

The Holocaust and Fundamental Rights. Case studies for reflections on the work of officials





Clandestine documents from the Ravensbrück concentration camp: Introduction on a glass jar excavated in 1975 with illegal documents from the Ravensbrück concentration camp

This glass jar was uncovered on 24 May 1975. It contained documents smuggled out of the concentration camp Ravensbrück in 1942 and 1943. The glass jar held the following, in good condition:

14 letters, dating from the period between spring and autumn 1943. They were written by Polish women and girls imprisoned in the largest women's camp in what was then the German Reich – the Ravensbrück concentration camp.



Lists of shootings: between November 1941 and September 1943, the SS shot Polish women in Ravensbrück. The uncovered lists mention 145 names; in one letter, the author refers to a total of 184 victims. It is likely that other lists were smuggled out, however not found in the jar.





A table listing the medical experiments carried out on 74 Polish women between July 1942 and August 1943. The abuses documented include experiments with sulphonamides, bone, muscle and nerve transplants, and regeneration experiments on the women's legs. The sulphonamide experiments were designed to research the treatment of

battle injuries (gas gangrene). The resistance fighters, arrested on Polish territory under German occupation, underwent enforced surgery without their knowledge or agreement, and without

sufficient treatment for their wounds. The youngest was 16 years old, the oldest 48.

A drawing, by the polish artist and camp inmate Maria Hiszpańska-Neumann

A miniature carving of an eagle with two inscriptions: "Poland is not yet lost" and "Freedom and Victory, 1943".

A table listing the medical experiments carried out on 74 Polish women between July 1942 and August 1943 (one page out of four)

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2. Okonierska Anisla	1. VIII. 42.	- him s	nioskawiona od kazysuie
3. Gutthe Roxalia	1. vin. 42, 16.18.42.	4 - 4	w pakoleierniku 42, Eroliw e obou 14 lipes 43 Roschwelana 16.18.43,
4. Gnas Maria 5. Zielonka Maria	1. VIII. 42		Rosettwelowa 12.11, 43.
6. Wojtasik Wanda	1. VIII. 42, 16. 18. 42	-11-1 9	Rostrelana 16.18.43.
7. Kominska Jadwiga	14. 10. 42, 16. 18. 42		
8. Kormanska zofia 9. Karrinska zofia	14. Vin, 42	-u-	transp. hub. 233.18. 0
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1. JHanika Janine.	14. 11. 12	-11- -11-	-u-
5. Sobolewska Amiela	14. Viv. 42 22. Viv. 42	-u	-u-
7. Mitira Janina	2.8 viii. 42	golettrotelil	Correctana 28.18.43.
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The list relate to 74 Polish women and girls (others of unknown nationality who were also subjected to these experiments are not included here). They are headed "Forename, Surname" "Date of Operation(s)", "Type of Operation and Number of Incisions", "Remarks".

The list, which is four pages long, shows that 23 women and girls underwent multiple operations. Under "Remarks" a note was made of the precise "special transport" that brought the person to Ravensbrück. By the name of Aniela Okoniewska (no. 2) is the note that she was pardoned from a "death penalty" in October 1942 on unknown grounds and even "released from the camp on 14 July 1943". In contrast, it is noted that five of the women were shot by the SS after the forced operations and there are three other women said to have died of the consequences of the experiments.

The inmates were unable to give precise medical details on the nature of these human experiments because, until the investigations in Poland in the run-up to the Nuremberg Trials, they did not know what the doctors had done to them. They recorded such information as "Infection", the number and type of "cuts", whether the operations were on "bone" or "muscle" and, for eight women, that they had only been administered with an "injection" of unknown content.

Source: Constanze Jaiser and Jacob David Pampuch: Ein Schmuggelfund aus dem KZ – Erinnerung, Kunst und Menschenwürde. Projektmappe für einen fächerübergreifenden Unterricht [Smuggled Out of the Camp – Memory, Art and Human Dignity, Project Folder for Interdisciplinary Learning], Berlin 2012.

Letter No. 5, smuggled out of the concentration camp Ravensbrück, written by one of the Polish victims of medical experiments Wanda Wojtasik, probably in the first half of September 1943.

Chiopay ohazji i cheung Ram predstazii sutnaci shiadlami ponemiscie ourgaisie zapamietai - a migi te operacion do iniadralmen preproducingon do marca

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Source: Constanze Jaiser and Jacob David Pampuch: Ein Schmuggelfund aus dem KZ – Erinnerung, Kunst und Menschenwürde. Projektmappe für einen fächerübergreifenden Unterricht [Smuggled Out of the Camp – Memory, Art and Human Dignity, Project Folder for Interdisciplinary Learning], Berlin 2012.

Translation:

Dear Boys!

We wanted to take this chance to let you know how things are in our camp at the moment. [...] I don't know whether you are aware of the experimental operations in the camp? – Well, from this transport between 1 August 1942 and March 1943, operations were carried out on 71 mostly-young women in perfectly good health. Five died as a result of the operations, the rest survived, but some of them were crippled and will never be able to walk normally again. -

In March, when after a fairly long pause (of several weeks), they wanted to take us again, we rebelled against it and the operations somehow stopped we asked the camp management why we were being operated on, and they answered that they knew of no operations, they were only taking measurements, and later they talked of medical investigations and similar excuses, but it seemed that we could hold our own, and when recently in March the women they called up said they would not go, it had no consequences for them, and until 15 August it seemed that the matter had gone to sleep - on that day, 10 women from our transport (and only 3 of them were new and 7 had been operated on before, several times even) were called and were supposedly going to be assessed to see if they were fit to work, but of course we didn't let ourselves be deceived, we know their tricks, and our girls said they wouldn't go, they bolted the first time, and then the second, and when they were finally fetched out of the barracks by the overseers, they were arrested and held, 5 in each of two cells, and a group of five women was operated on the next day, the 16 August, in the bunker, fully dressed and unwashed, they were taken by force, SS men held their hands and legs fast, and the nurse gave injections. - Our barrack, which they had not betrayed and not pointed out when, after their flight in 'protest', they hid among us, was given three whole days' detention without food or drink and with the shutters closed. After eleven days, the 5 women who hadn't been operated on were allowed back into their barracks, the other five, who were operated on, were moved into the sick bay and for two of them the operation was repeated. - And this is how things look for now: back injury and who, just these women are in bed (their legs were operated on and put in plaster, presumably they were bone operations), but we are not sure of that, because we don't actually know what operations they are subjecting us to, a week from 7 am to 7 pm. and we are always prepared for them to call us up at any moment- none of us will go of our own free will [...].

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Krystyna Oleksy, Irena Polska (ed.): Aby świat się dowiedział ...: Nielegalne dokumenty z obozu Ravensbrück. Panstwowego Muzeum w Oświęcimiu. Oświęcim 1989.









Drawings by Jadwiga Pietkiewicz, who had a like the victims of the medical experiments, was made to knit socks six days She wanted to use these drawings, completed in the camp, in memory of the seriously traumatised "guinea pigs".

permission of Jarek Gaiewksi (http://individual.utoronto.ca/ jarekg/Ravensbruck/Art.html).



