successful and resulted in various advantages. First, fellow prisoners were willing to help the *Rabbits*

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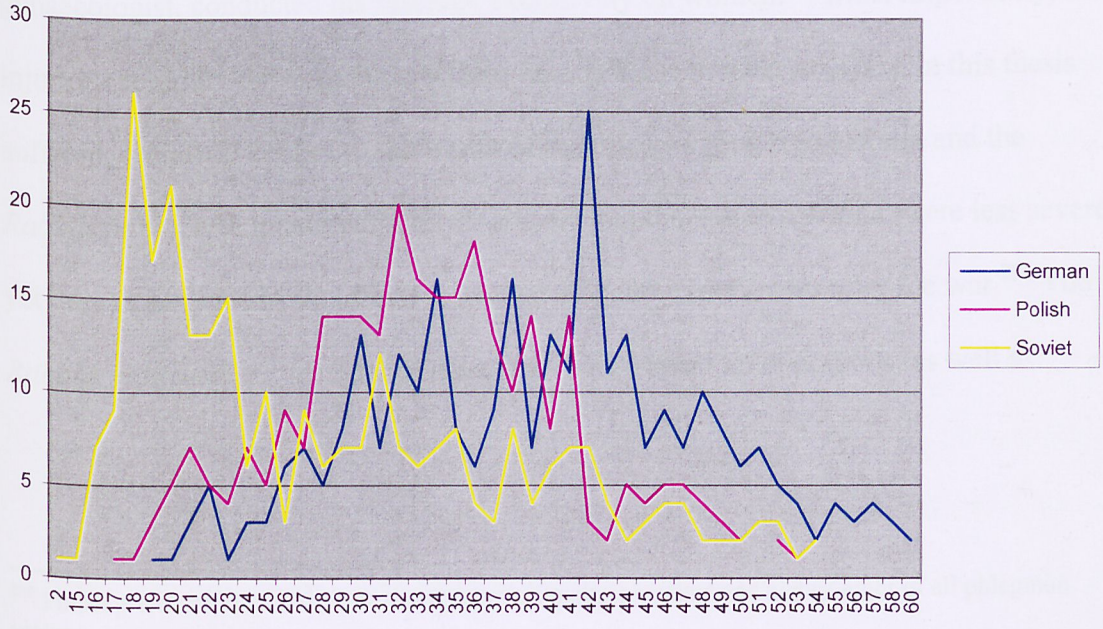
[284] Studium Polski Pozdziemnej (The Polish Underground Movement Trust), Delegatura Rządu Sprawozdania-Raporty, Raport dotyczący obozu w Majdanku i innych obozów w Rzeszy, 6 March 1944.
[285] Henryk Świebodzki (ed.), *London Has Been Informed: Reports by Auschwitz Escapees* (Oświęcim: The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 1997), p. 97. For information about what was known about atrocities committed at Ravensbrück before the war ended see Paul Weindling, 'Was wussten die Allierten während des Krieges und unmittelbar danach über die Menschenversuche in deutschen Konzentrationslagern?', in Astrid Ley and Marion Maria Ruisinger (eds.), *Gewissenlos Gewissenhaft: Menschenversuche im Konzentratonslager* (Erlangen: Specht, 2001), pp. 54-58.
[286] Półtawska, *And I Am Afraid of My Dreams*, p. 151.
[287] The International Committee of the Red Cross was informed about the situation of the *Rabbits* by the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisation already in October 1944. In December, the first food parcels were sent to the *Rabbits*. See Archives du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge (hereafter ACICR), Microfilm G 44/01, 44/13-11 otages, détenus politiques. Allemagne. Corréspondance générale avec Croix-Rouge 1.12.1943-30.05.1945, Resolution of the Liaison Committee of Women's international Organisations signed Elsie Zimmern, 23 October 1944. Also see Jean-Claude Favez, *The Red Cross and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 43. In addition, for a detailed description of the standpoint of the ICRC towards the *Rabbits*' issue see Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, pp. 15-20.

who found themselves in great danger on several occasions. Second, the information regarding the experiments reached abroad, which meant that the scale of Nazi crimes at Ravensbrück was to a large extent revealed, and could not be covered up even by killing all the victims. This process of notifying was continued after the war along with the *Rabbits*' demand for punishing those who were responsible for damaging their health.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Most of prisoners who were forcibly subjected to Nazi medical experiments suffered either from artificially created injuries, tropical and infectious diseases or side effects of unnecessary medical procedures; in addition to stress, mental abuse and trauma. Among victims presented in this part of my thesis there were prisoners of different ages, professions and genders. Inmates selected for the experiments were in general of good health. This was meant to increase chances of achieving successful results. Therefore, for example, at Auschwitz x-ray sterilisation victims were mainly chosen upon arrival at the camp before their health had been damaged by malnutrition. Moreover, Schumann preferred young inmates, unlike Schütz, Gebhardt and Schilling, for whom age did not matter as presented in the graph below.[288]

**Age of participants of the three largest groups of malaria victims. Graph produced using data for the AHRC project on 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism'**




[288] Chart on page 134 presents age of the *Rabbits*.

The prisoner's profession was not, in most cases, a subject of the SS interest with the exception of Polish Catholic priests at Dachau who were particularly targeted; thus, a large number of them were chosen for malaria and phlegmon research—172 for Schilling's and thirty-eight for Schütz's experiments.[289] Moreover, Schütz and Gebhardt used mainly Polish inmates as opposed to Schilling and Schumann who selected prisoners of various nationalities. However, according to various sources, prisoners selected for the sterilisation experiments at Auschwitz were mostly Jewish.[290] The gender issue of prisoners selected for the experiments discussed in this thesis is more complicated. The majority of Gebhardt's victims were Polish women; however, the primary tests were performed on males.[291] The motives behind the decision to use female prisoners are uncertain. Schumann, used inmates of both genders; however, ninety-five per cent of prisoners who underwent excisions of gonads were males.[292] In contrast, Schütz and Schilling experimented on males only, whereas Clauberg, as gynaecologist, conducted his research exclusively on women.[293] Most importantly, the injuries caused by the experiments, from which those inmates analysed in this thesis suffered, varied. Damages to the health of the priests exposed to malaria and the *Rabbits*, who participated in the first series of sulphonamide research, were less severe; yet they experienced side effects of these particular experiments after the war.[294] The *Rabbits* who were subjected to muscle and bone transplant operations, as well as

[289] Polish priests represented sixteen percent of all malaria victims and eighty-eight of all phlegmon victims
[290] ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.
[291] NARA, M 1019/17 Interrogation of Fritz Fischer, 21 September 1945.
[292] ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.
[293] ITS, Collection Konzentrationslager Dachau, folder. 267.
[294] Many priests complained about reoccurring malaria attacks that they suffered from after the war. See UNOG/SOA 417/3/01 Michałowski. These compensation dossiers form part of the documentation collected by Paul Weindling for the AHRC project on Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism.

victims of phlegmon at Dachau suffered from long-lasting injuries.[295] In addition, the injuries of the Jews who were operated on by Dering were more of a psychological nature; however, many victims developed cancer as a result of Schumann's x-ray application. Several of them, who were not entirely castrated, had to go through long and stressful medical treatment in order to have a child. Despite various therapies, some were unsuccessful, which greatly affected their libido and self-esteem as men and women. In addition, the vast majority of Jewish women who underwent removal of gonads experienced physical pain after the war.[296]

The scientific value of the medical experiments performed on prisoners has been questioned since the Nuremberg Medical Trial indicating that a number of medical researchers have believed that the Nazi research yielded no meaningful outcomes. The effectiveness of sulphonamide, for instance, had already been established by the Allies; therefore, the research that was carried out at Dachau and Ravensbrück was not essential. Moreover, Gebhardt during his interrogation mentioned that in his opinion this research was utterly useless and that he was completely aware of this from the start but still carried out those experiments just to prove his point.[297] Gebhardt did not say that the conduct of experiments was inappropriate. Despite what Fischer stated, bandages were changed every three or four days leaving wounds filled with pus, which meant that the sulphonamides applied were ineffective.[298] Gebhardt being in charge of the experiments most likely deliberately neglected the supervision of the post-surgical care, which effectively jeopardised the research. Thus, one can say that the five women who died and the other sixty-three *Rabbits* who survived the camp suffered because of

[295] In addition, the post-war health state of Maria Kuśmierczuk, who was infected with oedema malignum, was particularly bad as she required a frequent medical assistance. For post-war medical reports on the *Rabbits*, as well as their personal statements see ANN, Col. 415.
[296] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England.*
[297] NARA, M 1019/20 Interrogation of Gebhardt, 25 September 1945.
[298] Lee, *For What Reason Were the Nazi Human Experiments into the Efficacy of Sulphonamides Undertaken*, pp. 29-30.

his stubbornness. The experiments conducted by Schütz at Dachau were entirely superfluous because three previous series of experiments had already demonstrated that homoeopathic treatment failed. Disregarding the earlier trials, Schütz conducted his own experiments, which cost the lives of eleven priests. Experiments involving the sterilisation of concentration camp inmates caused hundreds of injuries among victims. Yet, none of the methods tested at Auschwitz proved feasible. The effects of applying different doses of x-ray treatment varied from vomiting to severe burns, which resulted in open wounds that often became infected. While most of Schumann's victims were rendered infertile through the combination of irradiation and the removal of ovaries or testicles, a small number of victims who had undergone excision of only one gonad were able to recover their fertility thanks to post-war medical treatment.[299] The x-ray method was finally rejected by the Nazi officials as too costly. The results of the experiments on immunisation against malaria, performed by Schilling at Dachau, were not revealed because the final report, on which Schilling worked while in American captivity, has never come to light. However, there are no vaccines or effective methods of immunisation against malaria even today. Despite Schilling's fame, his research methods were criticised as out-dated by other Nazi physicians, including Rose.[300] Schilling was allowed to conduct his rather pointless research regardless of the fact that it cost the lives of several prisoners and caused recurrent malaria attacks in hundreds of former prisoners.

The physical pain and mental pressure caused by Nazi medical experiments had a significant impact on the behaviour of those Poles who were victims of the research at Dachau and Ravensbrück, as well as those who acted as assistants to German physicians at Auschwitz. Not only were Polish priests the victims of several forcible experiments at

[299] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 180.
[300] Hulverscheidt, 'German Malariology Experiments', p. 228.

Dachau camp, but they also had to contend with continuous attacks and judgments due to their profession. In spite of their suffering, several of the Polish Catholic priests volunteered to help prisoners in the typhus block. As a result, many of them contracted typhus, fell ill and died. The seventy-four Polish women who became "human guinea pigs" at Ravensbrück have been known as *króliki* (the *Rabbits*). The physical pain and sense of injustice motivated the *Rabbits* to protest against further experiments and to spread knowledge in reference to the Nazi medical research. Their courage and determination made an enormous impression and brought them much respect and compassion from other prisoners. Therefore, during the last years of the camp's existence, they were called '*króle*' ('kings') by other Polish prisoners. Furthermore, their physical suffering and later decision to fight until the end stirred up courage in fellow prisoners. Some of them helped the *Rabbits* because they felt that it was the right thing to do, and others sensed an obligation to follow. No matter what their motives were, several prisoners lost their lives saving the *Rabbits*.

The issue of privileged prisoners is always complicated. It is difficult to presume the motives behind their behaviour; therefore, it is even harder to maintain objectivity, especially when it comes to physicians like Władysław Dering, whose actions have been analysed in this chapter. Of course, it would not be fair to portray him as one of the SS doctors, who made their decisions as free men without coercion. However, there were physicians and other extraordinary individuals who did not aid the Nazis in their human experiments. Unfortunately, these people were few and far between. Others, like Dering, surgically removed ovaries and testicles with full knowledge of the effects that these procedures would have on those on whom he operated. His decision to cooperate had conflicting consequences; it brought him substantial benefits regarding his position as inmate, yet it irreversibly damaged his reputation among a large group of prisoners.

# PART III: SURVIVING CONCENTRATION CAMPS: WHAT NEXT?

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The knowledge regarding the medical experiments conducted by Nazi physicians on Polish female prisoners at Ravensbrück reached the Western Allies by 1943/44.[1] Similar, the crimes committed on inmates at Buchenwald and Auschwitz were revealed before the liberation.[2] When the Allied liberators entered the camps, they discovered evidence of Nazi medical crimes, such as medical equipment, partial documentation, as well as some perpetrators, victims and witnesses to those crimes. In general, only a small proportion of the Polish victims of medical experiments performed by German doctors remained in Nazi camps until their liberation, with the exception of Dachau. The rest of the victims were killed after the experiments, transferred to other institutions or sent to camps further west. These factors, however, depended on the location of the camp. The authorities of the Third Reich were aware that the Red Army was swiftly proceeding towards the western territories of occupied Poland; thus, before the Nazis left Auschwitz they managed to destroy the vast majority of evidence of their crimes and sent large quantities of prisoners on death marches ostensibly to other destinations. The situation at Dachau, in comparison, was very different as the Nazis were not prepared for the rapidity of the

[1] ACICR, G 44/01, 44/13; Sterkowicz, *Zbrodnicze eksperymenty medyczne*, p. 21; Tillion, *Ravensbrück*, p. 109; Dunja Martin, 'Menschenversuche im Krankenrevier des KZ Ravensbrück', in Claus Füllberg-Stolberg, Martina Jung, Renate Roebe and Martina Schreitenberger (eds.), *Frauen in Konzentrationslagern Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbrück* (Bremen: Temmen, 1994), pp. 99-112; Klier, *Die Kaninchen von Ravensbrück*, pp. 218-21.

[2] ACICR, G 44/13-14.01, Rapport du Dr Descoeudres sur le camp de Buchenwald, 17-18 April 1945. Reports of 14 August 1940, and June 1940; AŻIH, Col. 209, Auschwitz, Block 10 Report. In addition, in December 1943, in *The Lancet* an article appeared that presented published in Germany results of various pharmacological trials performed on prisoners at Buchenwald by Dr Erwin Schuler (his actual name was Dr Ding). See Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, p. 31.

Western Allies' offensive; therefore, the vast majority of victims and several perpetrators remained at the camp.

For some prisoners—Dering, for instance, who was liberated in the German-occupied Polish territory—the situation was rather simple, as he returned to Warsaw. The position of the *Rabbits* and particularly of the Polish Catholic priests was more complex. The *Rabbits* were spread throughout the Soviet and the British occupation zones. In addition, several *Rabbits* ended up in countries like Sweden, France and Belgium. Yet, within months and with minor exceptions, the vast majority returned to Poland either with the help of liberators or by themselves. In the beginning, the Polish Catholic priests who were liberated at Dachau were prevented from returning to Poland by the Americans. Moreover, the priests had an antipathy towards the Polish provisional government, which was not only communist but also atheist. Therefore, a large number of Polish priests did not return and provided pastoral service in various DP camps across Germany and Austria.

Regardless of the fact that the war was over, the impact of experiences in the concentration camps of the Polish participants of Nazi medical experiments continued to have a significant influence on their lives. Priests, for instance, were torn between pastoral obligation towards their war-ravaged country and the freedom of religion and conscience that was limited in post-war Poland. As a result, those who were too afraid of the consequences of the communists' anticlerical policy began their efforts to immigrate to other countries and never returned to Poland.[3] Furthermore, Dering's involvement in removing gonads of Jews at Auschwitz was not forgotten by witnesses and victims; thus, he left Poland several months after the war. Nevertheless, his notoriety meant that he was tracked down to London where he

[3] Immigration History Research Center (hereafter IHRC), Collection American Relief for Poland, District 33, boxes 8-12, Emigration applications.

subsequently spent months in prison as an alleged war criminal. On the other hand, the *Rabbits*, whose health was badly damaged by the experiments, sustained their determination and fought for justice in the Allied courts in Hamburg and Nuremberg.

This part discusses how these experiences—related to the medical experiments conducted at Ravensbrück, Dachau and Auschwitz—influenced decisions made by Polish participants in Nazi medical research, and how these decisions were crucial in shaping their early post-war life. Emphasising this theme I will outline issues such as the different circumstances in which Poles were liberated from concentration camps and other institutions, as well as, the political situation in Poland, which contributed to a significant exile of Poles to the West.

## 2. THE END OF THE WAR

### Liberation: Auschwitz, Dachau and Ravensbrück

By the time the Allies landed in Normandy in June 1944, the Red Army advanced into Polish territories. Thus, as early as 22 July 1944, the Soviets liberated one of the first major Nazi camps—Majdanek.[4] Although from early 1944 the Nazis tried to obliterate any evidence of mass murder they carried out during the war, Majdanek was captured nearly intact. This means that the Reich did not anticipate the rapidly moving Soviet offensive. Within a few months, Himmler gave a command to liquidate Auschwitz.[5]

Implementing Himmler's order brought numerous difficulties due to a large number of prisoners at the camp. However, the chaos that was evident at Auschwitz in January 1945, which included the blowing up of gas chambers and crematoria, the last liquidations of inmates and forcing remaining prisoners onto death marches to other concentration camps, did not concern Władysław Dering as his position was fairly safe. In the end, Dering's supposedly temporary placement in Jastrzębie Zdrój lasted until the liberation of that region by the Red Army. On 19 January 1945, Professor Clauberg fled, leaving Dering without supervision or instructions. Eight days later, on 27 January 1945, Auschwitz was liberated by the Soviets. Despite the relatively short distance between the camp and Jastrzębie Zdrój[6], the Soviet Army entered the town three months later. The local hospital was run by the Nazis; therefore, all the medical personnel, including Dering, were arrested. After a few

[4] For more details on that matter see David Cesarani, *Holocaust: The End of the Final Solution and Its Aftermath* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 59-61.
[5] On 25 November 1944, Himmler ordered for the gas chambers at Auschwitz to be destroyed. See Franciszek Piper, 'Gas Chambers and Crematoria', *Anatomy of Auschwitz*, p. 174.
[6] Jastrzębie Zdrój is located in South Silesia on a border with Czech Republic approximately thirty kilometres west from Auschwitz.

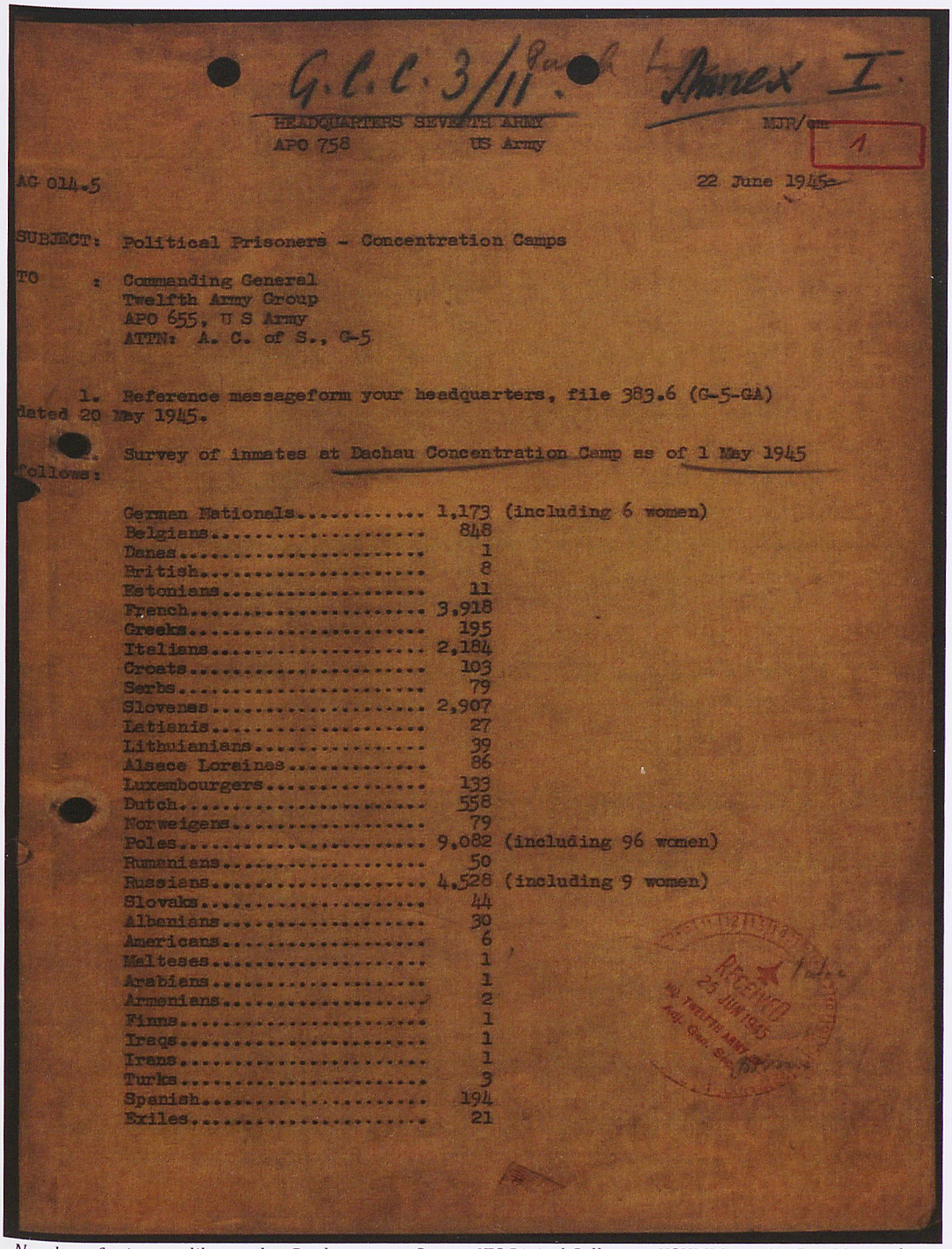
days of interrogation, on 1 April, Dering was released and made his way to Warsaw to reunite with his wife Krystyna.[7]

Unlike the Soviets, the American forces entered Nazi concentration camps in early April 1945—nearly ten months after the D-Day was commenced.[8] By that time, the atmosphere at Dachau camp was highly unsettled. After the war, Bishop Korszyński suggested that prisoners sensed that the war was coming to an end because the actions of the SS officers during the last days of April were incredibly chaotic. Camp authorities made the decision to evacuate prisoners; however, putting commands into action met with unexpected difficulties. For example, prisoners were gathered on the camp square for roll call and then dismissed several times. Meanwhile, Allied planes were already flying above the camp. Subsequently many camp officials left Dachau.[9]

On 29 April 1945 at about 5 pm, the 7th American Army entered Dachau freeing 31,432 prisoners. Those included inmates of thirty seven nationalities; yet, the largest group by far were the Poles, 9,082 in total, including ninety-six women (see image below).[10] Just over fifty per cent of the Polish clergy survived until liberation.[11] Remarkably, among the survivors were twenty-nine of Schütz's victims

[7] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 101.
[8] Buchenwald was the first major concentration camp liberated by the US troops.
[9] Korszyński, *Jasne promienie w Dachau*, pp. 118-19.
[10] ITS/USHMM,Col. 1.1.6.1, Entlassung- und Repatrieierunglisten nach Nationalitäten Zusammengestellt. Also see Michael Perry (ed.), *Dachau Liberated: The Official Report by U.S. Seventh Army Released Within Days of the Camp's Liberation by Elements of the 42nd and 45th Divisions* (Seattle: Inkling Books, 2000), p. 65.
[11] 826 Polish priests died at Dachau. For complete list see ITS/USHMM, 1.1.6.1 List Material Dachau, Alphabetisches Namensverzeichnis über Geistliche polnischer Nationalität des KL.-Dachau, verstorben in den Jahren 1940-1945.

and 168 Polish priests used in malaria experiments.[12] Conditions at the camp at the time of liberation were dramatic. Hundreds of decaying bodies were found.[13]



G.C.C. 3/11 Annex I.

HEADQUARTERS SEVENTH ARMY
APO 758 US Army

MJR/cm

AG 014.5 22 June 1945

SUBJECT: Political Prisoners - Concentration Camps

TO : Commanding General
Twelfth Army Group
APO 655, U S Army
ATTN: A. C. of S., G-5

1. Reference messageform your headquarters, file 383.6 (G-5-GA) dated 20 May 1945.

2. Survey of inmates at Dachau Concentration Camp as of 1 May 1945 follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| German Nationals | 1,173 | (including 6 women) |
| Belgians | 848 | |
| Danes | 1 | |
| British | 8 | |
| Estonians | 11 | |
| French | 3,918 | |
| Greeks | 195 | |
| Italians | 2,184 | |
| Croats | 103 | |
| Serbs | 79 | |
| Slovenes | 2,907 | |
| Latianis | 27 | |
| Lithuanians | 39 | |
| Alsace Loraines | 86 | |
| Luxembourgers | 133 | |
| Dutch | 558 | |
| Norweigens | 79 | |
| Poles | 9,082 | (including 96 women) |
| Rumanians | 50 | |
| Russians | 4,528 | (including 9 women) |
| Slovaks | 44 | |
| Albanians | 30 | |
| Americans | 6 | |
| Malteses | 1 | |
| Arabians | 1 | |
| Armenians | 2 | |
| Finns | 1 | |
| Iraqs | 1 | |
| Irans | 1 | |
| Turks | 3 | |
| Spanish | 194 | |
| Exiles | 21 | |

RECEIVED 25 JUN 1945 12th TWELFTH ARMY Adj. Gen. Sec.

*Number of prisoners liberated at Dachau camp. Source ITS Digital Collection USHMM, 1.1.6.1. List Material Dachau.*

[12] Eleven priests died during Schütz's experiments and four clergymen subjected to malaria research died at Dachau. See Appendix 1 and 3.

[13] Detailed report see NARA, RG-407, WWII Operations Reports, 1940-48 45th Infantry Division, box 9413.

A great number of prisoners nearly starved to death. Others showed signs of exhaustion due to extremely hard labour. Prisoners suffered from various medical conditions and diseases, such as TB, malnutrition and phlegmon. In addition, thousands of inmates were sick with typhus, of which a second epidemic had broken out in January 1945. Therefore, Allied priorities were to establish a professional hospital and organise regular transports of food to the camp.[14] In addition, Polish priests along with other prisoners went through quarantine.[15] The 127th Evacuation Hospital that was established at Dachau admitted the first patients on 3 May.[16] Polish priests, despite being forcibly subjected to medical experiments and being in contact with the typhus ill prisoners, were in relatively good condition. Only several of them were admitted to the evacuation hospital, including [Redacted] (phlegmon victim) and [Redacted] (malaria victim), who were both hospitalised due to pneumonia.[17] Moreover, according to the 127th Evacuation Hospital records, no patients were admitted with symptoms of malaria. One can raise questions whether malaria attacks occurred frequently among prisoners infected with the illness, or perhaps the Americans did not consider this non-directly contagious disease as life-threatening as was, for instance, TB.[18] Despite all the efforts of the medical staff, for some people help came too late. At the beginning of May 1945, the death rate at Dachau reached approximately 300 prisoners daily. Within weeks, thanks to medical support and increasing food rations, the number of casualties dropped to fifty a day.[19] Yet in May 1945 alone, approximately 2,200 people died at the camp.[20]

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[14] Bronisław Najgier, *Powrót z daleka* (Łódź: Ludowa Spółka Wydawnicza, 1973), p. 331. See also Rak, *Krematoria i róże*, p. 190.
[15] ITS/USHMM, 1.1.6.1 List Material Dachau, Liste polnischer Schutzhäftlinge, die sich am 1.5.1945 im Lager Dachau in Quarantäne befanden.
[16] Marcus J. Smith, *Dachau: The Harrowing of Hell* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 112.
[17] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[18] Malaria cannot be directly transmitted from human to human as it requires a mosquito as vector.
[19] Urbański, *Duchowni w Dachau*, p. 94.

The liberation process of Ravensbrück was less chaotic than those of Auschwitz and Dachau. The Nazis began preparation to liquidate the camp months before the Soviet liberators reached Ravensbrück. Shortly after Auschwitz was taken over by the Red Army, the SS began shifting prisoners from Ravensbrück to other camps, which were located further west.[21] This was seen as an opportunity by eighteen *Rabbits* who having false numbers left the camp in February 1945 with transports to Neustadt-Glewe in Mecklenburg and Bergen-Belsen where they were later liberated by the Soviet and the British Army.[22]

Meanwhile, the SS managed to gas the majority of elderly prisoners. On 25 April, three of the *Rabbits* left the camp with the Swedish Red Cross.[23] A few days later, on 27 and 28 April 1945, most of the inmates—among them forty crippled *Rabbits* —left the camp on death marches to other concentration camps that were not yet liberated by the Allies.[24] Many of women, who managed to escape along the way, experienced sexual harassment from Soviet soldiers.[25] Two days later, on 30 April, the 49th Army of the Second Belo-Russian Front led by Captain Boris Makarow entered Ravensbrück.[26] At that point, the camp staff had escaped, and the only people who remained at the camp were sick inmates and several medical staff who looked after them. Among them were *Rabbits*, Krystyna Dzido and Krystyna Iwańska, who managed to stay in hiding at Ravensbrück until liberation.[27] After nearly four years of imprisonment, which involved physical and verbal abuse, mental torment, hunger and fighting for survival, they were finally liberated.

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[20] Najgier, *Powrót z daleka*, p. 340.
[21] Szymonowicz, *Beyond Human Endurance*, p. 26.
[22] Kiedrzyńska mentioned seventeen *Rabbits* who left the camp before the final evacuation, see *Ravensbrück*, p. 213.
[23] The issue regarding rescuing prisoners by the Red Cross will be discussed in the next subchapter.
[24] Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, pp. 366-368.
[25] Półtawska, *And I Am Afraid of My Dreams*, p. 155.
[26] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 305.
[27] For biographical information see Appendix 8.

Despite the fact that there was only one day discrepancy between the liberation of Dachau and Ravensbrück, the American and Soviet armies discovered these camps in completely different state. Most of prisoners, including the survivors of medical experiments, remained at Dachau until liberation, whereas the number of inmates liberated at Ravensbrück was marginal, no more than 2,000, and included only two *Rabbits*. One can see that the Reich was well informed and therefore better prepared for the Soviet offensive, while the advance of the Allies in western Germany came as a surprise.[28] Unlike Dering who, being liberated in occupied Poland, simply returned to Warsaw, the vast majority of the *Rabbits* (60 out of 63) and all of the Polish priest used in medical experiments were liberated in Germany; however, the fact that they were freed by Soviet, American and British armies, meant that they faced different issues in the post-liberation period, which will be analysed in the next subchapter of this thesis.

**First months of Freedom**

- **Priests in DP camps**

Shortly after the liberation of Dachau, the Americans faced an urgent medical issue, which were fast spreading endemic diseases, such as typhus and TB. Thus, in the first week of May 1945, they created a Displaced Persons camp at Dachau in order to combat the epidemic. In effect, it meant that no one could leave the camp until further notice. For the time being, practical issues had to be taken care of, such as counting and registering remaining inmates. As a result, lists of people were made that included name, previous prisoner's number, nationality, date and place of birth

[28] In just over three weeks the American troops liberated three major Nazi camps: Buchenwald, Dachau and Mauthausen.

of each person in every block.[29] Unfortunately, providing medical help, food and even a slight improvement in living conditions did not meet inmates' expectations. In theory they were free, but in practice they were still incarcerated in the same blocks at the camp where they had experienced horrible mistreatment. This was caused by the fact that repatriations were at the time still logistically impossible. All these factors created tensions and frustration. However, things soon began to improve; as a result, Belgians, Dutch, Spaniards, French and Italians left the camp.[30] The situation of the Polish residents, however, was more complicated because the destruction of the local transportation infrastructure that made travel extremely difficult.[31] Therefore, American authorities decided to place Poles in a single DP camp. By the end of July 1945, the vast majority of Poles including clergy were transported from Dachau to the new location, Freimann.[32] Close to 500 Polish Catholic priests had left Dachau on 3 June 1945 for Freimann, among them were nearly 160 victims of medical experiments.[33] Thirty-eight priests remained at Dachau for a few months to be later sent to other DP camps, such as Murnau and Augsburg.[34]

The situation of Polish priests, who had been subjected to medical experiments but were now in DP camps, was rather unique. Unlike the *Rabbits* who were the only identified group of victims of sulphonamide experiments at Ravensbrück, Polish priests were just one among of many national groups and types

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[29] For instance, the list of Block 26, which was previously inhabited by the German priests, shows there were over 300 Polish priests. ITS/USHMM, Col. 1.1.6.1, List of Poles in block 26, pp. 5-13.
[30] Musioł, *Dachau*, p. 265.
[31] These include both Jews and non-Jews for monthly report of the Americans see UN, SO-0406, box 10, file 7, Reports and Statistics.
[32] Korszyński, *Jasne prominie w Dachau*, p. 141.
[33] The first group of Polish priests, in the number of 122, arrived in Freimann on 30 May 1945. They were given a separate, rather comfortable compared to others, block and bigger food rations. See Ludwik Bielerzewski, *Ksiądz nie zostaje sam* (Poznań: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1976), p. 165; also see *Słowo Polskie*, Dachau 3 June 1945, p. 4.
[34] ITS/USHMM, 1.1.6.1 List Material Dachau, Lists of Poles moved to Freimann, Augsburg and Murnau.

of prisoners exposed to medical experiments at Dachau. They became part of a large international network, which focused on collecting data regarding forcible experimentation on inmates, gathering remaining documents, creating lists of victims and giving sworn evidence. On the other hand, as priests they also belonged to a sizeable group of clergy, and were engaged in creating and serving Polish communities in DP camps.

Since the liberation of Dachau, the former "human guinea pigs" among Polish clergy were actively involved in the International Prisoners' Committee[35], which was established months before the Americans entered Dachau.[36] The IPC, unlike inmates' organisations at Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, was not politically or religiously driven. It was also not created to enhance conditions of particular nationalities within the camp.[37] The aim of the IPC, which consisted of thirteen national committees including *Komitet Polski*[38] (the Polish Committee), was saving as many prisoners as possible and recording crimes of the Nazis committed at the camp.[39] Father [Redacted], who was a victim of the brutal phlegmon experiments, was assigned to the position of chair of the Commission for Caring for Ill Inmates of the Polish Committee; he was therefore responsible for registering Polish survivors of the medical experiments, as well as representing their interests at the camp.[40]

[35] Hereafter IPC.
[36] Smith, *Dachau: The Harrowing Hell*, p. 118.
[37] Therefore, the leading positions in the IPC were filled by communists, Muslims, as well as Catholics (see photo below). In addition, the IPC was divided into branches. For instance, Ali Kuci—an Albanian prisoner—was responsible for press reports. See APD, Durham List 4/35, International Prisoners' Committee Information and Culture Central Press Bureau.
[38] Hereafter KP.
[39] Chowaniec, *Cudem ocaleni*, p. 277.
[40] ITS/USHMM, Col. 1.1.6.1, Komitet Polski.

*ITS/USHMM, 1.1.6.1 List Material Dachau, Polish Prisoners' Committee, 6 May 1945.*

The information gathered by the IPC and the KP helped the Americans to prepare the Dachau Trial (15 November- 13 December 1945) as the first interrogations took place only a few days after the liberation.[41] The priests [Redacted] [42], [Redacted] and [Redacted] only submitted their testimonies but also gave evidence at the trial.[43] The activity of the IPC was suspended after most of its members returned to their countries. Polish DPs, who could not be repatriated, continued the initiatives of the KP at Freimann DP camp.

[41] The report from these testimonies was concluded as early as 13 May 1945 and contained recollections of Father [Redacted] . See NTP, PS-2428. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)
[42] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[43] NTP, PS-2428. (Accessed on 12 December 2011)

In a similar manner to the previous organisation, Polish priests took part in organising the International Investigation-Office for Medical-SS Crimes in the German Concentration Camps at Dachau, which was established by a Luxembourgian prisoner, [Redacted], on 11 June 1945, and aimed to gain compensation for all victims of Nazi medical experiments.[44] For that reason, in late June 1945, the Polish Committee at Freimann formed the Injuries Section, which apart from supplying artificial limbs would also provide written evidence of Nazi medical experiments to the victims. This opportunity was acknowledged by many priests (see the image below of Father [Redacted]'s[45] form that was catalogued as application number 1189).[46] In addition to personal data, each applicant was required to submit a detailed description of the experiment or other injury, and gather signatures of at least three witnesses.[47] Although [Redacted] organisation did not last, the idea of gaining compensation for victims of Nazi medical experiments was eventually implemented, and several priests used the injury reports as supporting material in their compensation applications.[48]

[44] Among members of this organisations were two Polish Protestant priests—Father [Redacted] (malaria victim) and [Redacted] —who, as Polish secretaries, contacted the KP in order to contact remaining victims of medical experiments. See Leo Alexander, *The Treatment of Shock from Prolonged Exposure to Cold, Especially in Water* (Washington: Combined Intelligence Objectives Subcommittee, Target Number 24 Medical CIOS G-2 Division, Sheaf Rear, July 1945), pp. 60-63.
[45] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[46] *Słowo Polskie*, Freimann 29 June 1945.
[47] Polish Institute in London (hereafter PI), Col. 291 Mieczysław Chmielewski, folder Bolesław Charzewski, Protocol about heath damage at Dachau Concentration Camp, 14 July 1945.
[48] Ibid. The issue of compensation shall be discussed in the part 4 of this dissertation.

[Name redacted] *injury report. Source PI, Col. Chmielewski, Protocol about damage to health at Dachau Concentration Camp*

In addition to the activity described above, priests—the victims of malaria and phlegmon—like other clergy were obliged to fulfil their pastoral, patriotic and religious convictions towards Polish DPs. Therefore, when other DP camps were created, where Poles were often in predominance, the religious services provided by Polish clerics were needed.[49] At first, clergy were not able to leave Dachau due to a lack of official identification documents, most likely destroyed during the war. Thus, in May 1945, the *Collegium Delegatum rom.-cath. Cleri Poloni in castris Dachau* (the Polish Representative of the Roman-Catholic Church in Dachau) was

[49] Anna D. Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission: The Polish Political Diaspora and Polish Americans, 1939-1956* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p. 75.

established with Father Józef Korszyński as chairman and Father Franciszek Jadwabski as vice chairman. The main aim of this organisation was to produce special IDs for Polish priests in order to allow them to leave Dachau for other DP camps. The *Collegium* produced approximately 700 documents that included information, such as name, date of birth, place of birth, name of the camp where they were incarcerated and their position in the Church hierarchy. Each document had a stamp of the institution to make it look convincingly official.[50] The vast majority of Polish priests were issued with such identity cards by the time they moved to Freimann.

Meanwhile, in June 1945, Pope Pius XII appointed Father Józef Gawlina as bishop ordinary for Poles in Germany and Austria.[51] This was the response of the Holy See to the Polish primate who wanted an official representative of the Polish Catholics in the Allied occupied zones. On 26 June, Bishop Gawlina paid his first official visit to Dachau; however, by the time he arrived at the former Nazi camp the majority of Polish priests were already in Freimann.[52] Gawlina also learned that several clergymen had actually returned to Poland, and others were working in different DP camps.[53] He then appointed an additional 300 priests from Freimann to serve in other camps. Putting this task into action was complicated because of the difficulties of transportation. In the end, two American priests of Polish origin, Father Brzana and Father Kozikowski helped to transport Polish priests to their new destinations.[54]

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[50] Secular Polish inmates of Dachau DP camp also published newspapers: *Głos Polski*, *Słowo Polski*, and *Wiarus w Dachau*; see Korszyński, *Jasne promienie w Dachau*, p. 136.
[51] Józef Gawlina, *Wspomnienia* (Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka, 2004), p. 341.
[52] The first group of Polish priests, numbering 122, arrived in Freimann on 30 May 1945. They were given a separate, rather comfortable compared to others, block and larger food rations. See Bielerzewski, *Ksiądz nie zostaje sam*, p. 165
[53] Gawlina, *Wspomnienia*, p. 345.
[54] Ibid., p. 346.

*State of Polish D.P. Camps in the British Zone. Source IHRC, PAC, box 24, Fol. 191.* [55]

The first problem to be solved by the priests, who were appointed in DP camps, was organising chapels. The easiest solution was to convert unused barracks and other buildings into chapels, for which religious equipment was provided by the National Catholic Welfare Conference in the US.[56] A number of Polish priests were also able to take advantage of the hospitality of local churches. In rare cases, however, German priests created difficulties, such as preventing masses performed in Polish (as opposed to Latin).[57] Regardless of such issues, masses and other rites

[55] This image presents the service of four victims of phlegmon experiments including [Redacted] who worked in Niedersachsen, and thirteen victims of Schilling's malaria experiments including [Redacted] , [Redacted] and [Redacted] For biographical information see Appendix 8.

[56] For more information regarding help provided by the the National Catholic Welfare Conference and by the Catholic Relief Services to DPs see Eileen Egan, *Catholic Relief Services: The Beginning Years: For the Life of the World* (New York: Catholic Relief Services, 1988).

[57] Between 1945 and 1948, approximately 60,000 newborns were baptised; 55, 848 couples took wedding vows; and 15,000 Poles were buried. See Bielerzewski, *Ksiądz nie zostaje sam*, p. 165.

were celebrated regularly.[58] The eloquence and the broad general knowledge within the Polish clergy were instrumental in involving the residents in various social and cultural activities in DP camps. Priests began publishing newspapers, like *Polska Chrystusowa*, which aimed to help them in communicating and informing fellow Poles regarding the situation in the occupation zones and in Poland.[59] Priests were also involved in creating an education system in DP camps. Clergy were in the main a group of educated people who could teach at all levels from primary to academic.[60] They organised several field trips to familiarise pupils with German culture. In addition, they focused on involving young people, who were particularly influenced by deprivations in the concentration camp, in choirs, amateur theatres, trade courses and other activities.[61]

Polish clergy and Polish DPs developed respect and mutual understanding, much of it based on the fact that they shared the experience of incarceration and the torment inflicted by the Nazis.[62] This strong relationship resulted in the perception of Polish priests as persons of authority, which was acknowledged not only by the Polish DPs but also by the British, the Americans and even by Polish officials.[63] As a

[58] Urbański, *Duchowni w Dachau*, p. 98. Between 1945 and 1949 only in one camp, Hohenfels, Polish priests baptiesed 890 children and performed 914 weddings, see Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission*, p. 76.

[59] This newspaper was first published at Dachau DP camp and was later moved to Freimann along with priests. The two persons that were particularly dedicated to *Polska Chrystusowa* were Father Piotr Tubrak from Kraków and Father Dr Jan Warczak from Łódź. See Korszyński, *Jasne promienie w Dachau*, p. 136. Like the priests, they began to publish camp newspapers, which were informative in many respects. An enthusiastic article 'Będziemy budować nowy dom' (We'll build a new home) was published only two days after the liberation. See *Głos Polski*, Dachau 5 May 1945.

[60] In the British occupation zone Polish Catholic priests taught in 13 high schools; 101 kindergarten; 125 elementary schools; in addition, they served in 76 hospitals. The lessons given included subjects, such as Polish language, history and geography. In addition, they ran several courses in foreign languages for adults. See *Słowo Polskie*, Dachau 3 June 1945, p. 4; also Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission*, p. 75.

[61] Czesław Łuczak, *Polacy w okupowanych Niemczech* (Poznań: Pracownia Serwisu Oprogramowania, 1993), pp. 211-215.

[62] Mark Wyman, *DPs: Europe Displaced Persons 1945-1951* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 110-111.

[63] Anna D. Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, 'Patriotism, Responsibility, and the Cold War: Polish Schools in DP Camps in Germany, 1945-1951', *The Polish Review* 47, 35 (2002), p. 42.

result, apart from their spiritual mission, priests were also involved in defending Poles who broke the law before the German judges.[64]

One might think that priests who were subjected to medical experiments would create some kind of group that would receive special treatment, higher respect or at least certain level of compassion from other Poles. In reality, they were unidentifiable. The issue of medical experiments among clergy was overlooked, as it did not appear in their reports nor was it discussed in their newspapers.[65] Presumably this has because there was a high demand for their help, and the services they provided. Another reason may have been the fact that priests were expected to be supportive and understanding listeners rather than seeking compassion for themselves.

- **Dering's Escape**

In April 1945, Dering returned to his home in Warsaw. While he was enjoying his freedom, remaining at the camp Jewish inmates who underwent excisions of testicles as a result of Schumann's sterilisation experiments, including [Redacted] and [Redacted], gave evidence of Dering's activity at Auschwitz before the Extraordinary Soviet State Commission for the Investigation of the Crimes of the German-Fascist Aggressors.[66]

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[64] For example, Father Urbański helped to secure the release of several Poles from prison after they were convicted of stealing. Father Urbański on the one hand mentioned that about eighty per cent of crimes in Ingolstadt were committed by Poles, and on the other hand he justified the Poles' behaviour as, to some extent, payback for Nazis' robbery of Polish goods during the war. See Urbański, *Duchowni w Dachau*, pp. 99-100.

[65] Even Bishop Gawlina, who will be considered later in this chapter, did not make stand in reference to that matter in his published diary. See, Gawlina, *Wspomnienia*, p. 341.

[66] ITS /USHMM,1.1.2.1 List Material Auschwitz, Testimony by Mosek Waligóra. Also see Strzelecka, *Medical Crimes: The Experiments in Auschwitz*, pp. 57-58. For a biography of Jacek Skurnik see Gene Church, *'80629': A Mengele Experiment* (Richardson, Tex.: S. K. Damon Publisher Co., 1986).

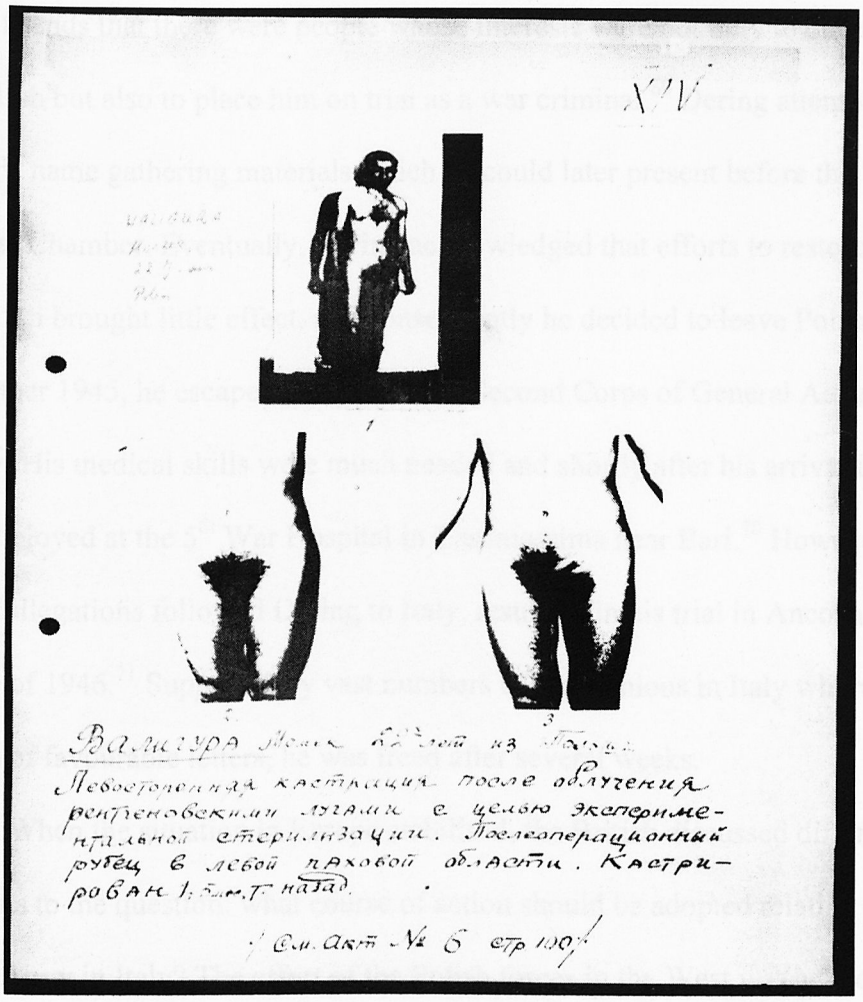

*Photo of Waligóra takenat Auschwitz shortly after liberation. Source ITS /USHMM,1.1.2.1 List Material Auschwitz.*

As a result, on 7 May 1945, the Russian newspaper *Pravda* published an article in which Dering's name appeared among a list of Nazi doctors who were accused of experimenting on prisoners at Auschwitz.[67] At the time, several other accusations suggesting that Dering was a war criminal also appeared in the media.[68] Within days, Dering's reputation and activities at Auschwitz were questioned, forcing him to work under a false name. Moreover, according to his post-war testimony, he was warned

[67] AŻIH, Collection Procesy Zbrodniarzy Wojennych, folder 216, Prof. Schumann i Prof. Dering, Wyciąg z Narodowa Prasa Komunistyczna *Prawda*, 7.05.1945. The folder has errors in the title because none of them were professors. See also TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Władysław Dering, p. 4.

[68] TNA, TS 58/744, Władysław Dering: My Replies, to the Accusations Submitted on the 18.12.1947, p. 7.

by his friends that there were people whose interests were not only to destroy his reputation but also to place him on trial as a war criminal.[69] Dering attempted to clear his name gathering materials which he could later present before the Warsaw Medical Chamber. Eventually, Dering acknowledged that efforts to restore his reputation brought little effect, and consequently he decided to leave Poland. In November 1945, he escaped and joined the Second Corps of General Anders' Army in Italy. His medical skills were much needed and shortly after his arrival in Italy he was employed at the 5th War Hospital in Casamassima near Bari.[70] However, war crimes allegations followed Dering to Italy, resulting in his trial in Ancona by the middle of 1946.[71] Supported by vast numbers of companions in Italy who wrote dozens of favourable letters, he was freed after several weeks.

When the situation in Europe stabilised, the British discussed different solutions to the question: what course of action should be adopted relating to the Polish Army in Italy? The effort of the Polish forces in the West was acknowledged along with the complicated political situation in Poland that prevented many servicemen from returning to their country. Therefore, it was finally decided that soldiers of the Second Corps along with their dependants should be moved to the UK.[72]

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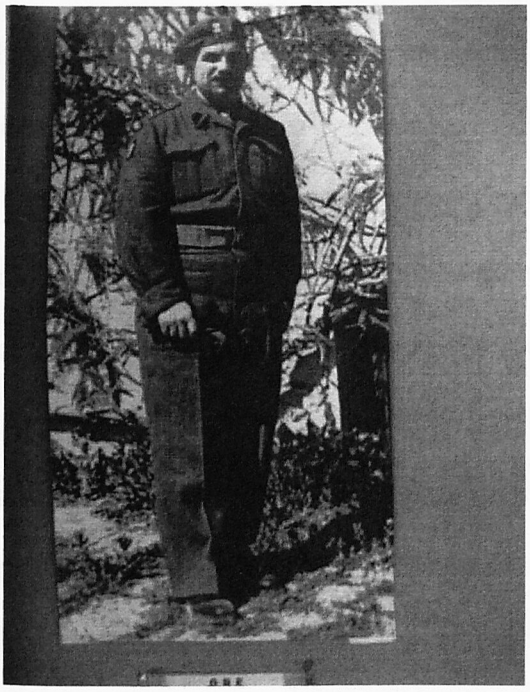
[69] TNA, TS 58/744, Władysław Dering: My Replies, to the Accusations Submitted on the 18.12.1947, p. 10.

[70] This hospital was established in 1944 to treat injured soldiers who fought in the Mount Cassino battle. Limited information regarding Dering's work in Casamassima can be found in TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Captain Stefan Grochowski, 26 June 1946.

[71] 'Ujęcie zbrodniarza', *Tygodnik Polski*, 3 May 1947.

[72] More on this issue see Antony Robin Jeremy Kushner and Katharine Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide: Global, National, and Local Perspectives during the Twentieth Century* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 218-226.



*Dering in his Second Corps uniform in Italy in early 1946. Source BP, Archiwum Emigracji, Kopertoteka 283 Władysław Dering.*

Consequently, in August 1946, Dering and the majority of the 5th War Hospital staff were transported from Italy to Great Britain.[73] Then, in 1947, the Polish Army in the United Kingdom including the Second Corps was demobilised by decree of the British government.[74]

Polish servicemen, who decided to remain in the UK, were given an option to join the Polish Resettlement Corps, which officially began working on 11 September 1946 and was intended to help soldiers adapt to civilian life.[75] Dering sought work as a physician. The employment of Polish medical officers under the Polish Resettlement Scheme was a separate issue, which was discussed by the members of

[73] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 69.
[74] Kushner, Knox, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide*, p. 226. Dering was demobilised on 1 September 1948. See BP, AE, Kopertoteka 283, Władysław Dering.
[75] For a copy of the original document see TNA, WO 315/29/2. For aims and achievements of the Polish Resettlement Corps see Keith R. Sword, '"Their Prospects Will Not be Bright": British Responses to the Problem of the Polish 'Recalcitrants' 1946-49', *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, 3 (1986), pp. 367-390; also Elisabeth Stadulis, 'Resettlement of Displaced Persons in the United Kingdom', *Population Studies* 5, 3 (1952), pp. 213-214; Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission*, p. 106; Robert Miles, 'Nationality, Citizenship, and Migration to Britain, 1945-1951', *Journal of Law and Society* 16, 4 (1989), p. 430.

the British government months before the Poles arrived in Britain.[76] Overall, among Polish refugees who came to Britain between 1945 and 1947 about 700 were physicians.[77]

The vast majority of the Polish medical officers practised under pressure in extreme conditions during the six years of the war, and those who had been incarcerated were not familiar with new medical procedures and medicaments that were in use by 1945. Thus, in order to update their skills they were required to undertake practical training, usually expected to take between one to two years. It was suggested that the first stage of this training would take place at one of the Polish General Hospitals, which were established across the UK to treat Polish refugees, and the concluding part of the training was designed to take place at one of the British teaching hospitals.[78] Subsequently Polish medical officers could obtain a full licence that would equalise their qualifications with British practitioners. In Dering's case, within a few months he had gained a temporary registration and was employed at the Polish General Hospital in Diddington, which was located near a Polish camp in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire.[79]

But Dering, like other Polish refugees, experienced difficulties in assimilating. The vast majority of Poles were not familiar with British culture, history, customs and language. Thus, Dering joined the Polish Medical Association,

[76] TNA, Ministry of Health (hereafter MH), 76/ 338, Question Concerning Polish Medical Services and the Polish Resettlement Corps. Also TNA, WO 315/29/3, Medical Practitioners and Pharmacists Bill.

[77] For additional information in regard to Polish physicians in Britain during the inner war and the post-war period see W. Wojcik, 'Time in Context- The Polish School of Medicine and Paderewski Polish Hospital in Edinburgh 1941-49', *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh* 31 (2001), pp. 69-76; also Kenneth Collins, 'European Physicians in Scotland, 1933-1945', *Social History of Medicine* 22, 3 (2009), pp. 513-530. For a comprehensive study of medical refugees in the UK see Paul Weindling, 'Medical Refugees in Britain and the Wider World, 1930-1960', *Social History of Medicine* 22, 3 (2009), pp. 489-511, also Karola Decker, 'Divisions and Diversity: The Complexities of Medical Refuge in Britain, 1933-1948', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 77, 4 (2003), pp. 850-873. Decker's paper has substantive errors.

[78] TNA, MH 76/338.

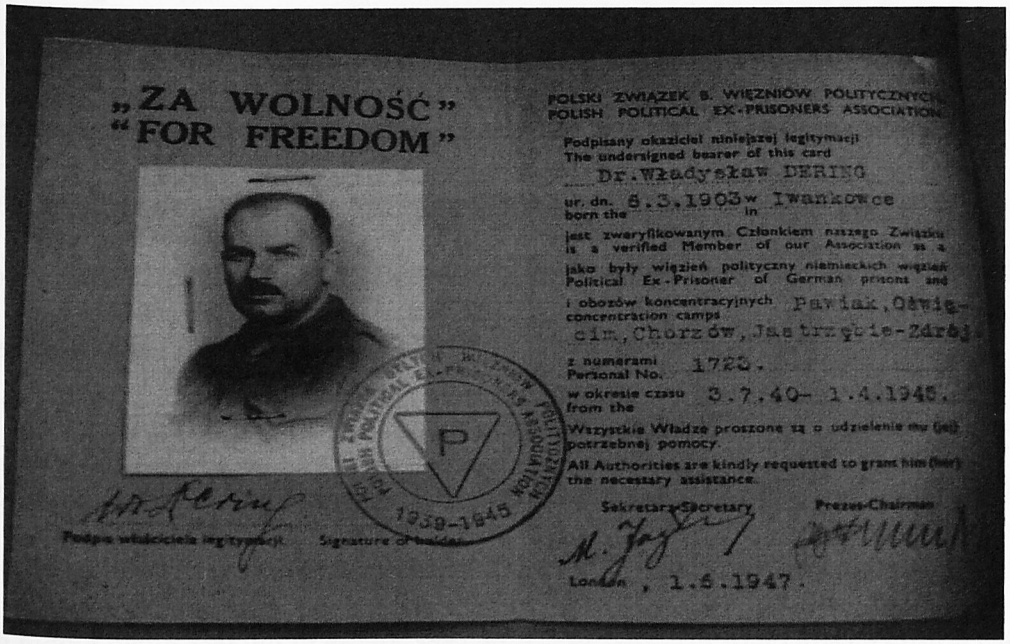
[79] TNA, MH 76/338, List of Polish physicians registered in the UK. Also see Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 56.

an organisation that was established in 1944 by Polish refugee physicians to support and to, in some way, represent the interest of Polish physicians before the British government.[80] Dering also joined the Polish Association of Ex-Political Prisoners of German Prisons and Concentration Camps in Great Britain. This organisation was established in 1945 by a group of liberated Poles who had joined the Polish Army in Italy. It aimed to help former prisoners in rebuilding their life from the beginning. They received help in the form of language courses, training courses and information on where and how to look for accommodation, as well as moral support. However, the association was also concerned about its reputation; thus, the application of each potential member had to be verified in order ensure his activities at the camp were not harmful to fellow inmates. Prisoners who signed the *Volksdeutsche Liste* or who were assigned, for instance, as *Kapos* were excluded.[81] Dering's application on which he presented himself as prisoner/physician at Auschwitz was accepted on 1 June 1947 (see photo below).[82]

[80] The history of this association was portrayed by its chairman see Kazimierz Nowak, *Pięćdziesiąt lat Związku Lekarzy Polskich na obczyźnie* (London: Polish Medical Association, 1994). For the standpoint of the Polish Medical Association regarding the requirement of the British government towards the Polish medical officers see TNA, MH 76/338, Memorandum by the Polish Medical Association on the Position of Polish Doctors in United Kingdom, 5 March 1948.

[81] For more details see Aleksandra Loewenau, 'Roles and Merits of the Polish Association of Ex-Political Prisons of German Prisons and Concentration Camps: Polish Survivors in Great Britain', in David Cesarani, Suzanne Bardgett, Jessica Reinisch, and Johannes-Dieter Steinert (eds.), *Survivors of Nazi Persecution in Europe after the Second World War: Landscapes after Battle* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010), vol. 1, pp. 109-126.

[82] Members of the association were given an ID, which stated where and when they were incarcerated. See BP, AE, Kopertoteka 283 Władysław Dering.




*Dering's membership card of the Polish Association of Ex-Political Prisoners of German Prisons and Concentration Camps in Great Britain. Source BP, Archiwum Emigracji, Kopertoteka 283, Władysław Dering.*

Within one year, Dering escaped Poland leaving his wife behind, joined the Polish Army in Italy and came to the UK where he began working as a physician. In addition, he joined several Polish organisations trying to put his Auschwitz past behind him. What he did not anticipate was that, while he was trying to build his life in a new country, his enemies in Poland were gathering evidence in order to put him on trial.[83]

- **The *Rabbits*' Journey to Freedom**

The liberation experiences of the *Rabbits* were very different to those of priests at Dachau and Dering in Jastrzębie Zdrój. Unlike priests at Dachau, the *Rabbits* were spread out across Germany, and in addition three of them ended up in Scandinavia. The condition in which they were freed varied from relatively safe to highly

[83] IPN, OKBZHwK, 174/183A.

disturbing. The process of releasing prisoners began before the Red Army entered the camp. This was possible thanks to an initiative of the Swedish Red Cross that approached Heinrich Himmler who, aware that the probability of the Third Reich winning the war was very slight, agreed to start a dialogue with Deputy Director of the Swedish Red Cross, Folke Bernadotte, who was aiming for gradual release of incarcerated at Ravensbrück women.[84]

In late February, Himmler met Folke Bernadotte, who—aware of the *Rabbits*' situation at the camp— requested their release. Himmler, although not keen on the request, said that he would think about it.[85] Meanwhile, the *Rabbits* were still in hiding while seeking to escape the camp. The Swedish Red Cross's efforts began to be effective after a second meeting with Himmler in early April, during which he agreed that Norwegian and Danish prisoners could be evacuated from Ravensbrück.[86] On 21 April 1945, the third meeting between Himmler and Bernadotte took place. Also present during discussions were the representative of Swedish Jewry—Norbert Masur, and Himmler's healer—Felix Kersten. This time Bernadotte negotiated the rescuing of prisoners of other nationalities including Polish Jews and non-Jews.[87] As a consequence of the Swedish Red Cross engagement, on 5 April 1945, the first prisoners were evacuated from Ravensbrück

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[84] Folke Bernadotte was born on 2 January 1895 in Stockholm to Prince Oscar Bernadotte Count of Wisborg. His grandfather was King Oscar II of Sweden. From an early age he attended military school and in 1915 he took his officer's exam. In 1943 Bernadotte was appointed the vice chairman of the Swedish Red Cross which opened opportunities to negotiate between the Allies and the Axis for prisoner exchanges and further for their release. Thanks to his 'white buses' action which rescued concentration camp prisoners under protection of the Red Cross approximately 31,000 inmates left concentration camps before their liquidation. His contribution was recognised and in 1948 he was appointed as the first UN mediator in Palestine. Unfortunately, on 17 September 1948, Bernadotte was assassinated by a Jewish terrorist Zionist group and as a result he died on the same day. See Ralph Hewins, *Count Folke Bernadotte: His Life and Work* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1948).

[85] Ralph Hewins, *Count Folke Bernadotte*, p. 123.

[86] Ibid., pp. 115, 122-125.

[87] For more information in regard to help that Bernadotte provided to inmates of the Nazi concentration camp see article written by a witness: Zygmunt Łakociński, 'Folke Bernadotte i akcja Szwedzkiego Czerwonego Krzyża', *Przegląd Lekarski* 1 (1968), pp. 145-152. Also see Peter Padfield, *Himmler Reichs Führer-SS* (London: Cassell & Co., 2001), pp. 590-591.

to Switzerland. These included 299 French inmates and a Polish woman, Karolina Lanckorońska.[88]

*The photo is part of a collage on the jacket of the Swedish book, Handelsresande i liv by Lena Einhorn, Prisma, Stochholm 1999.*

Soon after, on 8 April, Scandinavian women were rescued by the Swedes.[89] The white buses of the Swedish Red Cross came back again to Ravensbrück on 22 April 1945 rescuing 2,873 prisoners, among them 954 Polish females.[90] In the end, however, the broad action of rescuing women from Ravensbrück did not include the *Rabbits* and only Alicja Jurkowska, Janina Marczewska and Zofia Sokulska managed, under false names, to join the Red Cross transport to Sweden, which left on 25 April with approximately 4,000 Polish prisoners.[91] The rest of the *Rabbits* were not released. Jadwiga Dzido[92] recalled after the war that she tried to get onto the transport list but was unsuccessful because her injuries were too serious.[93] The lists of prisoners to be rescued were compiled by the camp commandant who

[88] Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, p. 242.
[89] Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 296.
[90] Hewins, *Count Folke Bernadotte*, pp. 154-155.
[91] Irith Dublon-Knebel (ed.), *A Holocaust Crossroads: Jewish Women and Children in Ravensbrück* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2010), pp. 228-229. For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[92] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[93] http://jtajchert.w.interia.pl/zyciorysykrolikow.htm (Accessed on 12 January 2012)

deliberately excluded Polish victims of medical experiments; thus, Bernadotte's influence was not strong enough to help the *Rabbits*.[94]

Meanwhile, the three *Rabbits*, who managed to falsify their numbers and that way joined the other women selected by the Swedish Red Cross, were loaded onto a train to Sweden where they were provided with medical help and general support. Despite the fact that the journey took several days, they could consider themselves free persons as soon as they left the camp. Following a few days of travelling in crowded freight wagons, they arrived in Denmark where they were greeted by a Polish priest and Danish Red Cross medical staff. The rest of the trip to Malmö was spent on a comfortable train and a ferry. On 1 May, they arrived in Lund where they were able to rest and receive medical assistance from the local physicians. Like other rescued women the three *Rabbits* were given various employment opportunities and the option to settle in Sweden. Despite the prospect Janina Marczewska[95], a *Rabbit*, chose to return, leaving Lund on 6 October 1945 with the first transport to Poland.[96] The two remaining *Rabbits*, on the other hand, never returned to Poland. Zofia Sokulska[97] remained in Sweden for several years later immigrating to the UK where she met her future husband Ryszard Kaczmarski. Alicja Jurkowska[98] also left Sweden for the UK. She later moved to Argentina with her husband.[99]

However, the last days of incarceration and the journey back to Poland was, for the vast majority of the *Rabbits*, an exhausting and traumatic experience. After the last transport to Sweden left Ravensbrück, there were still several thousand prisoners remaining at the camp. The final order was to evacuate the camp leaving

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[94] For more information in reference to rescue actions of Poles see Hewins, *Count Folke Bernadotte*, pp. 154-155.
[95] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[96] Wińska, *Więzi*, pp. 90-91.
[97] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[98] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[99] http://tajchert. interia.pl/życiorysykrólików.htm (Accessed on 10 January 2012)

behind only the severely ill. Thus, the remaining SS officers created large columns of inmates who were forced to march towards other concentration camps. The last group to be evacuated left on 28 April 1945.[100] Among them were approximately forty *Rabbits*.[101] They were just a small portion of the approximately 2,000 hungry and exhausted women who were herded along narrow roads with civilians trying to escape the Soviets.[102] The chaos and future uncertainty created tension and anxiety. In addition, the promised parcels delivered by the Swedish Red Cross were never distributed to prisoners. Women were given barely any food and were therefore forced to feed themselves with anything they were able to find or catch along the way. After hours of walking they were ordered to sleep on the bare ground. The constant bombing raids and ensuring panic created opportunities to run away. The women, who could not see the end of their marching and believed that separating from the SS-guarded columns was a better solution, organised themselves into groups. When the chance arrived they either joined columns of escaping civilians or ran into nearby forest.[103] On 29 April, a group of *Rabbits* guarded by SS officers separated themselves from the evacuation column. On 3 May in Parchim, the crippled women were handed over to the British. Because there was a great deficiency of food supplies in Germany a small group of the liberated *Rabbits* decided to make their way to Poland after three days. Their journey was long and exhausting but relatively safe as they had the company of several men for protection.[104]

For the eighteen *Rabbits* who managed to leave Ravensbrück with transports to the Neustadt-Glewe and Bergen-Belsen camps in February 1945 the suffering

[100] Wińska, *Więzi*, p. 45.
[101] Ibid., p. 54.
[102] Kiedrzyńska, *Ravensbrück*, p. 245.
[103] Wińska, *Więzi*, p. 62.
[104] Ibid., pp. 64-65.

continued. Although they were not frightened of being liquidated by the execution commando, they were still forced to fight for survival. Their position within the camp as newcomers was extremely difficult. They did not know other prisoners and thus did not receive any help. Półtawska recalled after the war that all food distribution in Bergen-Belsen resulted in physical and verbal violence between inmates.[105] The *Rabbits* had a great difficulty in adapting to the new reality as they were 'not used to fight for food.'[106] In addition, the horrendous accommodation conditions, which resulted in deteriorating camp hygiene, caused epidemics of typhus and other contagious diseases killing thousands of prisoners during the months before the end of the war.[107] On 15 April 1945, the British Army entered the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.[108] The conditions in the camp were severely disturbing. Approximately 10,000 corpses were found in decomposed stages lying around the camp site. The death rates were increasing due to malnutrition and various diseases.[109]

Two *Rabbits*—Maria Cabaj and Stanisława Michalik—suffered from typhus.[110] In June 1945, after quarantine and primary medical assistance provided by the British, they were sent by the Swedish Red Cross to Sweden to recover. After

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[105] Półtawska, *And I Am Afraid of My Dreams*, p. 155.
[106] Wińska, *Więzi*, p. 80.
[107] About the conditions at Neustadt-Glewe see Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, pp. 215-217.
[108] Hagit Lavsky, *New Beginnings: Holocaust Survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British Zone in Germany, 1945-1950* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), p. 37.
[109] Joanne Reilly, *Belsen: The Liberation of a Camp* (Routledge, 1998), p. 25. More in regard to the British medical efforts at Bergen-Belsen after the liberation see Susanne Bardgett; David Cesarani (es.), *Belsen 1945: New Historical Perspective* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), pp. 31-51. Bardgett and Cesarani favoured the way the British handled the liberation; however, issues such as the incorrect handling of malnutrition and infectious diseases were ignored. Weindling, on the other hand, emphasised both problems related to immediate health and hygiene problems and immigration of survivors to other European countries. See Paul Weindling, '"Belsenitis": Liberating Belsen, Its Hospitals, UNRRA, and Selection for Re-emigration, 1945-1948', *Science in Context* 19 (2006), pp. 401-418.
[110] A third person to be liberated from Bergen-Belsen was Hanna Sienkiewicz who returned to Poland relatively soon after the war. She studied art in Kraków and in Warsaw and died in 1986. Go to http://tajchert. interia.pl/życiorysykrólików.htm. (Accessed on 10 January 2012) For biographical information on Cabaj and Michalik see Appendix 8.

several months, they were reunited with their families in Poland. On 2 May 1945, the Red Army liberated the sub-camp of Ravensbrück, Neustadt-Glewe. The severely ill prisoners were taken to the nearby hospitals and the rest were gradually repatriated to their native countries.[111] Wanda Wojtasik, Zofia Kawińska, Zofia Modrowska, Halina Piotrowska and Krystyna Czyż were not willing to wait for a transport to Poland and they made their way on their own, unaware of any impending danger.[112] Many of the Soviet soldiers had not interacted with women for a long time. Therefore, being in a position of power, a number of them took advantage of civilians, as well as female inmates liberated from concentration camps. Półtawska described the distressing situations that the women faced after they accepted a transport offer from the Soviet soldiers:

> All of a sudden, the truck turned into a side road leading into wood [...] the men were approaching silently [...] I told girls: "Hold on as tight as you can. If we stick together, they can't rape us" [...] was it for that I had spent four long years in a concentration camp, I wondered in despair. Could it be really happening? Oh God! [...] we all began to scream, in unison, as if the whole world would hear us. A scream so piercing that the men, who had us surrounded now, sprang back [...] I threw myself down on the grass and, to my surprise, promptly burst into tears.[113]

After several upsetting situations these five *Rabbits* finally arrived in Poland in June 1945.[114]

Despite the issues mentioned earlier in this chapter, the conditions of those *Rabbits* who were liberated by the Red Army were far worse than that of the Polish priests. Liberated at Ravensbrück, Krystyna Dzido and Krystyna Iwańska were

[111] Saidel, *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück*, p. 158.
[112] For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[113] Półtawska, *And I Am Afraid of My Dreams*, pp. 170-172.
[114] Wińska, *Więzi*, p. 81.

looked after by the Russian physicians.[115] The rest of the *Rabbits* were abandoned, as there were no DP camps established in the Soviet occupation zone, and therefore the vast majority of liberated inmates organised the journey home by themselves often on foot, regardless of the caused by the experiments injuries.[116]

[115] For biographical information see Appendix 8.

[116] DP camps were established for these people who did not wish to return to their country. Polish Jews, for example, were scared off by post-war pogroms in Poland. Poles, Ukrainians, Czechs, and other Eastern Europeans were hostile towards communist regime being established in their countries. For more information see Anna Holian, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism: Displaced Persons in Post-war Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

## 3. FREE AT LAST

### The Priests' Emigration

In May 1945, there were approximately 900 Polish priests residing in Germany, and about 761 of them were liberated at Dachau.[117] By the end of 1945, approximately 250 were transferred to countries, such as France, Italy and Belgium. Additionally 108 priests were repatriated or returned to Poland on their own. The rest of them were appointed to Polish community centres and DP camps in the Allied zones of occupation in Germany and Austria.[118] According to a report produced on 31 December 1945 by the Bishop's Curia in Kraków, in the three Allied occupation zones there were 501 priests who served in 694 Polish religious outposts.[119] The number included 251 priests in the British zone, 193 in the American zone and 57 in the French zone.[120]

In addition to priests, in 1946, in the three Allied zones there were approximately 400,000 secular Poles and about 195,000 of them were settled in the American zone. Therefore, over time, the position of the American Army policy regarding repatriation was modified when the number of DPs increased due to the large numbers of Poles coming from Soviet occupied territories. The Americans faced several issues, one of which was growing dislike between Germans, Poles and other DPs, which was caused by the fact that the German authorities were obliged to feed inhabitants of DP camps despite the economic difficulties that they were

[117] The number of priests that survived the war was larger; however, approx. 35 of them died days after the liberation.
[118] Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission*, p. 75.
[119] Additionally, many Polish priests worked in more than one camp due to the insufficient number of clergymen. For instance, in 1947 in the British zone alone 126 Polish priests served in 255 DP camps. See Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann, *The Exile Mission*, p. 75.
[120] Between June and July 1945, on an initiative by Father Franciszek Tomczak, the main chaplain of the Polish Armed forces, 200 Polish chaplains were transported to the British occupation zone. See Wiesław Hładkiewicz, *Polacy w zachodnich strefach okupacyjnych Niemiec, 1945-1949* (Zielona Góra: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, 1982), p. 150.

struggling with.[121] Therefore, due to overcrowding the Americans began strongly 'persuading' Poles to leave their zone. Many methods of persuasion were used, from chicanery to verbal abuse.[122] In time, the number both of Polish priests and DPs decreased. As a result, in late 1948, the number of Polish priests was reduced to fifty-seven. They worked in 105 camps looking after 76,187 Polish Catholic DPs.[123] Among those priests were four victims of phlegmon experiments, as [Redacted] who worked in Niedersachsen, and thirteen victims of Schilling's malaria experiments including [Names redacted] .[124] When the decision to terminate all DP camps in Germany was made in 1948, the majority of the remaining Polish priests were forced to leave, with most of them returning to Poland.[125] The unstable political situation and the atheist regime that was in power in post-war Poland prevented many of the Polish Catholic priests—former prisoners from Dachau—from returning to their native country.

On 23 May 1945, Poles at the DP camp in Dachau were given questionnaires, on which they were asked to state where they would like to go in the near future.

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[121] Bogusia Wojciechowska (ed.), *Waiting to Be Heard: The Polish Christian Experience under Nazi Oppression, 1939-1955* (Bloomington: Author House, 2009), p. 260.

[122] For instance, on 15 January 1947, officials of the UNRRA Team 289 responsible for the DP camp in Neustadt did not react when they were informed that the German police stormed the camp at about 11 pm without a required permit and brutally arrested three Poles for stealing pigs. See UN, S-1021, box 178, file 1, Investigation referring to a raid and apprehension of Polish DPs by German Police in Neustadt Camp, 29 March 1947.

[123] According to Łuczak by 1950 the vast majority of Polish Catholic priests, approximately 600, decided to return to Poland leaving seventy-one priests in DP camps in Germany. However, the number of priests who returned to Poland seems to be too high taking into account a relatively large number of clergy who emigrated. See Łuczak, *Polacy w okupowanych*, p. 215.

[124] IHRC, PAC, box 24, folder 191, State of Polish D.P. Camps in the British Zone (November 1948); for more information on Polish priests working in DP camps including victims of medical experiments in Dachau see Michał Marian Grzybowski, *Martyrologium duchowieństwa diecezji płockiej w latach II Wojny Światowej 1939-1945* (Płock: Płockie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, 1982), pp. 161-189. For biographical information see Appendix 8.

[125] Initially DP camps were meant to be closed by the end of August 1946. This decision was later postponed. By the end of 1952 nearly all camps were liquidated. The remaining Föhrenwald camp was closed in 1957. See Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States & Jewish Refugees, 1945-48* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 23.

Several countries were listed, such as France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the US and Italy.

*List of Polish priests wishing to immigrate to the UK. Source ITS Digital Collection USHMM, 1.1.6.1. List Material Dachau*

Priests, similar to other Poles, were also asked to choose from a list of desired destinations. The vast majority of priests wished to return to Poland ·when

the situation is stabilised'.[126] Overall, out of approximately 7,700 people surveyed, about seventy-five per cent of Poles declared a desire to be repatriated to Poland, sooner or later.[127] A few days later, those inmates who put their names on lists to the US and to the UK were informed that emigration to those countries was no longer possible.[128] However, a great number of Poles, including many priests, did not wish to be repatriated. Thus, they gladly accepted offers of hospitality from priests of other nationalities. A group of approximately 300 young Polish clerics and monks was transported to Italy to continue their studies.[129] Father Franciszek Korszyński, vice chancellor of the Catholic University in Włocławek, was advised by Father Manciano to move the remaining priests from his diocese to Brescia in Italy. On 27 May, when it turned out to be impossible, Father Korszyński and 109 other Polish priests—mainly from Włocławek—left Dachau with the French clergy.[130]

In 1946, the rejecting decision regarding emigration to the UK and US was revoked; thus, priests and other DPs began their efforts to move to those countries. This was made possible due to the founding of the Polish American Immigration and Relief Committee.[131] This organisation focused 'on relief of Polish refugees in Western Europe and helping them to emigrate to the United States and to other Western nations'.[132] The actions of the United States government regarding the regulation of the emigration policy were very slow. The British government, in comparison, passed an emigration law with reference to DPs as early as 1946, and as

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[126] Musioł, *Dachau*, p. 265; also Chowaniec, *Cudem ocaleni*, p. 278.
[127] Najgier, *Powrót z daleka*, p. 341.
[128] Urbański, *Duchowni w Dachau* , p. 96.
[129] Among them was a prominent Polish writer, Gustaw Morcinek. See ITS/USHMM, Col. 1.1.6.1, A List of Polish Priests to Italy. See *Słowo Polskie*, Dachau 26 May 1945, p. 7. Also Najgier, *Powrót z daleka*, p. 343.
[130] Korszyński, *Jasne promienie w Dachau*, p. 140.
[131] Americans of Polish origin were involved in helping Poles in Europe already during the war see Bradley E. Fels, '"Whatever Your Heart Dictates and Your Pocket Permits": Polish-American Aid to Polish Refugees during World War II', *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22, 2 (2003), pp. 3-30.
[132] Jerzy Cisek, *Polish Refugees and the Polish American Immigration and Relief Committee* (Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland, 2006), pp. 38-39.

a result over one hundred Polish priests moved to the UK. The vast majority of these were military chaplains who came to Britain with the Polish Second Corps. The easiest way to immigrate to Great Britain directly after the war was by joining the Second Corps of General Anders Army, stationed in Italy until 1946. Officially, the soldiers of the Second Corps were under British command; therefore, when the British government decided to move Polish soldiers to Great Britain, priests came with them. Great Britain thus admitted hundreds of Polish priests.[133] Among them were approximately twelve victims of malaria and phlegmon experiments including [Names redacted].[134] The first transport of Polish soldiers arrived on British soil in June 1946.[135]

The position of Polish priests in Great Britain was not as stressful as it was for most Polish refugees. First of all, there was an urgent need for Polish clergymen due to a large number of Polish Catholic refugees who preferred that religious services be performed by their native priests.[136] Second, they were looked after by the Polish Catholic Mission in England and Wales, which assigned them to Polish parishes across the UK. Despite the efforts of American and British Army physicians, who treated them in DP camps directly after the war, those priests who had undergone experiments were still unwell. The Nazi medical experiments had permanently damaged their health, although this was often to be denied by the Germans in the course of attempts at collecting compensation. Regardless, former

[133] In 1952, there were 113 Catholic priest refugees from Poland. For more information, see Stadulis, 'The Resettlement of Displaced Persons', p. 235.
[134] It is difficult to estimate the exact number because they migrated within the UK. Others left Great Britain like Father [Redacted] who immigrated to Argentina in 1948. See Royal Air Force Polish Division (hereafter RAF), Collection Akta Osobowe członków Drugiego Korpusu. More about the Second Corps see Piotr Żaroń, *Armia Andersa* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2000), pp. 273-277. For biographic information see Appendix 8.
[135] Żaroń, *Armia Andersa*, p. 278.
[136] Maud Bulbring, 'Post-War Refugees in Great Britain', *Population Studies* 2 (1954), p. 107.

malaria and phlegmon victims were engaged in building the post-war Polish community and their social and cultural organisations in the UK. For example, Father [Names redacted] were very active as members of the Polish Association of Ex-Political Prisoners of German Prisons and Concentration Camps.[137]

The process of emigration to the US for Polish Priests was very long and complex. The United States government took some time to pass the DP Act; therefore, priests who had submitted their applications in 1947/48 then had to wait approximately two years before they could enter 'the land of opportunities'.[138] Each potential refugee needed a sponsor from the desired destination and references from a respected person.[139] Therefore, priests, as educated and outspoken members of DP communities with knowledge of foreign languages, were authors of many recommendation letters for Polish nationals immigrating to the US. Father [Redacted] from the Neustadt DP camp and Father [Redacted] from Ingolstadt, both victims of malaria experiments, were the most active in supporting Polish DPs in their efforts to emigrate, providing hundreds of positive evaluations.[140] Priests, meanwhile, established contacts with clergy and parishes abroad which agreed to sponsor and support their emigration applications. In addition, even priests who were subjected to Nazi medical experiments were not given preferential treatment and had to meet the same requirements as other civilians in order to be considered for emigration.

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[137] PI, Collection 289 Kacetowcy, Members Lists.
[138] The Displaced Persons Act was finally passed by the American Congress on 25 June 1948, and the first transport of immigrants landed on American soil in late October 1948. By the end of June 1950 slightly more than 169,000 refugees of different nationalities had come to the US under the new law. See Cisek, *Polish Refugees*, p. 51.
[139] Kozal, *Memoir of Fr. Chester Kozal*, p. 145.
[140] IHRC, Col. American Relief for Poland, District 33, Boxes 8-12, Emigration applications. For biographical information see Appendix 8.

Approximately half of the emigrating priests had relatives in the US, which made the immigration process easier.[141] At any rate, despite the long wait, Polish priests were still privileged. The vast number of Poles, who came to the US in the late 1940s and early 1950s, were employed on farms and factories because Americans were looking for cheap labour. Therefore, many immigrants had to work below their ability and ambitions.[142] Priests, on the other hand, were automatically assigned to service in Catholic parishes or Catholic schools depending on their knowledge of the English language. Additionally, Polish priests had received substantial help from organisations that dealt with applications, organising financial aid for transport from Germany to the US. Refugee assistance organisations helped link applicants with an appropriate sponsor. The sponsor was generally the rector of a parish to which priests would be assigned. Among the organisations which assisted were: the Catholic Committee for Refugees, the Polish-American Congress, the Resettlement Division of the War Relief Service and the National Catholic Welfare Conference.[143] However, certain rules applied in regard to financial assistance. Immigrants received an aid as a type of loan, which, in the end, was expected to be returned to support other refugees in need.[144] The United States was the most desirable destination according to the number of applications that were submitted by Polish priests.[145] Europe was suffering not only because of massive destruction but also from post-war austerity. Thus, in the UK, for instance, Poles were in general not

[141] Centre for Migration Studies (hereafter CMS), Col. #023 B, box 142, folder 4231.
[142] IHRC, Collection American Relief for Poland, District 33, box 7, folder 10, American Committee for Resettlement of Polish DP's Questionnaires.
[143] The National Catholic Welfare Conference broadly supported Catholic DPs' providing 370 tons of food and clothing with an estimated value of $1,050,000. For more information see Gerald J. Schnepp, 'What America Is Doing to Accommodate Displaced Persons', *The American Catholic Sociological Review* 1 (1948), p. 14; also CMS, Collection #023 B, box 143, folder 4270.
[144] CMS, Col. #023 B, box 142, folder 4231.
[145] For thousands of immigration applications see IHRC, District 33, box 7, folder 10.

welcome, being seen as a burden by the British taxpayers.[146] Overall, about eighteen Polish priests who had been victims of Nazi medical experiments found new homes in the US.[147]

Approximately twenty-five per cent of Polish priests who were liberated outside Poland had never returned to their country after the war. Fifty out of 197 victims of medical experiments immigrated to countries like the US, UK, Argentina, France and Canada. The primary factor was the anticlerical ideology of the new Polish government, as it meant that many priests were simply afraid of being persecuted for the second time. In addition, contradictory information about the situation in Poland reached DP camps. On one side, Poland was presented as a free country, where reconstruction was progressing; and on the other side, reports about robberies and rapes conducted by the Soviet soldiers in Poland appeared in newspapers on numerous occasions.[148] Regardless, most of the priests decided to return to Poland where they faced a new range of problems, which will be discussed further in this thesis.

**Dering Arrested as War Criminal**

During the first days of January 1947, Polish Authorities informed the British War Office that Dering, who was accused of medical crimes committed at Auschwitz, had come to the UK in order to escape justice. This communication was the result of an investigation carried out in Warsaw beginning in 1946.[149] On 9 January 1947, the Polish embassy in London requested Dering's extradition. Similar requests were

[146] Aleksandra Loewenau, 'Roles and Merits of the Polish Association of Ex-Political Prisoners of German and Concentration Camps', p. 115.
[147] Between 1946 and 1962 - 678 clergymen of all nationalities entered the US. For more information see CMS, Col. #023 B.
[148] *Słowo Polskie*, Freimann 19 June 1945, p. 4.
[149] For more detail information see IPN, OKBZHwK, 174/183A.

presented to the United Nations War Crimes Commission on behalf of the Czechoslovak and French governments. On 15 January, the British representative stated that Dering would be arrested.[150] This was caused by the fact that Dering's name appeared on the war criminals list in 1945 and 1946.[151] His name was mentioned for the third time in the Central Registry of War Criminals and Security Suspects in March 1947 due to the French claim.[152] On 16 January, a Polish Deportation Order for Dering was announced, and on 21 August 1947 the extradition request was sent to the UK.[153] However, British officials asked for further evidence against Dering and suggested the need to establish a prima facie case, which was willingly accepted by the representative of the Polish government.[154]

Polish officials were very determined to win this legal dispute. Shortly after the claim was placed, Marian Muszkat[155]—the chief of the Polish Military Mission to Investigate German War Crimes—arrived at the Polish embassy in London to prepare the case. Muszkat came to the UK having already collected some evidence against Dering.[156] This included testimony given by the Auschwitz prisoner doctor,

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[150] TNA, FO 371/66239, Polish request for extradition of Dering.
[151] TNA, FO 371/57524, United Nation War Crimes Commission: List of Criminals, Staffs of the German Concentration Camps: No.1 Auschwitz-Birkenau, p. 3; TNA, WO 311/60, CROWCASS Registry of War Criminals and Security Suspects: A Supplementary List.
[152] TNA, WO 309/1706, The Central Registry of War Criminals and Security Suspects: Consolidated Wanted List part-2: Non-Germans only, p. 75.
[153] In reference to that request Dr Kłodziński and Dr Grabczyński were called as witnesses before the Polish authorities; IPN, OKBZHwK, GK 174/183A, Correspondence of Tadeusz Cyprian, August 1947.
[154] TNA, FO 371/66239, Polish request for extradition of Dering.
[155] Marian Muszkat was born on 5 November 1909. He was a Polish lawyer, colonel, judge, specialist of international public law, military law and international affairs. After the war, he began work in the Polish Ministry of Justice as chief of the Polish Military Mission to Investigate German War Crimes. Muszkat was a famous specialist in international public law, and therefore the Ministry of Justice dispatched him to Nuremberg, as chairperson of the Polish delegation. At the Nuremberg Trials Muszkat directed the Polish delegation which also included Prof Tadeusz Cyprian and prosecutors: Prof Jerzy Sawicki and Dr Stanisław Piotrowski. They prepared the "Polish indictment" containing the list of proven Nazi war crimes committed on Polish territory. Muszkat died on 30 September 1995 in Israel. See Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, *Prawnicy czasu bezprawia: Sędziowie i prokuratorzy wojskowi w Polsce, 1944-1956* (Kraków: "Societas Vistulana", 2005).
[156] Testimonies favouring Dering were not taken into consideration.

Karl Sperber, in December 1945 and Alina Brewda's[157] statement from 19 November 1946.[158] Muszkat gathered statements from many former prisoners; however, one can say that the case against Dering was built mainly on testimonies from three witnesses: Alina Brewda, Karl Sperber and Dora Kleinowa. However, only Brewda had witnessed Dering performing operations on inmates at Auschwitz.

Dering was accused of offences, such as signing the *Volksdeutsche Liste*, performing experimental operations on inmates, selecting prisoners for gas chambers and injecting inmates with phenol. In reference to the first accusation, Alina Brewda stated that she believed Dering had signed the *Reichsdeutsche List* because as she said: 'many people did that at that time because it made things easier'.[159] She also suggested that Dering had become an SS officer.[160] Sperber, on the other hand, said that he was told that Dering signed the *Volksdeutsche Liste*, and as a result he was discharged from Auschwitz to be a personal assistant to Professor Clauberg in his private clinic.[161] In regard to the other accusation, Brewda stated before Muszkat that Dering told her of 16,500 experimental operations he had performed by the time she arrived at the camp. She also said that these operations were performed at great speed and, as a consequence, were fatal for all patients.[162] Sperber claimed that he knew from Kleinowa that Dering conducted experimental operations at Block 10. Kleinowa claimed that Dering performed experimental operations on males and females; however, she did not witness any of them.[163] All three accusers stated that

[157] She will again appear in Dering's life in the 1960s.
[158] IPN, OKBZHwK, GK 174/179, Witness Testimony by Dr Alina Brewda, 19 November 1946, p 59.
[159] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Alina Brewda before Marian Muszkat London 29 March 1947, p. 2.
[160] Ibid.
[161] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Dr Karl Sperber in Liverpool 21 March 1947, p. 5.
[162] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Alina Brewda before Marian Muszkat London 29 March 1947, p. 2.
[163] TNA, TS 58/744, Interrogation of a witness Prague 27 November 1947: Dr Dobra Kleinowa, pp. 1-2.

Dering personally selected people for the gas chambers. Brewda said that the majority of those Dering chose were severely undernourished, so-called *müselmänner*.[164] Sperber added that he knew from Czech prisoners that Dering chose inmates for gas chambers on his own initiative.[165] A similar witness statement was given by Kleinowa.[166]

Accusations made by the witnesses listed above were very serious, but they were misleading in many respects. For instance, Brewda stated that Dering had become an SS officer, something which she did not remember having said seventeen years later. She also gave an exaggerated number of 16,500 experimental operations performed by Dering. Moreover, she mentioned that all those operated upon died as a result of surgery, although on the same page she stated that ten out of thirteen Greek girls operated by Dering had survived. All these accusations were also corrected by Brewda during the libel trial of Dering versus Uris in 1964.[167] The most improbable statement given by Brewda related to sixty testicles being removed by Dering in two hours, which was physically impossible given that an average amputation of one testicle lasted 10 minutes.[168] Similarly, many of Sperber's statements were in fact someone else's observations. For example, he never saw, and indeed could not witness, Dering choosing patients for gas chambers because at that time Sperber was already at Birkenau; moreover, selections for the gas chambers were generally done by the SS doctors.[169] In addition, although Sperber claimed to be an informed witness, it seems odd that he named Schumann as Dr Klein, who was

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[164] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Alina Brewda before Marian Muszkat London 29 March 1947, p. 2.
[165] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Dr Karl Sperber in Liverpool 21 March 1947, p. 4.
[166] TNA, TS 58/744, Interrogation of a witness Prague 27 November 1947: Dr Dobra Kleinowa, p. 3.
[167] This trial will be closely analysed later in dissertation.
[168] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Alina Brewda before Marian Muszkat, London 29 March 1947, pp. 1-3.
[169] For details of the selection performed by SS at Block 21 see Tadeusz Orzeszko, 'Relacja chirurga z obozu oświęcimskiego', *Przegląd Lekarski* 1 (1971), p. 46.

also an Auschwitz doctor. Further, the two statements given in 1945 and in 1947 were very dissimilar.[170] Dora Kleinowa, on the other hand, mentioned that Dering performed experimental operations at Block 10. She withdrew this allegation soon after, since he was operating exclusively at Block 21.[171]

Władysław Dering never denied removing gonads of Jews at Auschwitz. He claimed that he operated on eighty-five men and five women. He categorically refused to call those procedures experimental because, in his understanding, his patients were already sterilised if not castrated by means of radiation; therefore, they could not be sterilised for a second time.[172] This argument is indeed significant since even Alina Brewda stated that victims of Schumann's sterilisation experiments were exposed to high doses of radiation, which had a castration effect. In such a case defining Dering's medical activity at the camp is very problematic, particularly as regard to removal of testicles and ovaries destroyed by radiation, and whether this was a form of medical experimentation. However, the removed gonads were most probably used to assess the effect of the initial sterilisation. But, as Dering argued, the excision was in certain sense therapeutic.

Meanwhile, Dering and his solicitor began campaigning to restore his reputation among his friends, co-workers, and members of the Polish Association of Ex-Political Prisoners. Dering's case divided Poles in the UK. Several articles published in London's *Tygodnik Polski* indicated that: 'Anders of course opened arms to the criminal Dering who was left by his wife after she learned what he was doing at Auschwitz'.[173] Moreover, the socialist newspaper claimed that the Polish government had attempted to secure Dering's extradition already in 1946 during the

[170] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Dr Karl Sperber in Liverpool, 21 March 1947, pp. 1-7;
[171] TNA, TS 58/744, Interrogation of a witness Prague 27 November 1947: Dr Dobra Kleinowa, p. 2.
[172] TNA, TS 58/744, Dr Wladyslaw Dering: My Replies to the Accusations made by Dr. Karol Sperber, p. 3.
[173] 'Ujęcie zbrodniarza i zdrajcy', *Tygodnik Polski*, London 3 May 1947.

Auschwitz trial held in Kraków.[174] Regardless of the claims and accusations, dozens of Poles and former inmates of Auschwitz sent declarations supporting Dering's release. The majority of them indeed interacted with Dering at Auschwitz; however, several Poles responded as if they had never met Dering. Thus, one may consider the gathering of positive opinions for Dering as some kind of joint action of the Polish post-war-refugees rather than a reflection of genuine support. Regardless, the Polish community in the UK stood by Dering. In March 1948, the Polish Association of Ex-Political Prisoners organised the Colleagues Court to judge Dering, whose membership was suspended. It was arranged to interrogate Dering's witnesses in order to highlight the 'inaccuracy' of the allegations made by Brewda, Sperber and Kleinowa. After three day-long sessions the court made its decision in favour of Dering.[175]

Meanwhile, the Polish government followed instructions from the Home Office and produced further evidence against Dering, which was then considered by Sir David Maxwell Fyfe and Mr. Elwyn Jones.[176] However, they could not agree upon whether Dering should be extradited or released. The British government was under pressure since the issue was presented by the Polish as a political matter. Dering, guilty or not, was extremely inconvenient, it was therefore suggested to send him abroad if released.[177]

The breakthrough in Dering's case was expected to take place when one of the actual victims of castration was brought to London— [Redacted] , a Polish Jew, who was deported to Birkenau in March 1942. According to [Redacted]

[174] 'Sprawa Deringa w Izbie Gmin', *Tygodnik Polski*, London 6 December 1947.
[175] PI, Col. 289 Kacetowcy, folder 12 Sprawa Dr Deringa, Sąd Koleżeński Polskiego Związku b. Więźniów Politycznych, 19 March 1948.
[176] Both of them represented the British side during the Nuremberg Trials.
[177] TNA, FO 371/71585, Polish request for repatriation of Dering, F.O. Minute Northern Department 11 March, p. 2.

testimony, he was taken to Auschwitz where he was castrated by Dering.[178] The operation, in his opinion, was performed badly because he suffered from infection and had to spend weeks at the camp hospital. Moreover, [Redacted] claimed he had begged Dering to leave him at least one testicle, but the doctor who operated on him said 'all the Jews should be exterminated'.[179] In early August 1948, [Redacted] was brought to Bow Street Police Station in London where he was asked to identify Dering. [Redacted], however, did not recognise Dering during an identity parade. He also said that Dering was not the doctor who operated on him.[180] A careful analysis of the original register of the surgical Block 21 at Auschwitz made accessible by the ITS in 2007 revealed that there were several inconsistencies in [Redacted] testimony. For instance, he claimed that he was taken to the operating room in May when in fact it was July. Also the 'anti-Semite doctor who operated on him in a brutal way' was not Dering, but Jan Grabczyński.[181]

At that time, Dering had already been in Brixton prison for nineteen months and fifteen months had been spent in an exceptional degree of isolation without any contact with other prisoners. For the last three months he was treated as a person condemned to death. He was dressed in special clothes with no buttons and no tie, and was watched day and night 'as a potential suicide'.[182] Dering's solicitor complained on several occasions on behalf of his client that the Polish prosecutors failed to meet deadlines in order to produce evidence against him and therefore had deliberately delayed his release.

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[178] Meaning, both his testicles were removed.
[179] TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by [Redacted] Paris 22 December 1947; TS 58/744, Examination of [Redacted] by Mr. Howard, p. 3.
[180] TNA, FO 371/71586, Polish request for reparation of Dering for trial.
[181] ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.
[182] TNA, TS 58/744, Memorandum 10 August 1948, p. 5.

Moreover, Dering tried to discredit witnesses who testified against him. For example, he claimed that there was a long tradition of hate between him and Brewda who was at the time very influential in Poland. He also pointed out and that several witnesses were her friends. Dering was correct to some extent. Brewda had indeed worked as a physician at the Secret Service clinic in Poland and had obtained the job as a result of a personal recommendation from her great friend Cyrankiewicz who became a Prime Minister of the Communist government in Poland.[183] Furthermore, shortly after liberation when the country struggled with financial crises and the vast majority of people suffered from food shortage, Brewda received governmental parcels—thanks to her left wing friends—containing luxury goods, such as cigarettes, champagne and chocolate.[184] Finally, Dering's defence produced an argument in regard to the current political system in his native country, and the manner in which former resistance fighters were treated in post-war Poland. In view of the fact that Witold Pilecki was convicted as a traitor who acted in the interests of General Anders and hanged on 25 May 1948, there was a serious risk that Dering would have no chance of a fair trial in Poland, since none of his witnesses would agree to travel to Poland to testify.[185]

In the end, after [Redacted] visit to Bow Street, the British Home Office decided to release Dering because the evidence against him failed to prove that he was a war criminal. Protests of the Polish and the French governments did not change the decision. Dering left Brixton in October 1948.[186] This, however, was only a temporary victory as the accusations against Dering did not lose their validity.

[183] IPN, Biuro Udostępniania i Archiwacji Dokumentów (hereafter BUiAD), 07721/860 Alina Brewda, Rekomendacje, 12 October 1945; Przebieg służby.
[184] Minney, *I Shall Fear No Evil*, p. 216
[185] TNA, TS 58/744, Memorandum, 10 August 1948, p. 4.
[186] TNA, FO 371/71585, Polish request for repatriation of Dering, Poland- the case of Doctor Dering, p. 2.

**The *Rabbits'* Fight for Justice: Post-War Trials**

During the war the *Rabbits* were determined to stay alive and to inform their families in regard to the crimes that were committed by the Nazi doctors at Ravensbrück. When the war was over, they focused on seeking justice and on informing the world about their experiences at the camp. Thanks to the *Rabbits*' efforts, particularly those of the released inmate, Aka Kołodziejczyk, the Allies already had in their possession the list of victims of medical experiments along with a detailed description of experiments before the liberation of Ravensbrück. As soon as the war ended, the victims of Nazi medical experiments, including the *Rabbits*, were seeking punishment for their perpetrators; however, the process of putting the Nazi criminals on trial was very difficult and time consuming. Therefore, the Allies created essential guidelines regarding the judgement of crimes committed by the Third Reich. The London Agreement, drafted by Robert H. Jackson, Robert Falco and Iona Nikitchenko of the European Advisory Commission on 8 August 1945, led to establishment of the International Military Tribunal. In addition to war crimes and crimes against peace, the tribunal also incorporated broadly understood crimes against humanity. The IMT created the foundation for the Nuremberg Trials.[187] In addition, the guidelines for British military trials entitled 'Regulations for the Trials of War Criminals' were shaped by the Royal Warrant Army Order 81/45 on 14 June 1945.[188]

When Schilling was placed on trial by the Americans in Dachau, a precedent was set encouraging other Allied prosecutors to put Nazi physicians, who were involved in medical experiments or killings, on trial as well.[189] For the American

[187] Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, pp. 93-94.
[188] Ulf Schmidt, 'The Scars of Ravensbrück: Medical Experiments and British War Crimes Policy, 1945-1950', *German History* 23 (2005), p. 22.
[189] Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, p. 95.

prosecutors preparing the Dachau trial was quite straightforward; by way of contrast the organisation of the trial involving the Ravensbrück perpetrators brought numerous difficulties.[190] The vast majority of the Nazis who worked at Ravensbrück, including the 'Hohenlychen group', had been captured by the British. However, the camp was liberated by the Soviets who became rather uncooperative due to rising political tensions between the Allies.[191] Consequently, regardless of the political situation and the location of Ravensbrück, the British claimed that 'the Russians [were] known not to intend to proceed with the case; [thus], it went to [them] by default'.[192] Further, the scale of the medical atrocities committed at Ravensbrück was to some extent revealed by the early autumn of 1945, after nearly all members of the 'Hohenlychen group' had been captured and interrogated by British investigators. The situation was further complicated when French and Polish governments demanded extradition of captured criminals. Each country, however, had different motives. The French government argued that a substantial quantity of French prisoners had died at the camp; thus, their concern was that the British would marginalise this issue. The Polish Provisional Government of National Unity made their demand, on the other hand, based on the fact that the majority of the victims of medical experiments performed by the 'Hohenlychen group' were of Polish nationality.[193] The British argued that in fact the nationality of prisoners was irrelevant since their focus was on crimes against human beings in general that took place at Ravensbrück regardless of prisoners' origin.[194] The argument was accepted

[190] Dachau was liberated by the Americans and was located in the American Occupation Zone.
[191] Schmidt, 'The Scars of Ravensbrück', p. 27.
[192] TNA, WO 309/468, Comments to Notes on Conference re Medical Experiments Carried out on Human Beings, held in Wiesbaden, 3 March 1946.
[193] Schmidt, 'The Scars of Ravensbrück', p. 24; Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, p. 107.
[194] TNA, WO 309/468.

by the Polish government and Lieutenant W. Wierzbowski was appointed Polish liaison officer to the British War Crimes Investigation Unit.[195]

The British concept of the Hamburg trial changed considerably over time.[196] Initially, the prime interest was to investigate the fate of British SOE agents Violette Szabo and Cecily Lefart who were shot at Ravensbrück.[197] In time, the British gathered more evidence and their focus expanded to other crimes committed at the camp. Moreover, the humane concerns of specialists, notably the forensic pathologist Keith Mant who worked on the case, resulted in a broadening of the investigation.[198] Attention drawn by John Thompson to "medical crimes" as a special category of criminality for investigation and prosecution meant that by 1946 new policy was in place to prosecute perpetrators of medical experiments in concentration camps.[199] The diverse character of the crimes led the British to the conclusion that there was a need to establish two trials. The first trial was meant to deal with crimes regarding the ill-treatment of Allied prisoners. The second case, on the other hand, concerned the 'Hohenlychen group' and the medical crimes they had committed.[200] This plan, however, was abandoned when British prosecutors faced, the above-mentioned, Polish request for extradition of the 'Hohenlychen group'.[201]

The Polish authorities carried out their own investigation, which included collecting hundreds of testimonies and performing medical examinations on the vast

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[195] TNA, WO 309/469; WO 235/305-306; also Schmidt, 'The Scars of Ravensbrück', p. 28.
[196] The first established by the British trial that triad the members of staff of the Bergen-Belsen camp. It took place between 17.10 until 17.11.1945 in Lüneburg.
[197] It was a result of a pressure from the British SOE organiser, Vera Atkins. See Paul Weindling, *John W. Thompson: Psychiatrist in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Rochester, NY: University Rochester Press, 2010), p. 120. For the biography of Vera Atkins see Sarah Helm, *A Life in Secrets: Vera Atkins and the Missing Agents of WWII* (New York: Anchor, 2007); Schmidt, 'The Scars of Ravensbrück', p. 29
[198] Keith Mant was assigned as one of investigators in December 1945. More information in Keith Mant, Autobiography, unpublished material in possession of Professor Paul Weindling.
[199] For detailed information see Weindling, *John W. Thomson: Psychiatrist in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Rochester: University Rochester Press, 2010).
[200] TNA, WO 309/469.
[201] TNA, WO 309/468.

majority of the *Rabbits* who returned to Poland. In November 1945, fifty-four of the *Rabbits* were invited to the Gdańsk Medical Academy. In the end, forty-nine of them attended a medical examination, which was performed by Polish specialists including Dr Kornel Michejda who took photos and x-rays of their legs and evaluated the damage to their health caused by the sulphonamide and bone-muscle experiments. The final report included an eye witness account by Dr Zofia Mączka who had been assigned as anaesthetist at the Ravensbrück camp hospital.[202]

In those circumstances the British decided that it was more reasonable to organise one integrated trial. The preparations for the trial were carried out with great commitment and energy. However, the chance to prosecute all those responsible for medical experiments and mistreatment of the *Rabbits* was taken away from them, as on 9 September 1946, three months before the beginning of the trial, they lost three of the most important defendants Gebhardt, Fischer and Oberheuser who were transferred to US custody due to the British Foreign Office decision to support the forthcoming US-administrated trials at Nuremberg.[203]

The participation of the *Rabbits* in the post-war trials of war criminals in Hamburg and Nuremberg had a double meaning. First of all, they continued the mission of informing the world about Nazi crimes conducted at Ravensbrück. Second, they aimed for the perpetrators to be punished. According to the agreement between the British and the Americans, the defendants were divided into two groups. Schiedlausky and Rosenthal stood trial in Hamburg by the British, and Fischer,

[202] Detailed report on medical examination of the *Rabbits* was published see Mączka, 'Operacje doświadczalne w obozie koncentracyjnym Ravensbrück', pp. 123-175.
[203] TNA, WO 309/468, Tentative Selection Defendants for Medical Atrocities Case, 9 September 1946. Also Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, p. 107.

Gebhardt and Oberheuser were tried in Nuremberg by the Americans.[204] Both proceedings overlapped during the first few months. The person who worked on the *Rabbits* case most extensively was the British pathologist for the War Crimes Group, Keith Mant, who spent months preparing the case, travelling to Sweden, Belgium and Paris to interview several of the *Rabbits*.[205] In total, Mant interviewed more than one hundred witnesses. The Soviet authorities created difficulties for Mant, including denying him access to Ravensbrück, which effectively meant an inability to investigate the crime scene. In the end, the first trial that took place in Hamburg began on 5 December 1946 and lasted two months. The British, in order to ultimately avoid tensions with both the Polish and French governments, created an international court, which was supported by Maj. Kazimierz Olszewski (Polish) and H. de Bonnechose (French) as members of the tribunal. All together nineteen former members of staff of the Ravensbrück camp stood trial accused of:

> Committing a war crime in that they at Ravensbrück, in the years 1939 to 1945, when members of the staff of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp in violation of the laws and usages of war, where concerned in the ill-treatment and killing of Allied nationals interned there him.[206]

Mant managed to call two *Rabbits* as witnesses. Helena Piasecka came from Paris and Zofia Sokulska from Sweden.[207] The questions they were asked mainly concerned the issues of their death sentence and the forcible participation in

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[204] Fischer was in the beginning held by the British who interrogated him; however, later he was handed over to the Americans. For detailed information on transfer of defendants see Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, pp. 146-147.

[205] Zofia Sokulska testified before Mant on 11 July 1946 in Lund see NMT 3/713; Zofia Baj testified on 12 August 1946 in Brussels NMT 3/718; Janina Iwańska testified in Paris 3/724; Helena Piasecka was questioned on 28 June in Paris NMT 3/733.

[206] TNA, WO 235/305.

[207] Mant worked according to certain rules. One of them was calling witnesses whom he previously questioned. As he was not able to travel to Poland he decided to call as witnesses the *Rabbits* who lived abroad. For biographical information see Appendix 8.

experiments. The *Rabbits* described their brave attempts at protesting against further experiments with precision.[208] The trial was concluded on 3 February 1947. Schiedlausky, Rosenthal and Treite, who was involved in sterilisation experiments on Sinti and Roma, were all condemned to death.[209]

The medical expert involved in preparation for the Nuremberg Medical Trial was the US Chief of Counsel for War Crimes, Leo Alexander, who was more successful in bringing witnesses into the courtroom. The American prosecution team sent a request to the Polish Military Mission in Germany to call four of the *Rabbits* as witnesses. This 'order' was then sent to Warsaw.[210] As a result, Władysława Karolewska, Jadwiga Dzido, Maria Kuśmierczuk and Maria Broel-Plater came to Nuremberg from Poland to tell their horrific stories and to show their scars.[211] The trial began on 9 December 1946.[212] It has been known as the Medical Trial or Doctors' Trial, and it was the first out of twelve Nuremberg trials. Despite the fact that reports from proceedings of the trial held by the British in Hamburg regularly appeared in the UK press, the publicity given to the trial in Nuremberg by the Americans was unquestionably more substantial. The importance of the *Rabbits* as key witnesses against Gebhardt, Fischer and Oberheuser was acknowledged both by the prosecution team and the international media. The publicity began when all four *Rabbits* were greeted by Leo Alexander upon their arrival at the Nuremberg train station on 15 December 1946 (see photo below).

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[208] For testimonies by Sokulska and Piasecka see TNA, WO 235/306, 31 December 1946.
[209] TNA, WO 235/306.
[210] 'Więźniarki z Ravensbrück jadą do Norymbergi', *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza*, London 21 February 1947, p. 2.
[211] Mitscherlich, Mielke, *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit*, pp. 140-143; Spitz, *Doctors from Hell*, pp. 144-153; Schmidt, *Justice at Nuremberg*, p. 180; Schmidt, 'Scars of Ravensbrück', pp. 30-31. For biographical information see Appendix 8.
[212] For lists of documents selected for the Nuremberg Medical Trial including exhibits, defendants' interrogation, as well as witnesses' testimonies see Dörner, Ebbinghaus and Linne in cooperation with Roth and Weindling (eds.) *The Nuremberg Medical Trial1946/1947.*

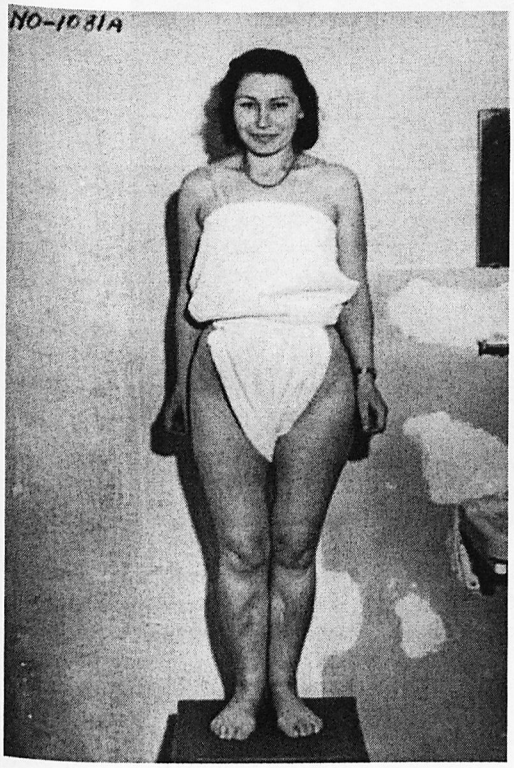
The Americans took a different approach to the British and Poles in gathering evidence for the trial. These included documents, such as witnesses' statements and photo images of the victims, which were later used as evidence in the courtroom. On 17 December 1946, all four of the *Rabbits* were photographed in Nuremberg by the representative of the prosecution team.[213]

*Four Polish women arrive at the train station in Nuremberg to be prosecution witnesses at the Doctors Trial. From left to right are Leo Alexander, Jadwiga Dzido (Hassa), Maria Broel-Plater (Skassa), Maria Kuśmierczuk and Władysława Karolewska. Photo taken on 16 December 1946 by unknown war correspondent. Source USHMM Photo Archive, Photo 43033.*

Two types of photographs were taken. The first technique used was that of medical photography, when the focus was only on scarred limbs. In the second type of image Dzido, Broel-Plater, Kuśmierczuk and Karolewska were presented in a more personal way. In other words, the *Rabbits* were facing the camera regardless of whether it was a front or a profile photo, which could be understood as giving the victims a face and a voice rather than presenting them as nameless statistics. Moreover, they were dressed only in white sheets, which covered just the private

[213] All together twelve photos were taken at the Document Room in the Nuremberg court where the Doctors Trial was held. This material was classified as the evidence files assembled by the war crimes staff (non-trial documents) and was analysed by M. J Houtz. For more information see http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu (Accessed on 10 January 2012)

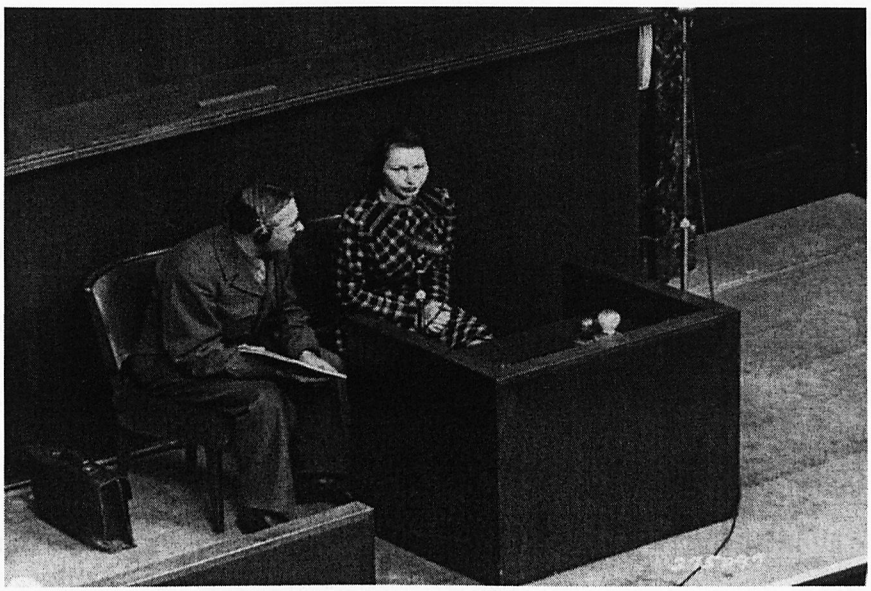
parts of their bodies. Additionally details, such as long hair, jewellery and slightly shy smiles (see photos below), regardless whether intentional or not, gave these images a personal character.




*A war crimes investigation photo of Władisława Karolewska, a survivor from Ravensbrück, who was subjected to medical experiments with sulphonamide drugs in 1942. Photo taken in Nuremberg on 17 December 1946. Source USHMM Photo Archives, Photo 78599*

Strictly speaking, the *Rabbits* were not only presented as victims and witnesses but also as attractive, young and physically fragile women, whose awfully scarred legs proved beyond any doubts that they were experimented upon. Moreover, the presence of the *Rabbits* in the courtroom as witnesses, and the content of their testimonies gave the prosecuting team an additional asset against the defendants. The experiences relating to the incarceration and forcible medical experiments described by the victims made unforgettable impressions. However, what had even greater impact was the fact that the *Rabbits* could be identified with American women who were present during proceedings. The goal of the prosecutors was not to present their

witnesses as emotionally unstable but rather the opposite as intelligent and educated women.[214]



*Władysława Karolewska, one of four Polish women to appear as prosecution witnesses, on the stand at the Doctors Trial where she was questioned by McHaney on Friday 20 December 1946. Photo taken by unknown war correspondent. Source USHMM Photo Archives, Photo 43019.*

For instance, Karolewska, who appears in the photo above, through her outfit and body posture, indicated her relatively high social background and that she brought good manners from her family home.[215] In addition, sophisticated behaviour in conjunction with eloquent communication portrayed the four *Rabbits* as extremely reliable witnesses who did not look for sympathy or compassion but for justice.[216]

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[214] Paul Weindling, 'Selection of Defendants and Witnesses at the Nuremberg Medical Trial', in Thomas Ruzicka, Michal Anděl, Martin Bojar, Detlef Brandes, Alfons Labisch and Thorsten Halling, *Mensch und Medizin in totalitären und demokratischen Gesellschaften: Beiträge zu einer tschechisch-deutschen Tagung der Universtitäten Prag und Düsseldorf* (Düsseldorf: Klartext, 2001 ), p. 99.

[215] For more information see Loewenau, 'Die "Kaninchen" von Ravensbrück', pp. 115-139.

[216] All four women had a relatively high social background. Broel-Plater, Kuśmierczuk, and Dzido were university students when the war began see http://tajchert. interia.pl/życiorysykrólików.htm. (Accessed on 10 January 2012) Moreover, for information regarding the social division and the impact of high education in the pre-war Poland see Alicja Iwańska, *Polish Intelligentsia in Nazi Concentration Camps and American Exile: A Study of Values in Crises Situations* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1998).

Meanwhile, the key perpetrators—Gebhardt, Oberheuser and Fischer—were tried by an American tribunal at the Nuremberg Medical Trial. Gebhardt mentioned in his interrogation that, when he was ordered to conduct experiments on the use of sulphonamides in the treatment of war wounds in 1942, he presumed that opinion in regard to the effectiveness of these drugs was highly exaggerated. In other words, he doubted that the experiments would be ground-breaking.[217] Yet he agreed to carry out the procedures, which led to several deaths and severe injuries for those who survived the experiments. As a result, Gebhardt was sentenced to death on 20 August 1947 and executed on 2 June 1948.[218] Oberheuser based her defence on the fact that she was mainly responsible for post-operative care of victims.[219] Fischer, on the other hand, was the only doctor who showed repentance.[220] Months before the trial, he stated:

> In conclusion I declare that I was fully aware of the fact that the instructions of Gebhardt were against every human ethic. I have carried out instructions which conflicted with my personal principles [...But] as member of SS [...] there was no other choice but obey.[221]

Whether his testimony was truthful or not, it is impossible to say. Perhaps Fischer treated the *Rabbits* without restraint from initiating inhuman behaviour towards prisoners; yet, he apparently made no effort to avoid participation in Gebhardt's cruel and unethical research. And, once involved in the experiments, he did not

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[217] NARA, M 1019/20 Interrogation of Gebhardt, 18 October 1945.
[218] There are several photos that present Gebhardt's execution. See NARA , RG 238, box 4; Mitscherlich, Mielke, *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit*, p. 281.
[219] NARA, M 1019/50 Interrogation of Herta Oberheuser, 25 September 1945; TNA, WO 309/469, Report on Herta Oberheuser.
[220] Jarosław Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi: Sprawa ofiar niemieckich eksperymentów medycznych w KL Ravensbrück', *Glaukopis* 9 (2007), p. 105.
[221] TNA, WO 309/469, Fritz Fischer's Statement, 7 August 1945.

commit any acts of sabotage, which could have saved lives, nor did he help to mitigate the negative impact of the experiments upon the health of the victims. Both Fischer and Oberheuser escaped a death sentence. Fischer was sentenced to life imprisonment. Oberheuser was given a sentence of twenty-five years in prison.[222] Despite the court conviction, they were freed after only five years.[223]

The Hamburg and the Nuremberg Trials received the steady attention of the public in Poland and abroad. The Polish newspaper *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza* published several short articles informing Polish refugees in London about the proceedings in both courts. The news from the Hamburg Trial appeared several times a week presenting topics beyond simply the testimonies of the *Rabbits*, whereas articles with reference to the proceedings in Nuremberg were concerned mainly with the suffering of Polish inmates at Ravensbrück.[224] In Poland, on the other hand, the press was controlled to a huge extent by the Communist regime and paid a great deal of attention to the Nuremberg Medical Trial. However, the motive of support given by the Polish government to the *Rabbits* case, despite how it was presented in the press, was mainly ideological. In other words, highlighting the crimes of the Nazis was a larger concern than seeking justice for Polish victims of medical experiments. The fact that the four *Rabbits* had to cover their travel expenses from Poland to Nuremberg and did not receive help regarding accommodation and food supplies in Berlin before they arrived in Nuremberg proves that they were not a priority for the Polish Military Mission in Berlin.[225] Unlike the

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[222] Mitscherlich, Mielke, *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit*, pp. 281-282

[223] According to Landsberg officers, Fischer, who worked as a doctor at the prison hospital, was a model inmate, which in fact led to his rather early release. NARA, RG 238, box 8, prison file Dr Fritz Fischer, Report written by Capt. M. Love, 23 June 1950.

[224] Examples of articles include: 'Zeznania Polki więźniarki z Ravensbrück', *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza*, London 10 December 1946, p. 1; 'Egzekucje w Ravensbrück', Ibid., London 12 December 1946, p. 4; 'Ofira nieludzkich eksperymentów', Ibid., London 21 December 1946, p. 1.

[225] 'Więźniarki z Ravensbrück jadą do Norymbergi', Ibid., London 21 February 1947, p. 4.

French who complained about the verdict of the Hamburg Trial, the Polish observers had no objections.[226] The Polish press in Great Britain did not mention the verdicts of either of the trials suggesting that final decisions of these courts were not a subject of interest of Polish refugees in the UK. However, the *Rabbits*' actions were successful to some certain extent. Thanks to their determination the Ravensbrück perpetrators were either executed or placed behind bars.

[226] For the reaction of the French to the Hamburg Trial see Weindling, *Nazi Medicine*, p. 108.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Two factors that had a fundamental impact on the immediate post-war lives of the Polish participants of the Nazi medical experiments were: the location of the camps and to which country the liberating army belonged. Therefore, Dering's journey home was relatively easy and short because he was liberated in occupied Poland by the Red Army. Polish Catholic priests who were rescued by the American soldiers at the Dachau camp received urgent medical and humanitarian help, but at the same time the process of their repatriation was interrupted by the political changes that were taking place in Poland. Most of the *Rabbits*, in contrast, were freed by the Red Army.

As mentioned in this chapter, approximately twenty-five per cent of the priests, who were used as "human guinea pigs" in experiments on phlegmon and malaria, never returned to Poland. Meanwhile, fifty-seven out of sixty-three of the *Rabbits* who survived Ravensbrück came back to Poland by the end of 1945.[227] The fact that the *Rabbits* were keener on returning to Poland, in comparison to the priests, can be interpreted in various ways. First of all, the political situation and repressions in Poland of which news spread among DPs in the American and British zones here reflected in the priests' reluctance regarding their return to Poland. The situation of the *Rabbits*, on the other hand, was quite different since the vast majority of them were spread across the Soviet zone; therefore, it is possible that they were not fully informed about the situation in Poland. Another factor that could have had a significant impact on that matter was implications of the priesthood. In other words,

[227] Those women who did not want to return, including Helena Karolewska, Zofia Baj and Maria Kamińska, walked towards the west to meet soldiers of the British or American Army after they managed to escape from the evacuation transport. Alicja Jurkowska and Maria Sokulska remained abroad after they were rescued by the Swedish Red Cross, and Janina Iwańska left Poland in 1946 with help from her French friends. http://jtajchert.w.interia.pl/zyciorysykrolikow.htm (Accessed on 21 January 2012)

the clergy had no families of their own and had lived in their parishes many of which were destroyed during the war; thus, they often had nothing to come back to. The *Rabbits* had either parents or children and husbands waiting for them back in Poland.

The new circumstances in which Polish participants of the Nazi medical experiments lived during the first few years after the war brought new challenges and struggles. Polish Catholic priests were advised not to return to Poland directly after the war, which resulted in most remaining to help Poles in DP camps through their religious service. The years that priests spent at Dachau, and the suffering they had experienced, meant that they had far better understanding of former prisoners' needs and frustrations and therefore were particularly engaged in defending Poles and fighting for their rights under the American Occupation Army. Further, Dering desperately tried to put the years spent at Auschwitz and the dozens of removed gonads of Jewish inmates behind him. However, for Dering the end of the war was only the beginning of a long struggle for freedom and the restoration of his reputation. Only several months after the liberation, Dering was forced to leave Poland. Moreover, within one year he was prosecuted twice for the same crimes; however, in both cases he was cleared of charges and released. The vast majority of the *Rabbits* who survived the war suffered from medical conditions caused by the experimental procedures and years of mistreatment they experienced at Ravensbrück. Several of them, however, despite their state of health, focused on seeking for punishment for their perpetrators and on highlighting the Nazi medical crimes to the world, in which the Allied trials in Hamburg and in Nuremberg were a great opportunity. Thanks to the *Rabbits*' detailed courtroom testimonies, Gebhardt, Schiedlausky and Rosenthal were condemned to death, while Fischer and Oberheuser served several years in prison.

# PART IV: POST-WAR LIFE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

By the early 1950s, the attention given in Poland to the issue of the medical experiments under National Socialism diminished. The *Rabbits* who testified at the Nuremberg Medical Trial returned to Poland; Władysław Dering left Brixton prison and continued to work as a physician after the British government decided that the evidence and witnesses had failed to prove that he was responsible for war crimes in Auschwitz; and the priests' suffering caused by malaria and phlegmon experiments at Dachau has never been highlighted in post-war Poland. However, the stagnation in their lives was only temporary.

In the early 1950s, the Federal German government agreed to compensate victims of Nazi medical experiments. Numerous regulations, however, resulted in creating obstacles for the victims. Thanks to determination and help of various organisations, most of the Polish priests who resided in the UK and US were compensated (albeit with relatively low single lump sums rather than pensions) within a few years. Meanwhile, the attempts by *Rabbits* resided in Poland in gaining financial compensation were unsuccessful, despite being supported by the Polish government and Polish combatant organisations. However, in the late 1950s, unexpected help came from the US. At the time, there were only fifty-three living *Rabbits* in Poland who became largely resigned that the world had forgotten about the crimes of which they were victims. However, due to the engagement of Helena Piasecka, a victim who had immigrated to the US, the topic of the *Rabbits* was reactivated. The publicity given to them by the American press, particularly by *Saturday Review*, resulted in continuation of the fight for compensation. Important

matters, such as the political and ideological differences between the Communist Poland and the Federal German government, were also at issue. After three years of intensive campaigning, the *Rabbits* were compensated; yet, the final agreement did not meet all their expectations in part because they were not given monthly pensions. Furthermore, the initial feeling of success was ruined by the Polish government's later actions.

Priests in Poland, on the other hand, have never been at the centre of attention, despite the fact that they suffered as much as the *Rabbits*, particularly those priests experimented upon by Schütz. In the early 1950s, the Polish Catholic Church attracted considerable attention from the Communist government. This, however, had a very negative character. The Communists' course of action was not as drastic as that of the Nazis as regards the limiting of the influence of the Catholic Church in Poland. The relations between the government and the Church were temporarily smoothed by signing a secret pact in 1950.[1] However, the repression continued regardless of the agreement. On 25 September 1953, the primate and Polish cardinal Józef Wyszyński was arrested and from that moment, the policy of the communist government towards the Church became one of open antagonism.[2] As a result of the political system and oppression in post-war Poland, priests as victims of Nazi medical experiments were anonymous and forgotten.

After a successful appeal against extradition to Poland to stand trial as alleged war criminal, Dering was released. The experience of nineteen months spent in Brixton prison persuaded Dering to leave Great Britain for British Somaliland where he gained a respect and a very good reputation as a physician, for which he

[1] For more details see Marian S. Mazgaj, *Church and State in Communist Poland: A History, 1944-1989* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2010), pp. 59-63.
[2] Andrzej Paczkowski, 'Polacy pod obcą i własną przemocą', in Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jean-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, Jean-Louis Margolon (eds.), *Czarna księga komunizmu: Zbrodnie, terror, prześladowania* (Warszawa: Prószyński i Spółka, 1999), p. 358.

later received an honour from the Queen. This gave him a feeling of security, and the confidence to challenge in court Leon Uris who miscounted the number of gonads removed by Dering at Auschwitz.[3] Yet, Dering's attempt to clear his name failed utterly as the impact of the victims' sense of injustice and dehumanisation caused by the sterilisation experiments was stronger than he had anticipated.

This part of the thesis analyses the later stage of lives of the selected participants of Nazi medical experiments. I will describe the attitude of the Polish government towards the Catholic Church discussing to what extent it had impact on the anonymisation of the priests as a victim group. I will elaborate on the role of the *Rabbits* in gaining compensation for victims of Nazi medical experiments in Poland. I will also present Dering's libel case, which despite all his efforts entirely ruined his reputation.

[3] Uris, *Exodus*, p. 155.

## 2. LIFE MUST GO ON

### Dering: The Libel Trial

Shortly after Dering was released from Brixton prison, he found employment at The Hospital of St. John's and St. Elisabeth, a private Catholic hospital in London.[4] However, after fifteen months, in 1950, Dering decided to move to Hargeisa in the British Protectorate of Somaliland where he worked as a senior medical officer of the Colonial Medical Service. Dering spent ten years of his life in Africa living happily with his new wife Maria and her two children from her previous marriage. On 24 March 1958, he officially became a British national. Moreover, his contribution to the colonial health care system was recognised, and after ten years of service, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire.[5] In 1960, Dering returned with his family to the UK. Shortly after, he opened a surgery that was run as a partnership in Finsbury Park in London.[6] His relatively peaceful life was about to be interrupted by the haunting memory of his alleged crimes at Auschwitz.

In 1962, Władysław Dering's reputation was again under threat due to the book *Exodus*, written by Leon Uris, an American journalist of Jewish origin. Uris had fought in the Pacific theatre of war. In 1950, he travelled to Israel. The result of his trip was the third of his books, *Exodus*, which was published in the US in 1958 and appeared in the UK a year later. Several passages out of over 600 pages made Uris famous:

> Here in Block X, Dr Wirthe [...] used women as guinea-pigs and Dr Schumann sterilized by castration and X-ray and Clauberg [...]

[4] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 73.
[5] BP, AE, Kopertoteka 283, Władysław Dering. Also see *The London Gazette*, 11 June 1960, p. 3995.
[6] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 52.

> removed ovaries and Dr Dehring performed seventeen thousand "experiments" in surgery without anaesthetic.[7]

Despite a clear misspelling of his surname, Dering believed that the novel, widely distributed in Britain, was hugely damaging to his reputation as a physician; therefore, on 21 December 1962, he sent a Statement of Claim accusing of libel Uris, publishers William Kimber & Co. and the printers Purnell & Sons.[8] In his claim, he stated that he did not perform 17,000 experimental operations on human beings without anaesthetics. Since Uris had no medical background the information in regard to medical crimes at Auschwitz had to have come from someone else's information. Dering claimed that Uris had committed an obvious inaccuracy in writing that inmates were 'sterilised by castration'.[9] At any rate, taking into consideration that in the late 1950s knowledge of the Holocaust and Nazi medical experiments was rather superficial, the information written in *Exodus* was taken as historical facts by the general public. Strongly confident, Dering was looking for justice in court. Printers of *Exodus*, aware of the potential costs that the trial could entail, sought to settle. As a result, on 3 May 1963, *The Times* published a retraction and a formal apology. Additionally, they paid £500 compensation. Leon Uris and the publishers of the book, on the other hand, decided to defend themselves in court.[10]

On 13 April 1964, court proceedings opened in London.[11] Both sides had one year to prepare for the trial. Dering, however, hugely underestimated the defendants who, without regard to expense, gathered very strong evidence and a group of twenty-two witnesses.[12] Dering was prepared to prove that what was said about him

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[7] Uris, *Exodus*, p. 155.
[8] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 16.
[9] Definitions of both terms can be found in the introduction to this chapter.
[10] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 17.
[11] Ibid., p. 23.
[12] Aitken, Aitken, *Law Makers*, p. 263.

in *Exodus* was untrue. The defence, on the other hand, aimed to divert the jury from the central claim of the plaintiff and instead focused on sufferings of victims of sterilisation experiments. To achieve this goal, they brought several former Auschwitz inmates as witnesses, who then told the jury of their dramatic past experiences. Furthermore, apart from physicians who were incarcerated at Auschwitz, practising doctors also testified, openly condemning the speed at which Dering performed excisions of testicles and ovaries and the spinal anaesthesia method that he used.[13] Meanwhile, Dering tried to present the circumstances that he found himself in as a prisoner at Auschwitz where the inmates' opinion was not taken into consideration. Uris' solicitors used the strategy of asking physicians who had never experienced the terror of a concentration camp what would they do in Dering's position.[14] As expected, the answer did not consider Dering's explanation. Dering was not only presented as an unethical doctor but also, since he did not refuse to perform surgical sterilisations and excision of gonads, it was understood that he willingly performed those procedures.[15]

Bringing before the court the Auschwitz Block 21 surgical register, which was believed by Dering to be lost, was a key moment since it was the prime evidence of his alleged crimes.[16] In that document were noted all performed sterilisations and excisions of gonads including information, such as the number of operations; the prisoner's name and number; diagnosis, which in the case of amputation resulting from a previous x-ray exposure was *casus explorativus*;[17] the procedure; the name of

[13] Although Dering was always accused of misconduct because he used spinal anaesthesia unlike Samuel who practised full narcosis, Dr Orzeszko who worked at the operation theatre in Block 21 as a surgeon stated after the war that using local and spinal anaesthesia was very common at Auschwitz because they suffered from shortage of ether. See Orzeszko, 'Relacja chirurga z obozu oświęcimskiego', p. 45.
[14] Ibid., p. 267.
[15] See ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.
[16] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 67.
[17] The terminology used in the register was explained by Dering during the trial. Ibid., pp. 71-72.

the surgeon who performed the operation; his assistant and the anaesthetic that was used.[18] Although Dering never denied that he performed operations on x-rayed prisoners, he was visibly annoyed with their number presented in the court. In addition, he claimed that any operations that were not recorded in his handwriting were not, in his understanding, conducted by him.[19] Moreover, the fact that during the time when Dering was in charge of Block 21 he operated on thousands of non-Jewish prisoners saving lives many of them was ignored by the defence.[20] Yet, the seventy-six excisions of gonads were highlighted before the court as the paramount activity of Dering at Auschwitz.[21] However, what the defence also ignored was the fact that apart from Dering there were four other Polish prisoners who were involved in the removals of testicles and ovaries, namely, Grabczyński, Ławski, Sobieszczański and Kobyliński. Instead of these men being prosecuted, they continued their careers without interruption in post-war communist Poland. Finally, according to the 'prime evidence' several victims who were mentioned by the witnesses in the court, including two girls Bella and Buena who died shortly after the operation, were in fact operated on by Grabczyński.[22]

On 6 May 1964, the jury reached a decision awarding the case to sixty-one year old Władysław Alexander Dering; however, the verdict still created a public sensation. The trial lasted eighteen days at the Queen's Bench Court II where Judge Sir Frederick Horace Lawton and a jury formed of ten men and two women heard disturbing stories from witnesses.[23] The jury compared Dering—dressed in white

[18] ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.
[19] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 67.
[20] By the time Brewda was transported to Auschwitz in September 1943 over 17,000 operations were performed at Block 21. A considerable number of these operations were conducted by Dering. Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England.*
[21] ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Aitken, Aitken, *Law Makers*, p. 263.

coat, well fed, having a high position at the Auschwitz hospital, to the Jews—who were undernourished, stripped of human rights and forcibly operated on, naturally perceived Dering, regardless of his explanations, as the perpetrator and the Jewish witnesses as true victims. Dering, like dozens of other physicians imprisoned in concentration camps, yielded to Nazi pressure and harmed through surgery many innocent inmates. The irony was that among the witnesses against Dering was Stanisław Kłodziński who assisted Helmuth Vetter in his pharmacological experiments on inmates at Auschwitz. In the end, the supposedly uncomplicated trial became a broadly publicised fight for justice by forcibly sterilised and operated on Jewish Holocaust survivors.

Dering's motive for taking legal action against Uris and the publisher of *Exodus* was lost in translation. In the eyes of the public Uris, an author who included untruthful statements in his book was perceived as a victim, and the plaintiff as an unethical doctor and perpetrator. The fact that the actual perpetrator was Horst Schumann was not emphasised enough to be taken into consideration. Dering's explanation—had he refused to execute an order in the concentration camp he would have been punished—was juxtaposed with Hautval's extraordinary behaviour. The operations conducted by Dering, in spite of the fact there were no casualties in the sense that the victims survived, were defined as experimental since they were performed in a hurry, and several cases resulted in post-surgical complications. After listening to arguments on both sides Dering was awarded one halfpenny compensation.[24] However, the £16,000 costs of the court proceedings bankrupted

[24] 'Dr Dering Libelled', *The British Medical Journal* 1 (1964), pp. 1321-1323.

him.[25] The victory that Dering aimed to achieve led to the complete ruin of his reputation. He died on 10 July 1965 in a hospital in London.[26]

## Health Issues and Financial Support

### ▪ Polish Priests in the UK and the US and their Requests for Compensation

On 26 July 1951, the hope of receiving financial support arose for the Polish refugee priests and the *Rabbits* in the UK and in US when the Federal German cabinet announced compensation provisions for victims of the Nazi medical experiments. As soon as the legislation was accepted by the Federal German Finance Ministry, the victims who resided in the US, including Polish priests from Dachau, began applying for financial compensation. However, the excitement of applicants was premature because the German government created numerous obstacles. Initially, only individual claims were accepted and so each priest had to collect his own documentation to support his case, despite the fact that lists of malaria and phlegmon victims were accessible to German authorities having been collected by the International Tracing Service based in Bad Arolsen in Germany. Further, each priest had to be examined by a German-appointed doctor in order to evaluate damage caused by the experiment to his health. That naturally delayed the submission of many applications since the number of doctors assigned to this task was limited; thus, victims waited for months for an appointment.[27]

A strict enforcement of the regulations created a paradoxical situation, when elderly applicants having been given too short notice failed to appear for their

[25] Shelley, *Criminal Experiments on Human Beings in Auschwitz*, p. 37.
[26] BP, AE, Kopertoteka 283.
[27] For more information see UNOG/SOA 417. These compensation dossiers form part of the documentation collected by Paul Weindling for the AHRC project on Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism.

appointments. Letters sent by Father Leon Michałowski to the United Nations Human Rights Division in New York prove that the sluggishness of the Federal German officers did not go unnoticed. Michałowski's claim was sent to the Federal German government via the United Nations in October 1951. Later, in a letter dated in November 1952 he expressed his frustration in words: 'I think this entire [claim] questionnaire is merely an act on the [Federal] German Government to delay as long as possible the payment due to those who have suffered so greatly'.[28] The position of Father Michałowski, a victim of both malaria and hypothermia experiments, was better than other Polish priests. He testified at the Dachau and Nuremberg Medical Trials. After nearly two years of struggling, Father Michałowski received a payment worth $2,378.12 because his application was supported by many influential individuals including the neurologist and medical expert at Nuremberg, Leo Alexander.[29] However, the vast majority of Polish priests did not have influential connections and as a result waited another six years for compensation.[30]

Neither the British nor American governments took a stand in regard to the issue of financial compensation for the victims of the Nazi medical crimes who settled in their countries, thus the victims—among them Polish Catholic priests—sought support from elsewhere. Polish clergy in the UK received significant help from British Catholic organisations, such as the *Catholic Women's League*, the *Catholic Council for Polish Welfare*, the *Anglo-Catholic Polish Association*, the *Catholic Committee for Refugees* and the *Foreign Catholic Information Service*.[31] The *Catholic Women's League* provided financial assistance in addition to moral

[28] UNOG/SOA 417/3/01 Michałowski. These compensation dossiers form part of the documentation collected by Paul Weindling for the AHRC project on Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism.
[29] Father Michałowski never received the full payment because he died several months later. See UNOG/ SO 262/2 GEN Part A: Plight of Survivors from Concentration Camps.
[30] For lists of compensated priests see Appendix 6 (phlegmon victims) and 7 (malaria victims).
[31] Bulbring, 'Post-War Refugees in Great Britain', p. 107.

support for several victims including the only *Rabbit* who settled in the UK long term, Zofia Sokulska-Kaczmarska.[32] Another organisation involved in fighting for compensation for the victims of Nazi medicine both in Europe and in the US since the early 1950s was the *Friends of the Association Nationale des Anciennes Déportées et Internées de la Résistance* (National Federation of Resistance Fighters Imprisoned and Deported and Patriots) (hereafter ADIR).[33] One person who was particularly dedicated to the cause was a vocal supporter of the Friends of the ADIR in New York, Caroline Ferriday.[34] In early 1957, Ferriday was informed by the National Catholic Welfare Conference about the very difficult situation of the Polish Catholic priests who were victims of malaria and phlegmon experiments at Dachau, and whose applications for compensation were still unsolved. As their documentation was completed, the Friends of the ADIR focused on pressing on the Federal German government to pay the compensation that they felt these victims deserved. By the middle of 1957, applications from over thirty priests had been submitted. These included Polish priests who were residing in various countries, yet outside Poland.

[32] UNOG/SO 262/2, Part A, Letter of Sokulska to Ferriday, 3 November 1957.

[33] The *Association Nationale des Anciennes Déportées et Internées de la Résistance* was founded on 4 November 1945 by former French resistance fighter who suffered during the war. The prime aim of this organisation was supporting members of resistance in need and their widow red partners if necessary. After the compensation decree of the German Federal government became valid ADIR sought for compensation application French victims of Nazi medical experiments to be submitted before the Human Rights Division of the UN. Later due to small number of applicants' victims from other countries also received ADIR's support, which meant financial payment to hundreds of victims worldwide including the US and UK. As a result, in 1950s Caroline Ferriday created *Friends of the* ADIR, which aimed to help victims in the US. Later this organisation was involved in plight for compensation for the *Rabbits* in Poland. For more information see USHMM Benjamin Ferencz and Caroline Ferriday Collections; also on organisation and achievements of the ADIR see Anne-Marie Pavillard, 'Les archives de l'Association des anciennes déportées at internées de la Résistance (ADIR) à la BDIC', *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société* 5 (2008), pp. 1-5.

[34] Caroline Ferriday was an American philanthropist. In her early years, she was an actress. During the war, she actively supported the French Resistance. She was a member of 'France Forever'. In addition, she was awarded the Legion of Honour. She died in New York where she lived almost all her life aged 87. See 'Carolyn Ferriday, Philanthropist, 87, Who Aided Poles', *The New York Times*, 27 April 1990.

Meanwhile, other victims of medical experiments who also had residence in the US submitted applications, among them one *Rabbit*, Helena Piasecka. In April 1957, Ferriday realised that victims who were already American citizens required a legal representative; therefore, she approached the New York Attorney and Counsellor in Law, Benjamin Ferencz.[35] The choice of attorney was extremely appropriate. Ferencz, of Jewish origin, was Chief Prosecutor for the United States in *The Einsatzgruppen Case*, one of the Nuremberg successor trials and was therefore well informed in regards to Nazi crimes committed in Nazi concentration camps and in occupied territories.[36] Additionally, he was actively involved in gaining compensation for Jewish forced labourers as a director general of the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization and later as a consultant to the Claims Conference and the United Restitution Organisation, which was created by German Jews who had immigrated to the UK.[37] Thus, Ferencz's contacts and experience were crucial. By November of the same year, the vast majority of compensation claims of victims who lived in the US were successfully resolved. Before that happened, each applicant was thoroughly verified.[38] Processing each request often took the German authorities a considerable time, and the money awarded was not proportional to the damage caused to the victim's health. In addition, the sums paid were not equal. For example, Father [Redacted] a malaria victim, was awarded DM 4,000 in 1954, whereas Father [Redacted], who was compensated in 1957, received only DM 2,000. [Redacted] a victim of phlegmon experiments, was given DM

[35] USHMM, RG.12.012.02-01, Letter from Benjamin Ferencz to David Apter, 15 April 1957.
[36] See www.benferencz.org (Accessed on 11 February 2011)
[37] For more details see Benjamin B. Ferencz, *Less Than Slaves: Jewish Forced Labour and the Question for Compensation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), pp. 40-46. Also Benjamin Ferencz, 'Compensating Victims of the Crimes of War', in Heikelina Verrijn Stuart, Marlise Simons, Benjamin Ferencz and Antonio Cassese (eds.), *The Prosecutor and the Judge: Benjamin Ferencz and Antonio Cassese, Interviews and Writings* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2010), pp. 101-111.
[38] See UNOG/ SO 262/2 GEN Part A, Father Leon Michałowski. Information from project records 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism'

18,000 in 1954 and Father [Redacted] who was also experimented by Schütz, had to wait over three years to receive DM 2,000.[39]

Priests who lived in the UK took a slightly different approach to applying for compensation and, in some respects, were more successful. Similar to victims in America, the majority of them applied via the UN and were supported by the Friends of the ADIR. However, they had additional assistance from the Legal Commission of the Polish Association of Ex-Political Prisoners of German Prisons and Concentration Camps, which was formed to represent Poles from the UK.[40] A solicitor named Mieczysław Chmielewski was particularly committed to the cause. He paid countless visits to Germany negotiating compensation with representatives of the Federal government. However, Chmielewski's focus was on winning compensation not only for victims of medical experiments but also for all Poles who were previously incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps. In the end, he was successful only to a certain extent. In any case, many Polish priests perceived Chmielewski as the only person who could help them in their struggle for compensation. As in the 1950s the German Federal Government processed only individual applications, and several priests chose Chmielewski to represent their interests in Bonn. The applicants continued to submit their claims until the end of 1950s. For instance, Father [Name redacted] victim of phlegmon experiments, contacted Chmielewski only in 1959.[41] Father [Redacted] who was a victim of Schilling's malaria research, was very determined in his attempts to earn compensation.

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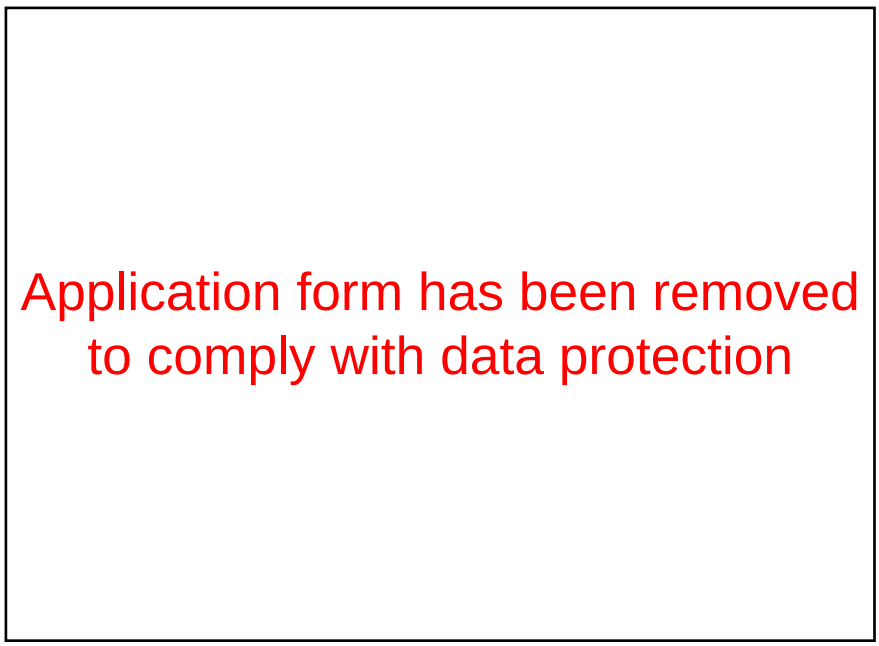
[39] Information extracted from the database of a project 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism'.

[40] A substantial correspondence between the Polish Association of Ex-Political Prisoners of German Prisons and Concentration Camp and ADIR and the UN is available at the UN Archives in Geneva. UNOG/SO 262. See project files 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism'.

[41] PI, Col. 291, Chmielewski, folder [Redacted]




*Evidence presented by* [Redacted] *as a part of his compensation claim. Source PI, Col. 291, Fol.* [Redacted]

He not only provided much evidence of his incarceration and participation in experiments, but also of his continued need for financial support (see photo above). He was granted DM 4,000 official compensation on 17 June 1953 under the victims of medical experiments scheme. In the end, Chmielewski on [Redacted] 's behalf also managed to negotiate a monthly pension of nearly £400 from the moment of imprisonment until 30 June 1960, the date Father [Redacted] was granted the pension. The German government owed him a total of DM 56,376.88.[42] Similar pensions were granted to other Polish refugees in the UK; among them were Father [Name redacted] (phlegmon victim) and Father [Name redacted] (malaria victim).[43]

[42] PI, Col. 291, folder [Name redacted]
[43] PI, Col. 291, folder [Name redacted] folder [Name redacted]

- **The *Rabbits* in Poland and their Requests for Compensation**

By the decision of the Federal German Finance Ministry, Polish victims who resided in Poland were excluded from compensation as there were no political relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and Poland; consequently, claims submitted by the *Rabbits* living in Poland in the 1950s were rejected on these grounds.[44] The Polish government, responsible for representing the interests of the Polish victims of the Nazi medical crimes, did not protest against the decision. Thus, the victims were forced to rely on aid guaranteed by the Polish government, as well as, on assistance from other countries.[45] However, the traumatic story of the *Rabbits*, who as victims of extremely brutal medical experiments were deprived of any compensation, moved numerous people abroad—particularly in the US.[46]

In 1958, three individuals, Norman Cousins[47] Caroline Ferriday, and Benjamin Ferencz, established the *Ravensbrück Lapins Project*, which was devoted to fighting for justice on behalf of the *Rabbits*. Ferriday, who had broad contacts in Europe and who was familiar with the issue of compensations, acted on behalf of victims of the Nazi medical experiments. Ferencz was the attorney responsible for

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[44] The precise explanation to this decision was the fact that because of lack of diplomatic representation it was impossible to verify the evidences collected by the Polish side. Ruchniewicz, *Polskie zabiegi o odszkodowania niemieckie*, p. 100.

[45] In March 1947 Koło Klubu Ravensbück (the Ravensbrück Club) received beds and mattresses from Swiss funders. See Archiwum Akt Nowych (hereafter AAN) the Archives of Modern Records, Collection 415, Polski Związek Byłych Więźniów Niemieckich Więzień i Obozów Koncentracyjnych, box 41.

[46] In 1956, Iwańska wrote a letter in which she informed Ferriday that her health was deteriorating, and therefore she was not able to fight for justice. The German Finance Ministry rejected any further requests for financial assistance submitted by Iwańska because she already received compensation of DM 25,000 in 1952. USHMM, RG.12.012.02-02, Letter from Nina Iwańska to Ferriday, 5 November 1956.

[47] Norman Cousins was born on 24 June 1915 in Union City. After graduating from high school, he studied at the Teachers College of Columbia University, and in the meantime; he worked as an education writer for the New York Evening Post. In 1940, he began working for *Saturday Review*. During the war, he was a member of the editorial board of the Office of War Information's Overseas Bureau. He left *Saturday Review* in 1972. Later he moved to California where he lived for over a decade. Cousins died on 30 November 1990. See Eric Pace, 'Norman Cousins is Dead at 75; Led Saturday Review for Decades', *New York Times*, 2 December 1990.

the legal side of the issue, such as negotiating with the UN, the Federal German Finance Ministry and the Polish Ambassador in the US. On the other hand, Cousins, as a well-known journalist, kept the public well informed. Yet, the project's initiative came mainly from Ferriday. In 1957 in New York, she met one of the *Rabbits*, Helena Piasecka, who presented the story of experimental operations performed on Polish women at Ravensbrück and illustrated the dramatic situation of the *Rabbits* in Poland who at that time were still waiting for compensation.[48]

Meanwhile, Ferriday was impressed by Norman Cousins' *Hiroshima Maidens Project*, thanks to which a group of twenty-four Japanese women were brought to the US to undergo plastic surgery free-of-charge to minimise skin defects caused by the atomic bomb.[49] Consequently, Ferriday contacted the medical consultant of the *Hiroshima Maidens Project*, William Hitzig[50], who in turn contacted Cousins. As a result, in the middle of 1958, the first meeting between Cousins and Ferriday took place, during which she presented all gathered documentation about medical experiments, post-war trials, as well as the *Rabbits*' personal profiles and their medical files. It was the beginning of the *Ravensbrück Lapins Project*.[51]

The first major decision of the Lapins' Project was to send Cousins to Poland where he had a chance to personally acquaint himself with the *Rabbits*' situation. Before he arrived in Warsaw, he had planned to meet with Jadwiga Dzido-Hassa,

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[48] Norman Cousins, 'Dialogue in Warsaw', *Saturday Review*, 28 June 1958.
[49] Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi', pp. 95-96.
[50] William Hitzig was born in December 1904 in Austria. He came to the United States with his parents as a child. He graduated from the Columbia College in 1928 and from Cornell University Medical College in 1932. Later he began working at the Mount Sinai Medical Center where he was employed for nearly 50 years. Hitzig specialised in cardiovascular diseases. He died in 1983 after a stroke aged 78. For more information, see Ronald Sullivan, 'Dr. William M. Hitzig, 78, Aided War Victims', *New York Times*, 30 August 1983.
[51] The project consisted of many important members, among them were Leo Alexander and Aka Chojnacki who was mentioned under her maiden name Kołodziejczyk in part 2 of this dissertation. See Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi', pp. 96, 106-107.

whose name he knew from the Nuremberg Medical Trial files, and with the representatives of the *Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację*[52] (the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy). The latter officially represented the interests of war survivors including former inmates of concentration camps and also victims of Nazi medical experiments. Establishing contact with the ZBOWiD was crucial since this organisation was closely affiliated with the Communist regime. During the meeting with two *Rabbits*—Jadwiga Dzido-Hassa and Stanisława Czajkowska-Bafia—Cousins was informed that the average monthly financial support that the *Rabbits* were receiving from the Polish government was equivalent to $20.[53] He then realised how urgent the help needed by the *Rabbits* was. The next day, another meeting took place, this time at the ZBOWiD headquarters. Cousins' offer to bring the *Rabbits* to the US for medical treatment was seen as highly beneficial by the organisation. Thus, the next step was organising a medical commission to examine the *Rabbits*, to choose how many of them were well enough to travel, and what kind of medicaments were urgently needed. The final selection of participants for treatment supported by the *Ravensbrück Lapins Project* was made by American medical specialists in Warsaw who consulted on their decision with several Polish physicians.[54]

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[52] Związek Bojowników o Wolność i Demokrację (hereafter ZBOWiD) (the Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy) is a combatant organisation which was created in 1949 as a result of combining several other organisations. ZBOWiD was under strong influence and control of the communist party until 1989. People associated with that organisations were soldiers who fought during the Great and the Second World War, the Jewish veterans' organisation but also communists and officers of the Secret Service of the Communist government. Members of the resistance movement were excluded until 1956. Among high ranking members were communist prime ministers including Józef Cyrankiewicz, Edward Gierek, Władysław Gomułka, and many more. The aim of the organisation was recruiting members, financial support of combatants and their families, collecting documents related to the military aspect of World War Two, building statues, and organising celebrations. In 1990, ZBOWID was renamed into The Polish Organisation of Combatants and Former Political Prisoners. See *Nowa Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2004), vol. 8, p. 861.

[53] At that time, the minimum salary per hour in the US was $1. See Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi', p. 112.

[54] Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi', p. 112.

After Cousins returned to New York he presented a report to other members of the project and published an article in *Saturday Review* in which he informed the public about the dreadful experiences of the *Rabbits* and about the Lapins project, asking for contributions.[55]

*Jadwiga Dzido-Hassa being examined in September 1958 by Dr Hitzig in Warsaw before the trip to America. The Photo was taken for Dzido's medical report that was later submitted for the Ravensbrück Lapins Project. Source USHMM Archives, RG-12.012, box 135 Benjamin Ferencz Collection.*

On 25 September 1958, the medical representatives of the *Ravensbrück Lapins Project*, led by Hitzig, arrived in Warsaw where along with a group of Polish doctors they examined over thirty *Rabbits* (see photo above).[56] Once all the paper work was completed, the *Rabbits* were ready for their trip to New York.

On 18 December 1958, twenty-seven Polish victims of Nazi medical experiments at Ravensbrück arrived in New York. An additional eight *Rabbits* flew to the US in March 1959. Health issues and family problems prevented several of the *Rabbits* from leaving Poland. Among the thirty-five selected there were three women

[55] The *Ravensbrück Lapins Project* was supported entirely by private organisations and individuals. Cousins, 'Dialogue in Warsaw', *Saturday Review*, 28 June 1958.
[56] Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi', p. 113. Also Erica Anderson, 'Nazi Guinea Pigs', *Look*, 17 March 1959.

who appeared on the list due to pressure from the ZBOWiD even if none of the *Rabbits* remembered them from Ravensbrück. The three 'fake *Rabbits*' did not board the return flight and remained in the US.[57] The Lapins' project was supported by many readers of *Saturday Review* who, by October 1958, had sent to the newspaper a total of $6,000. Many Americans tried to contribute whatever they were able to donate. Clothes for the *Rabbits* were prepared by a New York shop *Lane Bryant* and the magazine *Seventeen. Rogers of Boston* and the *Converse Rubber Company* gave shoes for the *Rabbits*. The return flights were a gift from *Pan American World Airways*.[58] In addition, the *Rabbits*' everyday expenses were covered by the *National Catholic Welfare Conference*. Just before Christmas, all arrivals were examined at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. After the exams they were divided into groups and sent to stay with private families in several cities in America.[59] At the end of their stay in the US, the *Rabbits* took part in a trip, which aimed to present the diversity of the country. They travelled from California through Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Tennessee, and finished their journey in Washington DC.

Overall, the *Ravensbrück Lapins Project* was considered a great success. First of all, several of the *Rabbits* were operated on, while others received optical or dental treatment. But more importantly, they left the US happy that there were people who were capable of offering help, yet not asking for anything in return. Łotocka said after her return to Poland:

> Many people with whom we lived, or had contact with showed us countless signs of friendship, which will remain in my heart forever. I've got my faith in people back.[60]

[57] Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi', p. 123.
[58] Ibid., pp. 122-123.
[59] 'The Lapins in America', *Saturday Review*, 13 June 1959.
[60] Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi', p. 124.

However, not all the aims of the *Ravensbrück Lapins Project* were achieved. Norman Cousins decided to use his influence to involve powerful Americans to pressure the government in Bonn to compensate the *Rabbits*. The first attempt was to illustrate the issue in *Saturday Review* through which the public could follow the course of the *Rabbits* visit. On 27 February 1959, the Federal German government acknowledged that the attention being given to the issue could no longer be ignored. The German Ambassador to the US then sent a letter to Cousins in which he declared the wish of his government to support each of the *Rabbits* who was still in America with $1,000.[61] A few days after the *Rabbits*' departure from New York International Airport, Anderson Field, the German ambassador sent a letter to *Saturday Review* informing it that the government of the Federal Republic had taken steps to find a solution to the issue of the Polish victims of Nazi medical experiments. In the letter was enclosed a cheque for $27,000 to cover the expenses of the medical treatment which the *Rabbits* received in America; however, this sum was lower than that previously mentioned.[62] At that time, it was seen as a success. Cousins wrote in his next article that in his opinion it was a sign that the *Rabbits* could be granted compensation and monthly pensions, which would be a happy prospect for the future. However, the future proved that he was too optimistic. In the end, the *Rabbits* refused to accept the offer of $27,000 because they were afraid that the German government would consider it a final payment, with the problem finally being solved.[63]

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[61] The German side did research on Rabbits in the US and came to conclusion that only 30 out of 35 were qualified for any financial aid. See USHMM, RG.12.012.02-01, Chronological Outline of Steps Taken by the Ravensbrueck Lapins and Groups Acting on Their Behalf to Obtain Indemnification from the Federal Republic of Germany, March 1960.

[62] USHMM, RG.12.012.02-01, Norman Cousins: German Promises and Fulfilment concerning Compensation to Victims of Nazi Medical Experiments, Memorandum to the Delegates of the American-German Conference, Washington DC, 16-19 February 1961.

[63] USHMM, RG.12.012.02-01, Norman Cousins: German Promises and Fulfilment concerning Compensation to Victims of Nazi Medical Experiments.

Several months later, the pressure of the *Ravensbrück Lapins Project* forced German politicians to re-determine their position regarding the *Rabbits*' request. On 13 July 1960, the Vice-President of the Bundestag, Carlo Schmidt, sent a letter to Ferencz in which he stated that the German government was aware of the urgent need to solve the *Rabbits*' problem.[64] A month later, on 8 August, the German government published an official statement in which it was declared that their government was progressing in discussions with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in order to find the best option of granting compensation to the *Rabbits*.[65] The *Ravensbrück Lapins Project*, as a representative of the *Rabbits* in their compensation negotiations, stayed in a regular contact with the Polish Ambassador in the US in order to follow the decisions made by the Polish government, and to be updated in regard to the relations between the Polish government and *Polski Czerwony Krzyż*[66] (the Polish Red Cross).

On 26 January 1961, Cousins was informed by Ferencz about the outcome of his meeting with the Polish Ambassador that had taken place in Washington DC. Dobrosielski presented the offer of the Federal German Government, which was sent to the representatives of the PCK by the ICRC. The Germans offered to pay between DM 3,000 and DM 25,000 to each of the *Rabbits* depending on individual damage to their health caused by the experiments. Ferencz categorically refused to accept this offer on behalf of the *Ravensbrück Lapins Project* saying that the proposal was not commensurate with their injuries.[67] In March 1961, another meeting with Dobrosielski took place. This time the Polish Ambassador presented a further offer from the German government wherein the *Rabbits* were to receive between DM

[64] USHMM, RG.12.012.02-01, Carlo Schmidt to Benjamin Ferencz, 13 July 1960.
[65] USHMM, RG.12.012.02-01, Norman Cousins: German Promises and Fulfilment concerning Compensation to Victims of Nazi Medical Experiments.
[66] Hereafter PCK.
[67] USHMM, RG.12.012.02-01, Letter from Benjamin Ferencz to Norman Cousins, 26 January 1961.

25,000 and DM 40,000 each. Ferencz suggested that every *Rabbit* should be granted DM 25,000 as compensation for "moral damage" plus up to DM 40,000 for the side effects of performed experiments.

Requests by Ferencz and Cousins on behalf of the *Rabbits* were very generous but unrealistic. They were forced to negotiate not only with Bonn but also with Warsaw in order to secure guarantees that the payments would be exchanged according to the best rate, and that they would not be taxed.[68] In the end, those multilateral negotiations were only successful to a limited extent. Unlike the priests in the UK, the Americans failed to obtain the most important goal, which was that of a monthly pension for each of the *Rabbits*.[69]

[68] USHMM, RG.12.012.02-01.
[69] For complete list of the compensated Rabbits see Appendix 5.

## 3. NAZI MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS: THE FINAL CLOSURE

### Polish Priests in Poland: Victims of Communist Propaganda

The vast majority of liberated Polish Catholic priests, including about 150 "human guinea pigs", returned to Poland within few years after the war. Regardless that the news of the political turmoil that took place in post-war Poland between the Soviet-supported Communists and the right wing faction, which was closely connected to the Home Army, reached priests months prior to their return. As a result, the former prisoners shared concerns, which were not by any means exaggerated. The Red Army began proceeding into the territory of the former Second Polish Republic in the beginning of 1944. Using liberation as a pretext, the Soviets enforced the establishment of a Communist regime in addition to a ubiquitous terror that was characterised by massive arrests and executions of opponents including thousands of soldiers from the Home Army, as well as devastating plunder and rape of women.[70] By the middle of 1944, the Communists practically dominated the Polish political scene. Subsequently, on 28 June 1945, the Provisional Government of National Unity was proclaimed, which was recognised by the Allies.[71]

Several months after the war was over, the Polish government began its propaganda campaign to convince Poles abroad to return to their country. Various tactics were employed to trick DPs into coming back, including representing the Catholic faith as a factor that consolidated society. In December 1945, the left wing newspaper *Gazeta Ludowa* published the Christmas memorandum of the anti-Catholic president of Poland, Bolesław Bierut, in which he assured that:

[70] Paczkowski, 'Polacy pod obcą i własną przemocą', pp. 349-351.
[71] Richard Sakwa, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 272-273.

> [Polish government] will build a sovereign Poland, and through a policy of alliance with the Soviet Union, the US, the UK, and all peace-loving countries, we will ensure the safety and integrity of our borders.[72]

This statement, however, was just an empty promise—at that time the ideological differences between the Allies became obstacles in guaranteeing further co-operation. In general, the Polish government always paid particular attention to the activity of Polish DPs and soldiers of the Second Corps. However, the beginning of 1946 brought concentrated focus on the issue of repatriations of Polish nationals. Criticising both 'enemies' of the political system in Poland and the opponents of governmental repatriations became ever more evident. Moreover, the government's aim was to regularly inform the Polish public about the antisocialist attacks made from abroad. Thus, General Anders and the Second Corps were constantly accused of anti-government activity of which the aim was to prevent Poles from coming back.[73] These allegations against opponents of repatriation were regularly placed before the American and British occupation armies by representatives of the Polish Repatriation Committee that had been created and supported by the Communist government.[74] In addition, Polish government began publishing the newspaper *Repatriant*, which on several occasions claimed that the intention of the West was exploitation of Poles as cheap labourers. It was another attempt by the Communists to convince Poles abroad that they would be better off in Poland.

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[72] 'Przemówienie wigilijne Prezydenta Bolesława Bieruta', *Gazeta Ludowa*, 27 December 1945. Translation by Aleksandra Loewenau

[73] Kazimierz Sidor who was in charge of the Polish Military Mission Italy claimed that Gen. Anders spent great sums of money supporting anti-communist propaganda. For more information see *Gazeta Ludowa*, 19 February 1946.

[74] Examples of reporting and complaining letters addressed to the American Occupation Army can be found at the UN Archives in New York. See UN, S-0406, box 9, Protective Officer, File 9 and 10, Anti-repatriation Propaganda 28.02.1946-13.06.1947.

The war-time destructions on Polish territory encompassed sacred buildings as well as priests' lives and, to a limited extent, nuns murdered under the Nazis. According to estimates, during World War Two, Poland lost thirty per cent (2,412) of clergy including: 1,832 diocesan priests; 375 convent priests and 205 monks.[75] Out of these 799 died in Dachau. Additionally, 289 nuns lost their lives.[76] Moreover, hundreds of chapels and convents were bombarded and others were converted into restaurants, motion picture theatres, clubs and arsenals.[77]

Within several months after the war, Poland struggled with immense problems: famine; shortage of accommodation due to massive destruction of major cities and infectious diseases. Hundreds of thousands of DPs, forced labourers and soldiers of the Polish Army were coming back and the majority of them needed urgent help. The Catholic Church provided food supplies, shelters and medical assistance to those in need of help. In addition, the charitable organisation *Caritas Polska* (Caritas Poland) continued the mission. Moreover, with the help of returning clergymen the Church managed to improve the morale of society and highlighted the positive future for Poland.[78]

Similar to their situation within DP camps, priests who were victims of the Nazi medical experiments were not the object of any particular interest of either the government or society. Perhaps it would not be right to say that their war-time suffering was forgotten by their parishioners; however, the issues which the Church had to deal with shortly after the war—such as helping Poles in need—meant that

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[75] In 1945 there were 10,344 priests in Poland, which means that one clergyman served 2,063 believers. A year later, the number of priests increased to 10,528. Furthermore, by the end of 1948, 23 new seminaries were established with 1,754 students. See Hanna Diskin, *The Seeds of Triumph: Church and state in Gomułka Poland* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), p. 11.
[76] Henryk Dominiczak, *Organy bezpieczeństwa PRL w walce z Kościołem Katolickim 1944-1990. W świetle dokumentów MSW* (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Bellona, 2000), p. 26.
[77] Mazgaj, *Church and State in Communist Poland*, p. 6.
[78] See also Sabrina P. Ramet, *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1989), pp. 241-247.

recording priests' experiences was not a priority. The *Rabbits* were the centre of attention, pictures were taken and interviews were written. Priests, at the same time, struggled with the political system for which any religion was unnecessary and the Catholic Church—as one of the most influential and powerful institutions in Poland—was perceived as an enemy of the state.[79] In other words, while the Communist government supported the *Rabbits*' case in their political disputes against the German Federal government, clergy were neglected as victims. Nonetheless, the priests did receive compensation in the 1960s as a result of the *Rabbits*' campaign. However, priests' sufferings were given less expression, and at the same time, were less known. Several testimonies were published in newspapers, such as *Tygodnik Powszechny*, where priests tried to present and perhaps even understand what happened to them during their imprisonment.[80] Anticlerical propaganda, and the fact that the Catholic press has never been read by the masses, caused their stories to be less publicised than those of the *Rabbits*. The fact that out of 150 priests who were experimented on at Dachau and who returned to Poland only Father Majdański wrote a memoir shows that they did not create a group of any kind, which would explain the relatively limited knowledge about their experiences in Polish historiography of the German occupation.[81]

**Dering's Damaged Reputation**

During the libel trial of Dering v. Uris, two witnesses were particularly valuable to the court: Dr Adélaïde Hautval and Dr Alina Brewda-Białostocki. Dr Hautval was

[79] Many priests were arrested and sentenced for crimes they did not commit. For instance, in December 1946, Father Stefański and Father Jaworski were condemned to death for alleged robbery. See 'Księża pod sądem', *Dziennik Polski i Dziennik Żołnierza*, 28 December 1946.
[80] Father Marain Michalski, 'Księża za Drutami' *Tygodnik Powszachny*, Kraków 26 August 1945.
[81] (To compare:) Półtawska's diary *And I Am Afraid of My Dreams* was first published in 1962, whereas Father Majdański's *Będziecie moimi świadkami* was published in 1987.

born to French Protestant parents. She graduated in medicine from Strasbourg University in 1934. During the German occupation, she repeatedly protested to the Gestapo against the treatment of Jews in France. She even wore a band with the words 'Friend of Jews' and for that reason, in January 1943, she was sent to Birkenau.[82] Shortly after her arrival at the camp, she was offered the position of assistant to Dr Eduard Wirths at Block 10 at Auschwitz. Firstly, Hautval agreed, as she explained, to find out what kind of experiments Wirths was performing. However, she later refused to assist him in his research and was not punished.[83] Her sworn statement proved that Dering could disobey Schumann's orders. Hautval's bravery has been presented as exemplary. However, according to post-war testimonies, including Hautval's autobiography, she assisted Wirths in a surgical removal of the cervix on four different occasions. In addition, she assisted Samuel in removal of ovaries of Jewish inmates.[84] Moreover, it is important to mention that her nationality and her profession could be seen an advantage in the concentration camp. French and other West European inmates, unlike Jews, Sinti and Roma and even Slavs, were in general treated better in concentration camps. Furthermore, Hautval came to Birkenau at a time when there was an urgent need for medical staff, and therefore she was treated as one of them from the start. It meant better food, one's own bed in Block 10, cleaning products and other privileges.

Another important witness who gave very strong evidence against Dering was Dr Brewda who was a former university colleague of Dering's wife. Brewda's remarkable care for the sterilised and operated on women was mentioned by all

[82] Minney, *I Shall Fear No Evil*, p. 137.
[83] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 220.
[84] Schleswig-Holsteines Landesarchiv, Clauberg-Verfahren, Nr. 16459, Sworn Statement of Ima Spanjaard, 16 March 1956. Also see Adélaïde Hautval, *Médecine et crimes contre l'humanité*, pp. 90-92.

female victims in the courtroom.[85] She presented a very negative portrait of Dering during the trial. Meanwhile, Dering tried to convince the jury that Dr Brewda had aimed to 'finish' him because of private issues they had in the past.[86] This attempt was ignored by the jury. In regards to Dering's accusation Brewda clarified that she had never belonged to any party, and had nothing to do with the Polish Secret Service. Moreover, to strengthen her position, she said that she had immigrated to the UK because she did not want to live in a Communist country.[87] She also claimed that she did not remember saying anything negative about Dering.[88] However, Brewda was not entirely honest during the trial. In fact, in October 1945 upon receiving a personal recommendation from the prime minister of Communist Poland, Józef Cyrankiewicz, she was employed at the clinic of the Polish Secret Service where she worked until she left Poland in February 1947.[89] Brewda signed the 'loyalty declaration' to the Secret Service in 1945 and again in 1947.[90] Moreover, Brewda gave unreliable evidence in regard to Dering's activity at Auschwitz on several occasions. In November 1946, during the Auschwitz trial Brewda testified that she was present at the theatre when Dering removed the ovaries of twelve Greek girls.[91] The truth was that Dering operated on in total five women.[92] In March 1947, she repeated previous accusations before the Polish Delegate to the United Nations War Crimes Commission adding that Dering performed 17,000 experimental operations. In addition, Brewda claimed that 'mortality after Dering's operation was

[85] Hill, Williams, *Auschwitz in England*, p. 220.
[86] Ibid., p. 98.
[87] Ibid., p. 140.
[88] Ibid., p. 199.
[89] IPN, BUiAD, 07721/860 Alina Brewda, Rekomendacje, 12 October 1945; Przebieg służby.
[90] IPN, BUiAD, 07721/860, Zobowiązanie, 22 October 1945; Zobowiązanie, 5 February 1947. In addition, while gathering materials against Dering in November 1945, Brewda took out part of the documents held at the Warsaw Medical Chamber Archives signing the register as '*Podpułkownik Dr Alina Brewda pracownik Urzędu Bezpieczeństwa*' (Secret Service Officer).
[91] IPN, OKBZHwK, GK 174/179, Witness Testimony by Dr Alina Brewda, 19 November 1946, p. 65.
[92] See ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder157.

100 per cent'.[93] De facto, the exact figure, 17,000 experimental operations, was used by Uris in *Exodus*. Similar evidence was given by Dr Brewda in 1956 in Kiel during preparations for Prof. Carl Clauberg's trial[94], and in 1957 in Israel where she met the eight remaining female victims of excisions of ovaries who testified against Dering in London in 1964.

An aspect that worked as an advantage for the defence but was not given enough consideration during the trial was the position of the Polish government towards Władysław Dering. It was broadly emphasised that his name appeared on a wanted criminals list in the late 1940s', and that Dering was in the courtroom only because the Polish government had failed to produce evidence strong enough to extradite him to stand trial in Poland.[95] Also, thanks to the cooperativeness of the Polish government, the operation book from Block 21—the most important evidence—was made accessible during the case, yet was also guarded by a government officer at all times. Therefore, Poland, regardless of its communist regime, was seen as a country that had complied with the rule of law.[96] However, it seems unusual that in Poland one doctor, who conducted excisions of gonads of Jewish prisoners, was seen as perpetrator while other physicians also involved in performing the same medical procedures continued with their careers. Finally, Grabczyński, who worked with Dering at the operation theatre and confirmed all his words, was denied a visa by the Polish government and could not give any additional

[93] Brewda said 'I saw with my own eyes how, within 2, 5 hours, Dering operated on twelve girls, formerly X-rayed by Dr. Schumann, removing their left ovaries'. For the whole testimony see TNA, TS 58/744, Statement by Alina Brewda before Marian Muszkat London 29 March 1947, pp. 2.
[94] WL, 1185/12/1.
[95] In October 1945, disciplinary investigations in regard to Dr Dering's person began before the Warsaw Medical Chamber. In the meantime, a separate investigation was initiated by the government of Poland. For more information about witness's calls and receipt in reference to borrowing personal files from the chamber's archives signed by Dr Alina Brewda as a Secret Service officer see BL, Physician's Files, Władysław Dering, 2/1/1388.
[96] On 23 April 1964, the Polish parliament passed a resolution according to which war crimes cannot be barred. See *Życie Warszawy*, 23 April 1964.

statements in Dering's defence. Those deliberate actions evidently worsened Dering's chances to clear his name. Further, dozens of letters of support written by Dering's patients were left unnoticed.

In addition, after Dering's death, historians, psychologists and survivors published quotations taken out of context, unfavourable comments in reference to Dering, and quotations from fictional books presenting them as facts in regard to Dering's activity at Auschwitz. Hermann Langbein, who was present in the courtroom as a witness during the libel trial, presented several inaccuracies in his publications. According to his information, Dering escaped from Poland and hid in the British African colonies in 1945.[97] He used quotations from Leon Uris' fictional book *QB VII* and presented them as facts stating that Dering's first wife divorced him after discovering what he had done at Auschwitz, and that his second wife, after reading *Exodus*, forced him to sue Uris for libel.[98] Langbein concluded that Dering 'did not refuse, for he was an anti-Semite and the experiments were being made on Jewish women and men [and he] participated in the human experiments with all his strength'.[99] Robert Lifton, for instance, imagined the profile of Dering according to his own judgement. Presenting the issue of phenol injections Lifton stated for example, 'I am inclined to believe the latter version' by which he meant a testimony of Samuel Steiberg against Dering.[100] Lifton quoted on several occasions Brewda's testimony from 1947 as comments of three different witnesses, giving an impression that he gathered statements of several persons: he influenced a great deal of

[97] Langbein, *People in Auschwitz*, p. 245.
[98] Ibid., p. 223.
[99] Ibid., p. 222.
[100] Lifton, *Nazi Doctors*, p. 246.

subsequent scholarship although this portrayal of Dering was misleading. Lifton also copied several statements from Langbein.[101]

Despite the fact that he won the libel case, Dering was the greater loser whose reputation has never recovered. Moreover, testimonies by witnesses and victims, including Brewda, [Redacted] and Jakob Skurnic, proof that a pattern has emerged attributing brutal operations to Dering when he did not carry them out.[102] Two aspects contributed to it. First, the determination of the Polish government and Brewda to put him on trial was decisive. Second, the fact was that in 1964 the sterilisation victims were still waiting for those responsible for their suffering to be punished. Clauberg died unexpectedly in his prison cell on 9 August 1957 before his trial began and Schumann was still untraceable at that point.[103] Thus, Dering, regardless of being an Auschwitz prisoner, was held responsible for the x-ray sterilisation experiments and consequential excision of gonads. In addition, the racial aspect dominated the defence strategy against Dering. The court was swayed by his alleged anti-Semitism, which, according to the defence, impacted on his behaviour towards the Nazis and Jews at Auschwitz.

[101] Lifton took as true fact quotations from the fictional novel *QB VII*. Ibid., p. 248.
[102] For Skurnik's testimony see Gene Church, *'80629': A Mengele Experiment* (Richardson, Tex.: S. K. Damon Publisher Co., 1986). There are many inaccuracies in this biography.
[103] Schumann's trial began on 23 September 1970 but was interrupted by his simulation of poor health. On 14 April 1971, the verdict was handed down. During seven months of proceedings, the prosecutors focused on Schumann's activity in T-4 centres and did not have a chance to question him regarding the accusation that he sterilised at least 180 inmates at Auschwitz. After spending six years in custody, on 29 July 1972, Schumann was released on the grounds of ill health. His cell companion claimed that Schumann drank his own blood and then forced himself to vomit simulating that way severe blood loss. Furthermore, by drinking a lot of coffee and flushing his medicine down the toilet, he was able to increase his blood pressure. Despite the protests of, for instance, Simon Wiesenthal, Schumann never appeared in court again Schumann lived as a free and healthy man for another eleven years. He died on 5 May 1982 at the age of 77. See Sterkowicz, *Lekarze-mordercy spod znaku swastyki*, pp. 155-157.

**The *Rabbits'* Suffering: A Bargaining Chip in the Political Game**

On 22 June 1961, during a discussion between members of the Federal German government, the decision was finally made to compensate victims of the Nazi medical experiments who lived in countries with which the Federal Republic had no official political relations.[104] The Federal German Finance Ministry agreed to distribute to the victims DM 5 million in the form of single instalments, each not exceeding DM 25,000.[105] Earlier it had been decided that applications from victims of other experiments from different camps should also be considered. In addition, the procedures agreed during several months' negotiations, applications were supposed to be submitted to the German Finance Ministry by the International Committee of the Red Cross with the cooperation of the PCK. The engagement of the Polish side, apart from dealing with the applicants, also involved collecting all available data in reference to the Nazi medical experiments. In the middle of the 1960s, a considerable number of people applied claiming that they were victims of experiments that were not listed at the Nuremberg Trials. As a result, this list was extended to include, for instance, sterilisation experiments performed at Auschwitz.[106] Apart from the Polish Red Cross, two other organisations were closely involved in the proceedings: ZBOWiD that made sure that the applications were filled in correctly and *Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce* (GKBZHwP)[107] (the Main Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland)

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[104] Ruchniewicz, *Polskie zabiegi o odszkodowania niemieckie*, p. 126.
[105] Ibid., p. 128.
[106] Ibid., p. 129.
[107] Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce (the Main Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Poland) was created in 1949 from Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Niemieckichw Polsce (the Main Commission to Investigate German Crimes in Poland) which was established in 1945. The main aims of the GKBZHwP were collecting documents, testimonies, and other materials in relation to Nazi crimes conducted in Poland during the Second World War. Another very important aspect of the activities taken by the commission was trying criminal including Germans, Polish collaborators, and many more. On 31 July 1990, the Polish parliament passed a resolution according to which the *Instytut Pamięi Narodowej* (the Institute of National Remembrance) was established that

interviewed applicants and sent them for further medical examination, while the Polish Red Cross requested additional documents from Bad Arolsen and the completed paper work was sent to the ICRC, which then forwarded it to the Federal German Finance Ministry.

The compensation claims process took place between 1961 and 1971. The 'urgent' applications of the *Rabbits* and the Polish Catholic priests from Dachau were considered mainly because of the publicity around them but also because of the fact that they did not require much work since they were very well documented and, more importantly, already completed. All the *Rabbits* who lived in Poland were compensated in 1962, and the vast majority of them received their payments in early January.[108] The money was sent to the individual accounts of *Polska Kasa Opieki Spółka Akcyjna* (The Polish PEKAO SA Bank). Moreover, the amount was processed in American Dollars. The sum varied from $7,500.63 up to $10,000.85 according to the health damage caused by the experiment.[109] Those *Rabbits* who were victims of the sulphonamide experiments with use of gangrenous cultures such as streptococci and staphylococci, and women who were operated on by Ludwig Stumpfegger received the highest amount of money. Each of the *Rabbits* upon receiving the money had to declare that it was financial assistance rather than compensation as stated:

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was effectively has been carried out the work of GKBZHwP, but also has been investigating communist crimes in Poland. For more information go to http://www.ipn.gov.pl/portal/pl/3/2299/Glowna_Komisja_Scigania_Zbrodni_przeciwko_Narodowi_Polskiemu.html (Accessed on 15 February 2010)

[108] Stefania Łotocka received her compensation in November 1962 see BArchK, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (hereafter PAAA), B 126/27580, Human Experiments Poland 30-40, Stefania Łotocka: Pokwitowanie, 30 November 1962.

[109] The entire documentation in regard to compensation for the *Rabbits* is held at the Archives of the Polish Red Cross in Warsaw and in the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz. The files deposited at the archives of the Polish Red Cross are not accessible because of the data protection act. However, files can be viewed at the Bundesarchiv. Subject to special access criteria negotiated for the project 'Victims of Human Experiments and Coercive Research under National Socialism'. For details of all 1,357 victims compensated between 1961 and 1971 see a collection BArch, PAAA, B 126.

> [The] sum was put at my disposal to help victims of the title of pseudo-medical experiences in German concentration camps under the National Socialist regime.[110]

Between 1965 and 1968, the definition of 'experiment' was broadened, and the list of experiments recognised by the Federal German Financial Ministry as eligible for compensation was also extended. It was seen as an advantage by those whose applications were previously rejected on the grounds that their description of the experiments did not match any experiment from the official list, which was created as a result of the Nuremberg Medical Trial proceedings. On the other hand, because the definition of experiment became more precise it caused the rejection of a large number of applications on grounds that some details presented did not match the established pattern. The last phase of compensation that was dealt with by the ICRC took place between 1968 and 1971. Changes were introduced such as prioritising GKBZHwP and ZBOWiD against the PCK. By 31 March 1969, approximately 5,611 people had applied for compensation.[111] This form of processing applications was very time consuming. In addition, despite what was originally declared, the GKBZHwP, which was influenced by the regime, had more power than the relatively apolitical PCK. The fact that knowledge about medical crimes was still being formed caused some confusion. Injections, for example, were often interpreted wrongly and qualified as experiments. Thus, the critical analysis of evidence was a great challenge. As a result, between 1961 and 1971 instead of the approximately 130 people originally expected by the Federal German Finance

[110] As an example file see BArchK, PAAA, B 126/27578, Teil 1, Irena Bakiel: Pokwitowanie, 3 January 1962.
[111] AAN, Col. 2207/5 Biuro Pełnomocnika Ministra Zdrowia i Opieki Społecznej, Zestawienie ilości wniosków do rozpatrzenia.

Ministry to apply, 1,357 applicants were compensated.[112] The vast majority received DM 25,000. In rare cases, this sum reached up to DM 40,000 in one instalment. Overall DM 39,440,000 was distributed to individual applicants in Poland during that period.[113]

In 1971, the issue of compensations for the victims of medical experiments residing in Poland was considered closed by the Federal German government. However, in the meantime applications were still being sent to the PCK. Therefore, the Polish side came up with an alternative solution. In early 1972, the first discussion to establish relations between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany took place. The prime ground for discussion was security in Europe. On 27 May 1972, the Polish government ratified the pact with West Germany. Official political relations between the two countries were established in the middle of September 1972.[114] Meanwhile, corresponding negotiations took place in the name of the remaining victims of the Nazi medical experiments whose number was estimated at 6,000 and who were waiting to be compensated. As a result, on 16 November 1972, an agreement was signed between the Federal German Finance Ministry and the Polish Ministry of Health and Public Care under which Poland was granted DM 103 million towards further compensation.[115] Those negotiations did not meet the expectations of the *Rabbits*. First of all, the word 'compensation' was replaced by 'financial help' for Polish victims of medical experiments, wherein the Federal German government thereby washed its hands from taking any responsibility

[112] AAN, 2207/5, Sprawozdanie z zakończenia akcji rozdziału pomocy finansowej dla ofiar eksperymentów pseudomedycznych w hitlerowskich obozach koncentracyjnych dokonanej przez Pełnomocnika Ministra Zdrowia i Opieki Społecznej d/s Pmocy Finansowej Ofiarom Pseudomedycznych Eksperymentów w Hitlerowskich Obozach Koncentracyjnych, 31 January 1986.
[113] Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi', p. 128.
[114] 'Uchwała Rady Państwa o ratyfikacji układu między Polską a NRF, Warszawa, 26.05.1972', in Tadeusz Walichnowski (ed.), *Układy Związku Radzieckiego i Polski z Niemiecką Republiką Federalną na drodze do pokojowej i bezpiecznej Europy. Dokumenty, przemówienia, wywiady, komentarz* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1972), p. 68.
[115] Gajewski, 'Odzyskana wiara w ludzi', p. 129.

for medical crimes committed by the Nazis. Second, the Polish government was put in charge of distributing the money instead of the PCK; thus, the risk of abuses increased. Finally, the sum of DM 103 million was to be the final solution to the compensation issue, which meant that the topic of lifelong pensions for the *Rabbits* was abandoned, and they were excluded from further support since they had already received compensation in 1962.[116]

On 10 February 1982, the *Rabbits*' request for additional financial support was rejected on the grounds that none of the applicants who received compensation in dollars could be compensated twice. The difficult health situation of the *Rabbits* was not taken into consideration.[117] A similar proposal was submitted by the *Rabbits* a year later. The Minister's Plenipotentiary stated that 'a group of former prisoners of Ravensbrück [...] cannot claim the right to special treatment [...] it would also be precedent which could lead to the influx of applications'.[118] In December 1986, the compensation scheme conducted by the Polish Ministry of Health and Public Care was considered finished. Overall, approximately 4,000 Poles were compensated and over 12,000 applicants were rejected.[119] The Ministry still had at its disposal approximately DM 29,790. By the decision of the government, the remaining amount was distributed to former prisoners of concentration camps, roughly 42,671 of whom were beneficiaries. Thus, the final distribution of the financial support provided by the Federal German government took place on 30 June 1989.[120] The most shocking was the fact that the *Rabbits*, whose persistence led to winning the struggle for compensation for Polish victims, were ignored by the Polish government

[116] Ruchniewicz, *Polskie zabiegi o odszkodowania niemieckie*, pp. 205-207.
[117] AAN, 2207/1/1, Protokół z posiedzenia Zespołu Doradczo-Opiniodawczego, 10 February 1982.
[118] AAN, 2207/1/1, Protokół z posiedzenia Zespołu Doradczo-Opiniodawczego, 25 May 1983.
[119] See IPN, Col. Eksperymenty pseudo-medyczne, 1972-1987.
[120] Ruchniewicz, *Polskie zabiegi o odszkodowania niemieckie*, pp. 215-217.

for many years, and their requests for further support were approved only after nearly two decades.[121]

[121] Between 1998 and 2006, 1189 Polish victims of human experiments compensated by the Polish partner organisation of the Stiftung "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft". See Paul Weindling, '"Sonstige Personenschäden"- die Entschädigungspraxis der Stiftung "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft" 1998-2006', pp. 27. (unpublished article)

## 4. CONCLUSION

Ironically, the libel trial instead of clearing Dering's name ruined it completely as he has been negatively presented ever since. There were many prisoner-physicians who assisted Nazi doctors in their inhuman research, although hardly any of them were held responsible. This is a complex issue, as the physicians acted, albeit to a differing extent, under duress, and some saved lives and sabotaged the research– Dering, however, was remarkably compliant. However, the type of medical procedures that Dering conducted on approximately seventy-six Jews involved a very sensitive and personal area.[122] Excision of ovaries or testicles dehumanised victims. Yet the fact that none of the people sterilised or partially castrated by Dering died, according to the operation book, has not been taken into account. Furthermore, the fact that those operations were conducted on Jews by a Pole, who was known for his sharp language, automatically added a racial dimension to the problem. Since 1965, Władysław Alexander Dering has been described in the literature as an example of an Anti-Semite who 'willingly performed illegal experiments in surgery'.[123]

The health of the *Rabbits* continued to deteriorate, and a large number of them were unable to work and therefore sought additional financial support. The Polish government's possibilities in regard to securing pensions were rather limited. Meanwhile, due to the efforts of the UN, the Federal German government recognised its obligation to compensate individuals who suffered as a result of Nazi policies during the war. The *Rabbits*' first attempt to take advantage of that measure was not successful. Engaging several influential people in America proved helpful. However,

[122] I used a figure of 76 since that is the number of operations actually performed by Dering. See ITS, KL Auschwitz, folder 157.
[123] Willy Berler and Ruth Fivaz-Silbermann, *Journey through Darkness: Monowitz, Auschwitz, Gross-Rosen, Buchenwald* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2004), p. 91.

despite all the efforts, the process of securing compensation for victims in Poland was not only time consuming but also less effective than might have been expected. Lifelong pensions were never achieved and further requests for additional support were dismissed by representatives of the Polish government. The *Rabbits*' major success in their fight for compensation was in enabling other Poles to receive financial support, though there were doubts about a certain number of the applicants.

The position of the priest-victims was even more complex. Those clergy who emigrated to the UK and US received greater attention in comparison to the refugee-*Rabbits*. This was, however, purely based on the fact that a large number of them settled in those countries (32 priests versus 2 *Rabbits* Helena Piasecka (US), Zofia Sokulska (UK)). They were also the first group to gain attention of Caroline Ferriday and other organisations in their fight for compensation. The priests in Poland, unlike the *Rabbits*, gained very little interest. Despite the fact that they submitted their applications for compensation, like the *Rabbits*, in the early 1950s, they were ignored by the government, the media and the public opinion. Thus, several questions can be raised. First of all, one can ask whether the gender aspect had a significant impact on the level of attention given to the *Rabbits*. In other words, perhaps priests' sufferings was not comparable with the *Rabbits*, given that as women they were subjected to experiments that aimed to improve treatment of wounded soldiers, and their health may have therefore be seen as more damaged than those of the priests. Another issue is whether the lack of need or perhaps inability to form a victim group, which could be caused by the nature of priesthood, made them indefinable as victims. Unlike the *Rabbits*, the majority of whom returned to Poland by the end of 1945, the priests came back between 1945 and 1950. Also, as

mentioned in this chapter, priests were not active in publishing their memoirs, which could also have reflected in the lack of interest in their war-time experiences.

# PART V: CONCLUSION

This thesis has engaged with three fundamental issues: 1) the way medical experiments have been analysed in existing historiography; 2) the position of victims in regard to Nazi medical research; and finally, 3) the underrepresentation to this date of issues related to compensation claims submitted by victims of Nazi medical experiments. Based on selected Polish participants in the Nazi medical experiments that were conducted at Dachau, Auschwitz and Ravensbrück this dissertation has drawn several conclusions, which have been supported through research and critical analysis of primary and secondary findings. First of all, this thesis has fully investigated profiles of Poles who were involved in unethical research both as victims and as assistants of German doctors (precisely Władysław Dering). Second, it examined the impact of the medical experiments on human behaviour and the post-war life of both victims and perpetrators. Third, this dissertation discussed the issue of compensation claims in order to prove that the suffering of victims continued for many years after the war. But more importantly, this thesis analysed the Nazi medical experiments from the victims' perspectives, thus departing from the common pattern of presenting medical experiments in the historiography only as medical procedures performed by perpetrators for whom victims were nameless objects.

The outlined issues and goals presented in this thesis have been shaped by gaps in the existing historiography. What needs to be pointed out, therefore, is the fact that until recently Western scholarship faced difficulties, such as a different political system combined with the language barrier, which prevented many scholars from conducting research in Poland. Therefore, scholars often based their

observations on sources notably the Nuremberg Documents that had been accessible in Germany and other Western countries. These materials, however, were limited as they only exceptionally included personal accounts of the Polish prisoners who were involved in Nazi medical experiments; therefore, for the most part, the Polish victims were anonymous and generalised as a national group. This was the case with the Polish priests who were victims of malaria and phlegmon research at Dachau. In Władysław Dering's case, on the other hand, the fact that scholars had access only to the libel trial files and Leon Uris' fictional books meant that he has only been presented in a negative way. This thesis, however, presented numerous Polish sources which led me to other collections held in Europe and in the US. I was therefore able to establish several research objectives. The first discovery of my empirical work related to Dering's activity at Auschwitz and the complex relationship between Dering and Alina Brewda, which had a great impact on Dering's post-war life. I was able to base my assumptions on a detailed examination of the original register of the surgical Block 21 that listed all performed operations and doctors who had carried out those procedures. This source is available at the ITS in Bad Arolsen, which opened its collections to scholars only in 2007. Dering's legal disputes in the UK and documents relating to Brewda's role, such as Dering's imprisonment in Brixton during 1947-1949 and the libel trial in 1964, are accessible in several collections held at the National Archives in London.

My second research objective involved reconstructing the post-war lives of the Polish priests who were experimented on at Dachau and who decided to emigrate to the UK and the US, starting from their activity in DP camps, through the emigration process, and finally to their fight for compensation. Elaborating on this issue required access to various sources such as DP cards of priests available at the

ITS Digital Collection via the USHMM; the educational and social activity in DP camps that is presented in Collections at the IHRC at Minnesota University, and at UN Archives in New York. Further, the emigration process was shaped by analysis of emigration applications from the Centre for Migration Studies on Long Island and Royal Air Force Polish Division, which holds the files of Polish priests who came to the UK with the Second Corps of the Anders Army.

Another issue was the scale of the compensation claim process regarding Polish victims of the Nazi medical experiments and the diverse approach of the Federal German Government towards victims of the same experiments who resided in different countries; in other words, the *Rabbits* and the Polish priests in the UK and the US versus the *Rabbits* and Polish priests in Communist Poland. This problem became apparent after careful analysis of claimant applications that are held at the AAN and IPN in Warsaw—applications from Poland as well as at the UN in Geneva and Polish Institute in London. Additional information regarding unequal treatment of victims was obtained from the Benjamin Ferencz and Caroline Ferriday Collections available at the USHMM Archives. Finally, through critical analysis of Leon Uris, Hermann Langbein's and Robert Lifton's publications, I was able to argue that facts related to Dering's life, such as his relationship with both his wives and the number of excisions of gonads he performed at Auschwitz, have been mistakenly interpreted. The above-mentioned authors based their observations on Brewda's exaggerated allegations submitted during the Auschwitz trial in 1946, in 1947 during Dering's extradition process, and during preparation for the Prof. Carl Clauberg trial in 1956.

Issues related to the three major topics presented in this thesis—the Polish priests from Dachau, women from Ravensbrück known as the *Rabbits* and the

prisoner-physician at Auschwitz, Władysław Dering—could be further developed. Therefore, my recommendation for further research includes: analysing the integration of Polish priests to the new life in the US and in the UK; comparing the attitude of the Polish communist governments and the post 1989 governments in Poland towards the *Rabbits* and researching careers in post-war Poland of the other four Polish doctors who were involved in performing excisions of gonads at Auschwitz to reveal how the Nazi medical crimes were interpreted by the Communists in Poland taking into account the negative way in which Władysław Dering was regarded by the Polish authorities.

This thesis contributed to the current historiographical debate in two ways: a) by understanding and presenting the issue of the Nazi medical experiments with respect to the Polish victims, and b) by developing a profile of Władysław Dering as prisoner/assistant of an SS doctor. To this date Nazi medical experiments have been presented in the historiography as mainly medical procedures performed by German perpetrators whereas victims have been perceived as rather shadowy subjects of their research. I have tried to change that pattern by describing Nazi medical experiments through the victims to reveal what physical and emotional side effects the research caused, including enormous pain, fear and trauma. I was able to construct my argument as a result of empirical work on personal accounts and statements including published diaries as well as life stories attached to applications for compensation. In these materials victims described their understanding of their experience related to the incarceration, medical research and post-war reality and politics in their own words. Moreover, unlike other scholars who limited their research to name lists of experimental subjects or to describe the experience related to the experiments of chosen victims (see Waltz), I have decided to present as

complete as possible profiles of victims. Therefore, I was able to establish reasons as to why the *Rabbits* and the Polish priests were arrested and imprisoned, what was their position within the camps and how they coped with incarceration, by analysing personal accounts, sources related to persecution of the Catholic Church in Poland and Resistance fighters, as well as publications referring to Nazi concentration camps. Furthermore, testimonies given in post-war trials in Dachau, Hamburg and Nuremberg and published diaries, apart from valuable information about the conduct of experiments, allowed me to analyse how the participation in experiments positively and negatively affected their behaviour. Finally, I have addressed the issue of compensation requests by the Polish victims of the Nazi medical experiments, which have been in general ignored by scholars. I presented this as an additional struggle that the victims faced, and as a final closure to the topic of Nazi medical experiments rather than merely a legal matter, in contrast to the approach of Ruchniewicz.[1] The critical analysis of over 4,000 compensation files that were submitted to the Federal German Finance Ministry by Polish victims helped me to highlight the victims and to present the international political dispute that was caused by the victims' financial requests.

The other major contribution to the historical debate this dissertation offers is a better understanding of the controversial topic of drastically changing behaviour patterns in concentration camps, with Władysław Dering as a crucial example. In general to this day prisoners have been presented in a 'black and white' format. In other words, privileged prisoners such as *Kapo* or assistants of German physicians were perceived in a negative way. However, I have taken on the challenge to investigate what led Władysław Dering to accept removing of gonads at Auschwitz.

[1] Ruchniewicz, *Polskie zabiegi o odszkodowania niemieckie.*

Detailed analysis of the original register of surgical Block 21 gave me precise information about the number of conducted operations, how often they were performed, when, how and by whom. In addition, collections available at TNA in which Dering himself described his life before and during incarceration, and numerous articles published in the *Przegląd Lekarski* helped me improve current knowledge regarding relations between prisoners as well as the political and ideological situation among inmates at Auschwitz. Many scholars have presented Władysław Dering as an example of an anti-Semitic perpetrator who could have refused to perform forcible excision of gonads on Jewish inmates but did not, in order to achieve personal benefits (see for example Langbein, Lifton, Uris and Shelley). These scholars referred directly or indirectly to several testimonies of Alina Brewda, which were treated as truthful sources. The outcome of my extensive research led me to conclude many of Brewda's observations should be questioned, and thus her interpretation of facts cannot be taken as undisputed. I have not disputed Dering's involvement in removing testicles and ovaries of Jewish inmates, as numerous sources including his own statements prove beyond any doubt that he did perform those procedures. I have analysed the inaccuracy of allegations made against him regarding the conduct of those operations, his brutal behaviour towards other inmates at Auschwitz, his servitude towards the SS and the number of performed operations and claimed death rates caused by his misconduct. In addition, unlike scholars mentioned above I have thus focused on emphasising the intensity of the impact of experiences related to incarceration including hunger, physical pain and fear, which meant that a considerable number of prisoners lost their human values that were replaced by the survival instinct. Therefore, they behaved with manners that would be considered horrific in normal circumstances. In addition, I have

emphasised a situation completely ignored by other scholars, namely the fact that there were four other Polish prisoners involved in removing gonads at Auschwitz, yet only Dering has been tried and treated as a war criminal.

Overall, this dissertation offered a fruitful new approach to understanding the life histories of the Poles who participated in Nazi medical experiments both as victims and as assistants of perpetrators. It is hoped that future research will continue to shed light to this complex chapter in the history of science and Holocaust.

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