



***Ravensbrück***  
*A story not to be forgotten*



*To the memory of Polish women  
40,000 Polish women, girls and children were imprisoned here  
200 were shot  
74 underwent medical experiments  
Many thousands died of malnutrition or were gassed  
8,000 lived to see the liberation  
If the echo of their voices fades, we shall perish*

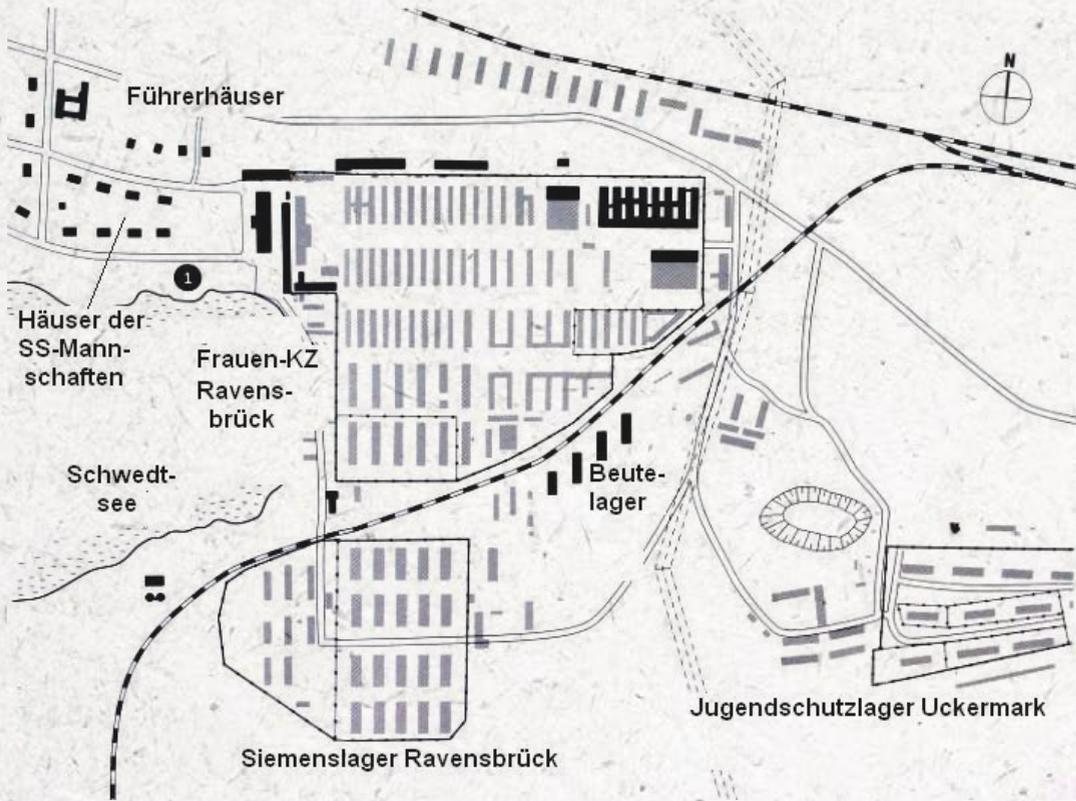
Institute of National Remembrance  
Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation  
The Szczecin Branch Office



Szczecin 2020

**THE POLISH  
PERSPECTIVE**

Sketch plan of the KL Ravensbrück camp



Map of the Brandenburg Province with the location of the camp marked



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forgotten*



## **THE POLISH PERSPECTIVE**



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The view of the barracks camp with barrack rows no. 1 and 2 of the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp at no. 1, Lagerstraße; in the foreground, the roof of the garage wing with chimneys of the inmates' kitchen behind, ca. 1940. The photograph was taken from the Commandant's Office building. In the middle ground to the left, among the barracks arranged on a letter H plan, is the inmates' hospital building constructed ca. 1940. The common name for a camp hospital in Polish: *rewir dla chorych* or simply *rewir*, was derived from the German term for a military-camp sickroom, *Revier*. In the years 1943–1945, the SS often transformed residential barracks into sickrooms. Ultimately, one-fifth of those barracks was assigned to the camp hospital. *(National Site of Admonition and Remembrance at Ravensbrück, photo no. 1642)*



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## *Introduction*

Germany entered the period of terror in 1933, when Adolf Hitler assumed power. Mass arrests of his political opponents began soon after. Those regarded as enemies of the German state and nation were sent to prisons or concentration camps. The earliest camps, those in Dachau and Oranienburg, were established in the first year after Adolf Hitler's rise to power. The first German concentration camp for women was organized at the same time in Moringen in the Nordheim district. From there, women were transferred to the prison in Lichtenburg near Torgau. Initially, the inmates were communists, social democrats and Jews. Later, they were joined by the followers of various religions, including the Catholics, "students of the Bible", that is Jehovah's Witnesses, and Protestants, as well as male and female homosexuals. After the outbreak of the war, the entire operational system of the concentration camp network was extended to cover the occupied countries.

When the women's camp in Lichtenburg began to run out of space, it was decided to build a new camp. Heinrich Himmler chose a site near Ravensbrück, a village in the picturesque Mecklenburg Lake District with its lakes of Röblinsee, Baalensee and Schwedtsee, some 80km away from Berlin and not far from Fürstenberg. The final decision as to its location was made in 1938. Sarah Helm, the author of the monograph on Ravensbrück, stated that Himmler's choice was influenced not only by the favourable distance and transport connections: "Another factor that influenced Himmler's choice

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was the siting in an area of natural beauty. Himmler believed that the cleansing of German blood should begin close to nature, and the invigorating forces of the German forests played a central role in the mythology of the *Heimat* – German soil”.<sup>1</sup> The proximity of Berlin was also important, as it enabled Himmler to come frequently for inspections; so was the location of the men’s camp in Sachsenhausen, a mere 45km from Ravensbrück. It was that inmates of Sachsenhausen who in November 1938 started work on the construction of a camp for women.

This brochure presents the history of the women’s camp KL Ravensbrück based on the accounts of women survivors submitted to the staff of the Polish Institute of Source Research in Lund, as well as scholarly literature and a selection of texts originating from the camp. One of the inmates, Maria Moldenhawer, divided the history of this place into periods. The first of those covers the years 1939–1941, when the camp was constructed and opened, and the first transport of women arrived. It was the foundation period, a time when “lawns and flower beds around the prison blocks were very carefully maintained. The streets were swept and the blocks were very clean”. Transports of Polish women came to KL Ravensbrück during this period. “The characteristic feature of the first period,” wrote Maria Moldenhawer, “is that the so-called German methods of education in relation to a conquered nation were being applied in full. They consisted primarily in obliterating a person’s individual identity and self-confidence, making an inmate lose their ambitions and willingness to respond to insults. Inciting class and national hatreds, encouraging distrust and the willingness to grass on others also belonged to the program”.

The second period, which fell in the years 1941–1944, was described by Maria Moldenhawer in the following way:

Gradually, in the second half of 1941 and in both 1942 and 1943, a Polish community began to form in the camp [...]. As workers, Polish women were trusted by the authorities. Most of the internal camp work was performed for the inmates (kitchen, hospital, laundries and darning workshops), which provided a moral basis for diligent work in these areas. Mutual help networks developed thanks to Polish women receiving similar positions, playing a huge role in the life of the camp. At the beginning of this period, the original methods of discipline were still in force, but harassment became relatively less intense [...]. However, there was a clear increase in the heavy and tragic consequences of orders from the central authorities, which were strictly enforced by the camp authorities, in contrast to the previous home-grown methods of torment. Those were: executions by shooting of Polish women brought in from prisons, the commencement of medical experiments, the persecution of the *Bibelforszereg* [students of the Bible, i.e. female Jehovah’s Witnesses] and communists, barrack searches carried out to detect political conspiracies, sending transports of inmates to munitions factories, sending the sick and the mentally deranged to be shot, enlisting women for work in the brothels for German soldiers, etc. [...]. The provisioning deteriorated rapidly. Food rations were reduced and products were often rotten and inedible.

In this situation, mutual assistance developed on a larger scale. The main concern was to procure food. Working in the camp kitchen made it easier, but many women caught on such dealings were beaten and sent to the prison block.

The changes introduced by the Nazis during this period included the fact that national groups were gathered in separate blocks. The so-called national blocks were more vulnerable to collective responsibility. “Thus,” writes Maria Moldenhawer, “leaving some Polish transports in the old part of the camp and placing others in a new one, with a very strict ban on all communication between them, created one more opportunity for raids, punishments, searches, etc.”. The Germans sought to break up any groups that emerged in the camp and to create an atmosphere of insecurity. Women could not be sure of what awaited them the next day. For those who had been in Ravensbrück for a long time, this feeling became unbearable. A youth camp was created during this period, called the *Jugendlager*, which was later used for the elderly inmates and those weakened by malnutrition. From there, the weakest and most sick women were daily taken to the gas chamber.

The third period lasted from the second half of 1944 until the Red Army entered the camp in April of the following year. The beginning is marked by the arrival of Polish women transported from Warsaw after the suppression of the Warsaw Uprising. Those days were hauntingly described by Maria Moldenhawer:

It can be said that it was a time of suffering at a scale unknown to history, a time when the dying regime raged like a beast and inmates were struggling to stay alive. While in the first period reasonable compliance with detailed regulations made it possible to survive the camp relatively safely, at that time [only] individual cleverness and initiative could save an inmate from danger. Physical resilience also played a crucial role. The inmates as a whole were clearly divided into two groups. The first one consisted of inmates who had already stayed in the camp for a long time, who had developed necessary abilities and had permanent work; the second were the new arrivals,

who were bound to be exterminated, unless they managed, themselves or with the help of the old inmates, to organize their life in the camp [...]. Incoming transports were so numerous that it took several days to settle them in the camp. They stayed outside both in summer and in winter. The lawns, once carefully maintained, served those waiting people for beds...

During this period, the gradual evacuation of the camp began. As the front approached, the inmates were transferred to other camps, further away from the oncoming troops. The elderly and weakened women were sent to gas chambers *en masse*. The crematorium worked day and night. The last stage in the tragic history of the camp were the transports of the Swedish Red Cross. “The appearance of the camp changed in an incredible way [...], the lawns ceased to exist. The blocks were not repainted, most of the windows were broken and the windows covered with paper or colourful rags. Inmates wandered up and down the streets of the camp at all hours of the day. In the past, nobody had the right to walk around the camp during work periods [...]. The interiors of the barracks look like shelters for hobos. Only a few were still being tidied up”.<sup>2</sup>

Specific issues related to the history of the KL Ravensbrück are presented in more detail in the following chapters.



## Camp authorities

Heinrich Himmler was the chief overseer of the entire system of German concentration camps. In KL Ravensbrück, the power was held by its commandants. The first of those was SS-Standartenführer Günther Tamaschke, who supervised the construction of the camp from May 1939 to August 1939, followed by SS-Hauptsturmführer Max Koegel, who held this post from September 1939, although he was officially nominated only 1 from January 1940, until August 1942. The last was SS-Hauptsturmführer Fritz Suhren, from August 1942 until the camp's liberation in the late April 1945. A high position in the camp was occupied by camp directors, who were effectively deputy commandants. During Koegel's term of office, this position was held by Otto Soeldner; in January 1941 he was replaced by Theodor Traugott Meyer, and after him, from April 1942, the camp director was Michael Redwitz. Edmund Bräuning took over in summer 1942, and Johann Schwarzhuber was the last director from January 1945 until the end of the camp's existence.

The main female overseers were Johanna Langefeld, Maria Mandl, Anna Klein-Plaubel and Luise Brunner. Their deputies assisted them in fulfilling their duties. One of them was Dorothea Binz, known for her brutal treatment of women. The supervisors were subordinate to the camp director.

Inmates in the men's section of KL Ravensbrück were supervised by Wilhelm Siegmann, followed by Rudolf Beer, who held this office from October 1941. After Beer's departure to the Czech Republic in July 1944, the men's camp's director was Heinrich Peters, followed by Wilhelm Anton.

Basic information about KL Ravensbrück  
(Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance,  
Main Commission 159/66)

TYTUŁ PRZESTĘPSTWA

Obóc. Ravensbrück ..... Prowincja Mecklemburg .....

Czasokres: od roku 1940 - 1945 .....

Opis. Pracownice transportu polskie przybyłe w roku 1940 były specjalnie przesła-  
owane przez władze obozu (komendant Kögl). Na wdrażenie blokady  
wypracowano prostytutki niemieckie. Zachowanie ich specjalnie  
w stosunku do inteligencji było brutalne i sadystyczne: bicie po twarzy,  
kopanie, rucanie dołkiem w tył, oblewanie zimną wodą w mrozie -30°  
i wyżyłanie w mroźnych ubraniach do pracy, okradanie i zwalanie winy  
na więźniarki, podważanie apoli przez werwinyjose wypracowanie z bloku 2 warte

kto wydawał rozkazy i kto wypełniał! Równocześnie wypełnił karty  
widenyjne dla zbrodniarzy wojennych!

Rok (1940-42) Hauptsturmführer Kögl, komendant obozu - Oberaufs.  
Zimmer i Mandel. Rok 1943 Haupt. Redwitz - Oberauf. Erich.  
Rok 1944 Hauptsturmf. Surgen - Oberauf. Binz: (Surreu)  
Szef Młodej Pracy - Unterscharführer Glaum.

Data 20/1/1945 ..... Podpisy: Przewodnicząca: Buzonja, p. Buzonja, p. Buzonja.  
Przewodniczący: Maria Tolai 24/1/45, Przew. Mary Kypal 6.

Za zgodność podpisów

Komisja przesłuchująca  
Przewodniczący M. Moldenhauer  
Członkowie M. Woytowicz  
Felicja Felija  
F. B. B.

Data: 16/1/1945

## Transports

The first transport, consisting of 867 women, arrived at KL Ravensbrück on 15 May 1939. Upon arrival, the women received their camp numbers, were stripped, washed and deloused. Polish women made up the vast majority. The first to arrive, on 23 September 1939, were the residents of both German lands and former Polish territories incorporated into the Third Reich: Silesia, Pomerania, Lubusz Land and East Prussia. The first five women from occupied Poland arrived in the camp on 2 November. Large transports of Polish women began to come to KL Ravensbrück from April the following year. In the following years, 1941 to 1943, the next ones arrived, each holding from 1,000 to 1,500 women. The most plentiful in this respect was 1944, when more than 16,000 new female inmates appeared in the camp, of which about 12,000 came from the insurgent Warsaw. In the same year, some women were brought to KL Ravensbrück from KL Auschwitz. It is estimated that about 40,000 Polish women passed through the Ravensbrück camp, but their exact number is impossible to determine, since many documents have been destroyed and those that have survived have some lacunas. Apart from Polish women, the camp held 18,000 Russian women, 8,000 French women, 1,000 Dutch women, as well as women of British, German, Jewish and Gypsy origin. In total, about 130,000 women were forced to live in this place of torment.

Upon arrival, each of the inmates was marked with a triangle, a simple patch of fabric that had to be sewn on the left sleeve of the jacket. Black colour marked women qualified in the "antisocial" category, i.e. prostitutes, petty thieves and lesbians. Green meant professional criminals, red was reserved for political prisoners, Jehovah's Witnesses wore a purple triangle, and Jewesses wore a yellow one.

20

### Karta ewidencyjna sbrodnarzy wojennych

Nazwisko: Koegel / Kögel Imię: - Wiek lub rok urodz.: około lat 50

Formacja i stopień: S.S. Funkcje w obozie: komendant obozu  
Stützpunkt Stutthof obóz Ravensbrück

Wygląd zewnętrzny: wzrost wysoki  
brzość kłopotliwa, długi nos  
 włosy blond (brązowe) twarz owalna

Krótki opis przestępstw (w stosunku do kogo (nazwisko, imiona, data i miejsce urodzenia), miejscowości, daty popełnienia czynów przestęp. w przybliżeniu, o ile może się zgadzać) Wzrost 2 transportów lat 1939-1941, 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1946, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 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2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 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2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 2680, 2681, 2682, 2683, 2684, 2685, 2686, 2687, 2688, 2689, 2690, 2691, 2692, 2693, 2694, 2695, 2696, 2697, 2698, 2699, 2700, 2701, 2702, 2703, 2704, 2705, 2706, 2707, 2708, 2709, 2710, 2711, 2712, 2713, 2714, 2715, 2716, 2717, 2718, 2719, 2720, 2721, 2722, 2723, 2724, 2725, 2726, 2727, 2728, 2729, 2730, 2731, 2732, 2733, 2734, 2735, 2736, 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3069, 3070, 3071, 3072, 3073, 3074, 3075, 3076, 3077, 3078, 3079, 3080, 3081, 3082, 3083, 3084, 3085, 3086, 3087, 3088, 3089, 3090, 3091, 3092, 3093, 3094, 3095, 3096, 3097, 3098, 3099, 3100, 3101, 3102, 3103, 3104, 3105, 3106, 3107, 3108, 3109, 3110, 3111, 3112, 3113, 3114, 3115, 3116, 3117, 3118, 3119, 3120, 3121, 3122, 3123, 3124, 3125, 3126, 3127, 3128, 3129, 3130, 3131, 3132, 3133, 3134, 3135, 3136, 3137, 3138, 3139, 3140, 3141, 3142, 3143, 3144, 3145, 3146, 3147, 3148, 3149, 3150, 3151, 3152, 3153, 3154, 3155, 3156, 3157, 3158, 3159, 3160, 3161, 3162, 3163, 3164, 3165, 3166, 3167, 3168, 3169, 3170, 3171, 3172, 3173, 3174, 3175, 3176, 3177, 3178, 3179, 3180, 3181, 3182, 3183, 3184, 3185, 3186, 3187, 3188, 3189, 3190, 3191, 3192, 3193, 3194, 3195, 3196, 3197, 3198, 3199, 3200, 3201, 3202, 3203, 3204, 3205, 3206, 3207, 3208, 3209, 3210, 3211, 3212, 3213, 3214, 3215, 3216, 3217, 3218, 3219, 3220, 3221, 3222, 3223, 3224, 3225, 3226, 3227, 3228, 3229, 3230, 3231, 3232, 3233, 3234, 3235, 3236, 3237, 3238, 3239, 3240, 3241, 3242, 3243, 3244, 3245, 3246, 3247, 3248, 3249, 3250, 3251, 3252, 3253, 3254, 3255, 3256, 3257, 3258, 3259, 3260, 3261, 3262, 3263, 3264, 3265, 3266, 3267, 3268, 3269, 3270, 3271, 3272, 3273, 3274, 3275, 3276, 3277, 3278, 3279, 3280, 3281, 3282, 3283, 3284, 3285, 3286, 3287, 3288, 3289, 3290, 3291, 3292, 3293, 3294, 3295, 3296, 3297, 3298, 3299, 3300, 3301, 3302, 3303, 3304, 3305, 3306, 3307, 3308, 3309, 3310, 3311, 3312, 3313, 3314, 3315, 3316, 3317, 3318, 3319, 3320, 3321, 3322, 3323, 3324, 3325, 3326, 3327, 3328, 3329, 3330, 3331, 3332, 3333, 3334, 3335, 3336, 3337, 3338, 3339, 3340, 3341, 3342, 3343, 3344, 3345, 3346, 3347, 3348, 3349, 3350, 3351, 3352, 3353, 3354, 3355, 3356, 3357, 3358, 3359, 3360, 3361, 3362, 3363, 3364, 3365, 3366, 3367, 3368, 3369, 3370, 3371, 3372, 3373, 3374, 3375, 3376, 3377, 3378, 3379, 3380, 3381, 3382, 3383, 3384, 3385, 3386, 3387, 3388, 3389, 3390, 3391, 3392, 3393, 3394, 3395, 3396, 3397, 3398, 3399, 3400, 3401, 3402, 3403, 3404, 3405, 3406, 3407, 3408, 3409, 3410, 3411, 3412, 3413, 3414, 3415, 3416, 3417, 3418, 3419, 3420, 3421, 3422, 3423, 3424, 3425, 3426, 3427, 3428, 3429, 3430, 3431, 3432, 3433, 3434, 3435, 3436, 3437, 3438, 3439, 3440, 3441, 3442, 3443, 3444, 3445, 3446, 3447, 3448, 3449, 3450, 3451, 3452, 3453, 3454, 3455, 3456, 3457, 3458, 3459, 3460, 3461, 3462, 3463, 3464, 3465, 3466, 3467, 3468, 3469, 3470, 3471, 3472, 3473, 3474, 3475, 3476, 3477, 3478, 3479, 3480, 3481, 3482, 3483, 3484, 3485, 3486, 3487, 3488, 3489, 3490, 3491, 3492, 3493, 3494, 3495, 3496, 3497, 3498, 3499, 3500, 3501, 3502, 3503, 3504, 3505, 3506, 3507, 3508, 3509, 3510, 3511, 3512, 3513, 3514, 3515, 3516, 3517, 3518, 3519, 3520, 3521, 3522, 3523, 3524, 3525, 3526, 3527, 3528, 3529, 3530, 3531, 3532, 3533, 3534, 3535, 3536, 3537, 3538, 3539, 3540, 3541, 3542, 3543, 3544, 3545, 3546, 3547, 3548, 3549, 3550, 3551, 3552, 3553, 3554, 3555, 3556, 3557, 3558, 3559, 3560, 3561, 3562, 3563, 3564, 3565, 3566, 3567, 3568, 3569, 3570, 3571, 3572, 3573, 3574, 3575, 3576, 3577, 3578, 3579, 3580, 3581, 3582, 3583, 3584, 3585, 3586, 3587, 3588, 3589, 3590, 3591, 3592, 3593, 3594, 3595, 3596, 3597, 3598, 3599, 3600, 3601, 3602, 3603, 3604, 3605, 3606, 3607, 3608, 3609, 3610, 3611, 3612, 3613, 3614, 3615, 3616, 3617, 3618, 3619, 3620, 3621, 3622, 3623, 3624, 3625, 3626, 3627, 3628, 3629, 3630, 3631, 3632, 3633, 3634, 3635, 3636, 3637, 3638, 3639, 3640, 3641, 3642, 3643, 3644, 3645, 3646, 3647, 3648, 3649, 3650, 3651, 3652, 3653, 3654, 3655, 3656, 3657, 3658, 3659, 3660, 3661, 3662, 3663, 3664, 3665, 3666, 3667, 3668, 3669, 3670, 3671, 3672, 3673, 3674, 3675, 3676, 3677, 3678, 3679, 3680, 3681, 3682, 3683, 3684, 3685, 3686, 3687, 3688, 3689, 3690, 3691, 3692, 3693, 3694, 3695, 3696, 3697, 3698, 3699, 3700, 3701, 3702, 3703, 3704, 3705, 3706, 3707, 3708, 3709, 3710, 3711, 3712, 3713, 3714, 3715, 3716, 3717, 3718, 3719, 3720, 3721, 3722, 3723, 3724, 3725, 3726, 3727, 3728, 3729, 3730, 3731, 3732, 3733, 3734, 3735, 3736, 3737, 3738, 3739, 3740, 3741, 3742, 3743, 3744, 3745, 3746, 3747, 3748, 3749, 3750, 3751, 3752, 3753, 3754, 3755, 3756, 3757, 3758, 3759, 3760, 3761, 3762, 3763, 3764, 3765, 3766, 3767, 3768, 3769, 3770, 3771, 3772, 3773, 3774, 3775, 3776, 3777, 3778, 3779, 3780, 3781, 3782, 3783, 3784, 3785, 3786, 3787, 3788, 3789, 3790, 3791, 3792, 3793, 3794, 3795, 3796, 3797, 3798, 3799, 3800, 3801, 3802, 3803, 3804, 3805, 3806, 3807, 3808, 3809, 3810, 3811, 3812, 3813, 3814, 3815, 3816, 3817, 3818, 3819, 3820, 3821, 3822, 3823, 3824, 3825, 3826, 3827, 3828, 3829, 3830, 3831, 3832, 3833, 38

One of those wearing a red triangle was Zofia Czajkowska. Born on 22 December 1910, she was a teacher from Sandomierz. She arrived in KL Ravensbrück on 21 August 1940 and was there until the end, i.e. until April 1945. As she claims, she was imprisoned as “undesirable at large”. She came to KL Ravensbrück in a transport of about 130 persons. The journey itself lasted four days and four nights. After arriving at the camp, the women formed rows in front of the bathhouse and then were taken inside. First, however, they had to surrender all their private belongings, including jewellery and money. After the bath, they underwent a medical examination. Their heads were shaved, no exceptions. They also received summer uniform, i.e. a shirt and underwear, a steel-coloured the summer dress, and clogs. They were also assigned bras, cotton stockings, belts for the dresses, aprons and white headscarves. They were taken to the block, where they received food: two pieces of bread, 10 decagrams of sausage, a tablespoon of fat, plus basic tableware. Zofia Czajkowska was assigned the number 1462. This does not mean that in 1940 there were exactly this many inmates in KL Ravensbrück: numbers carried by deceased or released inmates were not re-assigned. For this reason the actual number of inmates at the camp at that time could have been smaller than the camp number Zofia Czajkowska received. When she arrived in the camp, it had already been settled by German communists and “asocial” women. There were also many Gypsy, Czech, Jewish and Polish women, of which these last were the largest group. Almost all Polish women were political prisoners and they mainly originated from the intelligentsia.

<u>Sondertransport v. Radom.</u>				He/Wi.
16.6.44.				19.30 Uhr
<u>Distr. Radom.</u>				
1.	Bolecka/Owczarek, Zofia	11.11.10.	polit.	42 445 Polin
2.	Brzosowska, Helena Liebner	30.1.84.	"	42 446 "
3.	Bustakiewicz, Anna	20.7.35.	"	42 447 "
4.	Chib, Janina	4.1.12.	"	42 448 "
5.	Pudsińska/Rembikowska, Jozefa	18.3.02	"	42 449 "
6.	Janiaszewska, Zofia	1.1.22.	"	42 450 "
7.	Lesniowska, Kotlinska, Antonina	13.6.00.	"	42 451 "
8.	Mazur, Helena	16.2.15.	"	42 452 "
9.	Olejarczyk/Blicharska, Zofia	11.3.21.	"	42 453 "
10.	Pawlak/Flak, Antonina	7.5.13.	"	42 454 "
11.	Sasul/Czabak, Genowefa	26.12.20.	"	42 455 "
12.	Szwarc, Tekla	10.10.91.	"	42 456 "
13.	Tomyślak, Waleria	13.4.20.	"	42 457 "
14.	Werner, Janina Szymon	6.12.06.	"	42 458 "
15.	Zawadzka, Stanisława	4.1.97.	"	42 459 "
<u>Adst. Busko</u>				
16.	Bak/Marzec, Antonina	12.6.92.	"	42 460 "
<u>Adst. Jedrzejów</u>				
17.	Zielinska/Sobieraj, Marta	11.5.93.	"	42 461 "
18.	Wiewiara/Paciór, Zofja	20.4.17.	"	42 462 "
<u>Adst. Kielce</u>				
19.	Chomiuk, Regina	26.11.24.	"	42 463 "
20.	Gorska, Stanisława	15.4.11.	"	42 464 "
21.	Hempel, Danuta	18.4.22.	"	42 465 "
22.	Wawrot/Jamorska, Władysława	30.7.23.	"	42 466 "
23.	Sieradzan/Gorska, Jadwiga	15.10.07.	"	42 467 "
24.	Zapala, Krystyna	19.1.11.	"	42 468 "
25.	Miernik/Miernik, Maria	19.1.11.	"	42 469 "

Sondertransport v. Radom.

He/Wi.

19.30 Uhr

16.6.44.

26.	Nowak, Jozefa	1.3.28.	polit.	42 470	Polin
<u>Adst. Ostrowiec</u>					
27.	Dybiec, Janina	28.8.21.	polit.	42 471	"
28.	Dybiec, Alfreda	12.12.24.	"	42 472	"
29.	Dombrowska, Sabina	28.2.26.	"	42 473	"
<u>Adst. Petrikau</u>					
30.	Chinke/Kaminska, Stanislawa	28.5.18.	polit.	42 474	"
31.	Cieslowska/Janioka, Franciszka	1896	"	42 475	"
32.	Kapica, Helena-Henryka	19.1.24.	"	42 476	"
33.	Kolodziejczyk, Kazimiera	20.2.23.	"	42 477	"
34.	Kaminska, Stefanja	8.3.22.	"	42 478	"
35.	Kolano/Dynda, Jozefa	1.1.87.	"	42 479	"
36.	Kolano, Veronika	21.11.19.	"	42 480	"
37.	Kolano, Stanislaw	22.3.25.	"	42 481	"
38.	Napierska/Serek, Irena	1/8.4.14.	"	42 482	"
39.	Soboszyk, Zofia	3.5.23.	"	42 483	"
40.	Sowa/Ssarowicz, Helena	20.9.05.	"	42 484	"
41.	Wiatr, Bronislawa	29.5.16.	"	42 485	"
42.	Zaborowska, Jozefa	13.2.97.	"	42 486	"
43.	Zak/Jenczek, Luzia	22.8.10.	"	42 487	"
<u>Adst. Starachowicz</u>					
44.	Berlinska, Sofia	17.12.21.	polit.	42 488	"
45.	Mesiarek/Kowalik, Stanislawa	25.12.00	"	42 489	"
46.	Graba/Sarszoka, Ludwika	18.6.01.	"	42 490	"
<u>Adst. Tomaszow</u>					
47.	Helon/Offmanska, Halina	17.2.03.	polit..	42 491	"
48.	Lukaszevska, Danuta	26.5.24.	"	42 492	"
49.	Niedzielska/Sadlo, Jolanta	17.5.03.	"	42 493	"
50.	Witecka, Maria	2.2.21.	"	42 494	"
51.	Perenc/Piatek, Marianne	2.2.20.	"	42 495	"

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The list of Polish women sent to KL Ravensbrück, p. 2 and 3  
(AINR, MC 2535/1221)

Sondertransport v. Radom.

He/Wi.

19.30 Uhr

16.6.44.

52.	Tomaszewska/Para, Maria	30.1.08.	polit.	42 496	Polin
<u>Adst. Techenstochan</u>					
53.	Chrzastek, Aleksandra	9.11.28.	polit.	42 497	"
54.	Chrzastek/Pardela, Aleksandra	23.10.99.	"	42 498	"
55.	Jasiurska/Radawska, Wladyslawa	31.1.94.	"	42 499	"
56.	Jochymczyk/Kwed, Prakseda	17.6.04.	"	42 500	"
57.	Miohalik, Anna	3.7.23.	"	42 501	"
58.	Milkowska, Irena	3.6.24.	"	42 502	"
59.	Milkowska/Walda, Zofia	28.2.99.	"	42 503	"
60.	Plasa/Krysstofowicz, Maria	27.6.17.	"	42 504	"
61.	Sztuka, Janina	27.6.25.	"	42 505	"
62.	Sztuka/Lis, Wladyslawa	24.3.98.	"	42 506	"
63.	Zabochnicka, Helena	30.1.20.	"	42 507	"
64.	Zabochnicka/Palmowska, Janina	20.2.93.	"	42 508	"
65.	Dyl/Stachowicz, Jadwiga	31.8.18.	"	42 509	"
66.	Sliwakowska/Kukla, Anna	24.7.21.	"	42 510	"

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<u>Transport v. Krakau.</u>				He/Wi.
	20. 6. 44.			20. 6. 44.
1. Anlauf/Janka, Helena	3.8.09.	polit.	42 820	Polin
2. Badylek/Panjk, Rozalja	8.1.14.	"	42 821	"
3. Brzosowska/Tscharnowska Alexandra	3.1.03.	"	42 822	"
4. Buklad, Wladyslaw	4.12.13.	"	42 823	"
5. Cichorz/Stawarz, Josefa	25.3.06.	"	42 824	"
6. Grochowska/Kolacs, Michalina	4.10.05.	"	42 825	"
7. Heniaz/Jarozyska, Jahina	6.2.96.	"	42 826	"
8. Heniaz, Anna	20.12.22.	"	42 827	"
9. Jarocz/Tobola, Maria	27.8.14.	"	42 828	"
10. Jeziorska, Joanna	12.12.21.	"	42 829	"
11. Kopińska, Zofia	9.10.19.	"	42 830	"
12. Kluska/Pomierska, Zofia	15.1.22.	"	42 831	"
13. Kramarczyk/Grabysa, Josefa	14.2.20.	"	42 832	"
14. Krzeminski/Wermann/gesch./ Martha	1.8.09.	"	42 833	"
15. Lechowicz/Warga, Julia	1.8.90.	"	42 834	"
16. Lewandowski/Smajek, Helena	26.8.98.	"	42 835	"
17. Lpocka, Krystyna	28.9.23.	"	42 836	"
18. Lipińska/Wegrzynska, Henryka	15.7.00.	"	42 837	"
19. Pasurek, Helena	29.9.14.	"	42 838	"
20. Madwowska, Anna	30.9.10.	"	42 839	"
21. Pas, Zofia	3.3.14.	"	42 840	"
22. Pyka/Judowska, Zuzanna	16.6.02.	"	42 841	"
23. Rypien, Waleria	23.11.00.	"	42 842	"
24. Przegocka/Jachimek, Irena	17.3.13.	"	42 843	"
25. Stary, Isabella	19.4.25.	"	42 844	"
26. Stary, Zuzanna	13.6.16.	"	42 845	"
27. Wesolowska/Kolarska, Bronisława	21.7.24.	"	42 846	"
28. Witkowska/Veltscher, Klara	23.4.02.	"	42 847	Polin Julia

23. 6. 44.

Jo/Wi.

1. Lampens, Simone	28. 4.08	polit.	43 030	Belgierin
2. Rameau, Marie-Louise	2. 11.03	polit.	43 039	Französin
3. Tresse, Denise	19. 3.25	polit.	43 040	Französin
4. Talluel, Jeannine	21. 8.20	polit.	43 041	Französin
5. Walecka, Josefa	8. 2.05.	polit.	43 042	Polin
6. Wodka, Rosalie	5.10.25.	polit.	43 043	Polin
7. Wolkowa, Valentina	23.1.23.	polit.	43 044	Litauerin
8. Butzin, Irmgard	26.4.23.	polit.	43 045	"
9. Gnas, Helene	24.12.26	polit.	43 046	Polin

Überstellungen ins Jugendschuttlager.

Wratschko, Sonja	2.10.27	polit.	39 983
Buchmüller, Elfrieda	25.4.25	polit.	39 938
Kehmann, Ruth	24.5.26.	polit.	40 004

Berichtigungen.

Norden/Ramünke, Elisabeth	10.1.15.	polit.	38 182	Verk.m. Polen
<u>heisst richtig:</u> Ramünke, Elisabeth		gesch.		Norden.
Gau, Inna				
Kanzinska (verh.)	17 Jahre	asoz.	35 794	Zigeunerin Polin <u>ist politisch.</u>
Kwiatkowska/Barianska, Sofia	26.8.03.	polit.	35 849	Zigeunerin staatenlos <u>ist Polin</u>
Kwiatkowska/Pawolowska, Helena	1911	asoz.	35 852	Zigeunerin Polin <u>ist politisch</u>
Kwiatkowska/Kwiatkowska, Sofia	1910	asoz.	35 854	Zigeunerin Polin <u>ist politisch</u>
Reinhardt, Klara	19.5.21.	asoz.	36 017	Zigeunerin staatenlos <u>ist politisch</u>
Strauss, Sofia	23.9.29.	asoz.	36 074	Zigeunerin Polin.
<u>heisst richtig:</u> Franz - Strauss.				
Winter, Emma	12.4.24.	asoz.	36 103	Zigeunerin
<u>heisst richtig:</u> Reinhard - Winter.				

## The layout of the camp

According to Zofia Czajkowska, the camp was rectangular, the “blocks” (barracks) standing in two rows. The area of the camp also included kitchen buildings, a bathhouse, as well as administrative offices, warehouses, workshops and the camp hospital. The blocks had electricity, toilets and access to running water. Each barrack was divided into two parts: a bedroom and a dining room. Each bedroom held three-tiered bunks, and each woman had her own place to sleep. However, Zofia Czajkowska’s report refers to the beginning of her stay in the camp, i.e. 1940; she did not wish to speak about the subsequent years she had spent there. For this reason, some details of her description contrast with other inmates’ reports about the appearance of the camp or sleeping conditions in later years. For example, Zofia Czajkowska mentions that not only each inmate had her own bed, but that each of them had a white sheet and chequered pillowcase and cover for the blanket. It must be said that these conditions seem almost comfortable. In the following years, when the number of women in the camp increased dramatically, one’s own bed became a futile dream: in some cases, two or three women used one bed. Zofia Czajkowska also mentioned that cleanliness was considered very important. There were cupboards around the dining-room walls, each intended for three inmates, and the women kept dishes and toiletries in them. The wiping-cloth, towel and tableware had to be arranged in specific way, according to rules. Apart from cupboards, the dining rooms held tables for sixteen to twenty inmates. It was forbidden to enter the barrack in clogs, they had to be removed in front of the door. The women entered in stockinged feet and once inside, they put on the *laczki* – slippers sewn from rags of camp dresses.<sup>3</sup>

The building of the headquarters and administration of the women's concentration camp at Ravensbrück, ca. 1940 (housing the offices of the commandant and his adjutants, the Political Department, the camp doctor, the post office, the department of censorship and the pharmacy). Female inmates work in front of the headquarters. The guardhouse and the camp garage are visible behind the building. (National Site of Admonition and Remembrance at Ravensbrück, photo no. 1634)



The view of the barracks camp with barrack rows no. 1 and 2 of the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp at no. 1, Lagerstraße; in the foreground, the roof of the garage wing with chimneys of the inmates' kitchen behind, ca. 1940. The photograph was taken from the Commandant's Office building. In the middle ground to the left, among the barracks arranged on a letter H plan, is the inmates' hospital building constructed ca. 1940. The common name for a camp hospital in Polish: *rewir dla chorych* or simply *rewir*, was derived from the German term for a military-camp sickroom, *Revier*. In the years 1943–1945, the SS often transformed residential barracks into sickrooms. Ultimately, one-fifth of those barracks was assigned to the camp hospital. (National Site of Admonition and Remembrance at Ravensbrück, photo no. 1642)

Overseers in the women's concentration camp at Ravensbrück, lined up in a row for the visit of Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer of the SS; in the background, the front façade of the wing housing the baths and the camp kitchen, ca. 1941. (*National Site of Admonition and Remembrance at Ravensbrück, photo no. 1622*)

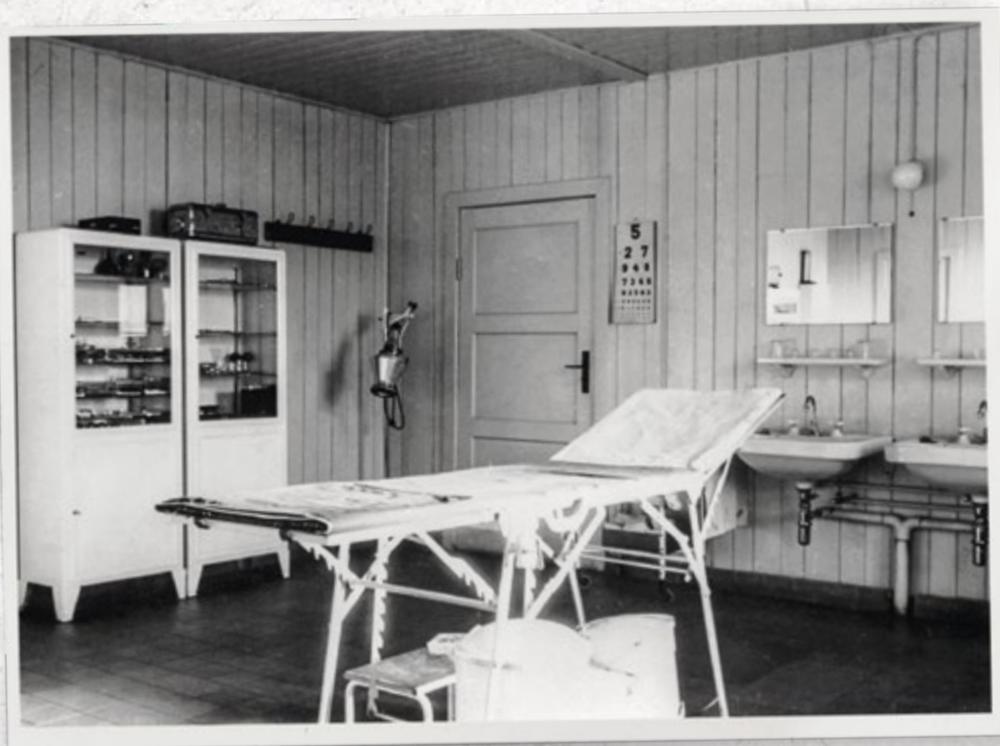


Heinrich Himmler, Max Koegel, other officers and head overseer (Oberaufseherin) Johanna Langefeld pass by the overseers, lined up to welcome the guests, in front of the wing housing the baths and the camp kitchen, ca. 1941. (*National Site of Admonition and Remembrance at Ravensbrück, photo no. 1624*)

Another inmate, Wanda Jarzycka, who arrived at KL Ravensbrück in 1944, recalled that the camp consisted of “the so-called transport blocks and work blocks. The transport ones were much larger, with about 500 bunks on which slept 1,500 to 2,000 people, sometimes more. In the winter months, many bunks were damaged due to overload, and the number of inmates increased significantly before they were taken to the factories [...]. Work blocks (some of them were also used as transport ones) were much smaller, with about 400 bunks, on which slept, on the average, 800 to 1000 people inmates. Those numbered 1 to 4 were the ‘showroom blocks’. There, almost every inmate had a bed for herself, or three slept on two beds”.

By the time Wanda Jarzycka arrived in KL Ravensbrück, however, it was a much larger camp. It consisted of five rows of blocks, separated by streets. The main street of the camp, in the camp parlance known as the *Lagerstrasse*,<sup>4</sup> led from the square in front of the kitchen to the second gate on the opposite side, leading to a separate part of the camp, the *Industriehof* (the camp’s industrial zone), to which the men’s camp adjoined, connected with the women’s one by a gate. On the left-hand side of the camp street was the hospital, offices, the *Strafblok* (a separate penal block), the laundry and the workshops, known as *betrieby*. On the right stood the residential barracks numbered 1 to 4, then the rest, up to number 11, were the sickroom blocks known as the *rewir* (*Revier*), and finally more workshops. The next three rows were residential barracks, of which the last two rows were known as large transport blocks. Instead of block 25, there was a large *celt* (*Zelt*), a kind of tent where incoming and outgoing transports of inmates were kept in the harshest conditions. There were 32 blocks in total. In January 1945 the last row of blocks, from number 27 to 32, was surrounded with wires.

The Ravensbrück camp was systematically expanded, although it still had a rectangular shape. It was surrounded by a wall four meters high, topped with electric wires, patrolled around by SS sentries with dogs. Initially, the camp was prepared to receive 15,000 inmates. Its expansion was related to the increasing number of women. Wanda Jarzycka recalls: "At the time of my arrival at the camp, the number of inmates was over 30,000, and in the winter months it reportedly rose to 42,000. These numbers refer only to the main camp, the so-called old camp. The largest percentage were Polish women, but apart from them there were all European nationalities; I even saw two black women".<sup>5</sup>



The outpatients room in the camp hospital, ca. 1941  
(National Site of Admonition and Remembrance at Ravensbrück, photo no. 1658)

Łódź, 19. III. 1976 r.

Szanowna Pani!

B. serdecznie dziękuję za przesyłany do mnie list, potoczeń się wzięły do akcji i proszę co tylko pamiętam.

1) Tyblewska Apolonia - moja matka  
ur. 13.I.1894 r. w Cierwińsku  
Nr. obozowy 52515

2) Kuciathowska Maria - 2 d. Tyblewska  
ur. 23.I.1923 r. w Warszawie.  
Nr. obozowy 52514

obie - pobyt  
w Ravensbrück  
jako więźniowie  
z Powstania  
Warszawskiego.

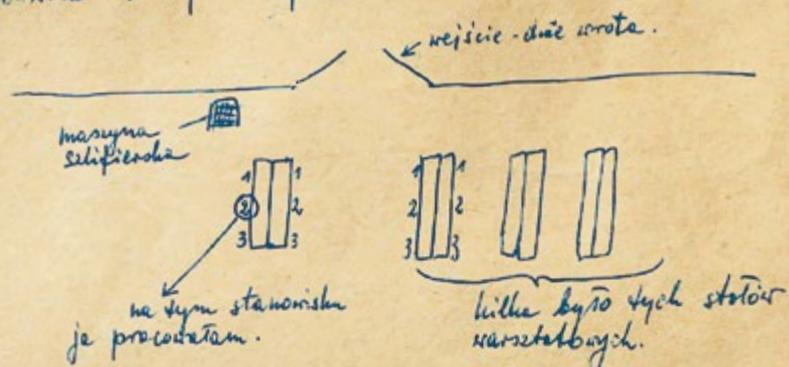
Data przybycia : do Ravensbrück - 15.VIII.1944 r.  
do obozu do Eberswalde - początek września 1944 r.

Data uwolnienia : z Eberswalde - 21.IV.1945 r. transport  
z obozu do Ravensbrück, a 25.IV.1945 r. - transport  
Szwedzkiego Czerwonego Krzyża do Szwecji.

Powrót do Polski : październik 1945 r. - Gdynia.

Nie powracając przez te wszystkie lata do spraw pobytu  
w obozie, nie miałam na to dość czasu pochłonięta kolejnymi  
studiami, wychowaniem dzieci, pracą zawodową, a konkretniej -  
pracą naukową. Dopiero teraz piszę do Pani wracam  
do wspomnień. Nie pamiętam wiele, tyle lat już minęło.  
Kilka dni temu zetknęłam się z p. Studzien Siedlitz,  
naszą współwięźniówką obozu w Eberswalde, która pracowała  
w tym samym komandzie co ja i która poznała mnie  
po tych latach. Przypominamy sobie wzajemnie różne  
szczegóły i nawet wiem teraz przy którym stole One  
pracowała. Teraz nasiliczyj mamy plan naszej hali

ni debayce. Kiem od p. Studzien, ie Pani zdaje sig  
pracowata w tej samej hali?



Praca nasza polegała na obróbce różnych drewnianych  
części aluminiowych (bo b. lekkich) przy pomocy imadła  
i pilników. Była też maszyna silifikacyjna, na której  
często pracowała p. Studzien. Robiła na niej takie  
(nielegalnie!) noże dla nas kolejanek, z kartridżów blachy!

Obok mnie na stanowisku Nr 1 - przy tym  
samym stole pracowała siostra Pani, o której jeszcze  
bramy, ładna, serdeczna - często do bramy wspominałem,  
ale nie pamiętam nazwiska. Czy to może Pani?  
Hydaje mi się, że to samo imię miała ta siostra Pani!

Do Eberswalde przywieziono nas wczesniej,  
było nas wtedy mało, mieszkalymy luźno, pojedynczo  
spędzamy na Tischel. Krótko potem przyjechały  
transporty z Ostrocimie i wtedy nas silikowano.  
Obok liczył zdaje się około 1000 kobiet.

Komendant - metody, dobre budowanie SS-ma.  
Komendantka - miła, b. przyjazna, wysoka,  
mocno budowana SS-manka, chłodnie przed naszymi  
szereżami dźwięm, charakterystyczny kokiem.

Nazwisk oczywiście nie znam.

Lekarz choroba - pamiętam choroba, nazwiska  
nie znam. Może Mama wspomina ją, jako

b. dobra kobieta; Mama miała słabe serce, nogi w czasie  
pracy (upadła jej podłoga) - lekarza choroba b. serdecznie  
się zajęła leceniem. Może Mama pracowała w  
innym mi ja komando - tam przy maszynach była  
obrobka dużych pocisków - chyba artyleryjskich.

Pamiętam też węgierską Reginę, która była  
nazwa „dageraltaste” - jeśli to się tak nazywało - ona  
meldowała komendantowi każdy epel po odliczeniu namyśl  
szereżów. Zastępowała ją cześc Ewa - starsza trochę, brępa  
kobieta

Inne osoby, które pamiętam z Eberswalde:

- 1) Skibińska Józefa - z Warszawy z Poznania, nie wiem jej losu.
- 2) Marter Krystyna - też z Warszawy - ona była w naszym  
komando prowadząca nas, miała trochę niemiecki, miode-1944
- 3) Krystyna Piatkowska - była wylka pożytkowa, miała  
niemiecki i była pożytkowo prowadząca nasze komando,  
ale była chore, zdaje się na płuce i wywieziono ją  
skrótce do Ravensbrück - miode, około 1944.
- 4) Tybleńska Alina - z Warszawy - moja siostra kuzynka,  
została w Szwecji - synka zaimię ze Szwecji. Adresu  
nie mam, ale mogę oświadczyć.
- 5) Pani Starucha - z Warszawy, była chore, wywieziono do  
Ravensbrück spowolnioną, po wojnie została w Warszawie,  
znam jej córki.
- 6) Rusin Helena - była z matką (nie pamiętam nazwiska)  
- która była szubora w mojej szubora.
- 7) Bożka Zofia - była szubora w szubora, a  
po wojnie była doznająca nasze ubikacje, czasem  
niektóre szubora - dla zachowania w nich porządku.  
Była po wojnie mieszkająca w Poznaniu.

Pamiętam jeszcze inne twarze - ale nazwisk nie pamiętam

Przepraszam serdecznie za opóźnienie, chętnie  
pomogę Pani w tej pracy, jeśli będzie mogła mi  
pisać.  
Marek Kwieciński

## *The men's camp in Ravensbrück*

The men's camp was established in April 1941. About 20,000 male inmates were registered there. They were used primarily as a reservoir of workforce used to enlarge the women's camp. The inmates included those transported from KL Dachau. Before they came to Ravensbrück, Egon Zill, the commandant of KL Dachau, told them: "In Ravensbrück, you will be building a women's prison and you will be quite fine there. I looked at the construction site and prepared everything for your arrival. Work well. You will return to Dachau in three months".<sup>6</sup> Apart from men from Dachau, inmates from Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Flossenbürg, Natzweiler, Auschwitz, Neuengamme and other camps were sent to work on the expansion of KL Ravensbrück. By the end of 1941, the Ravensbrück men's camp held about one thousand inmates. Of the total of 20,000 inmates altogether, the largest group were Poles, about 6,200, so they constituted 32% of all inmates. The second-largest group, about 4,400 men, consisted of the residents of the Soviet Union. Other inmates were Germans, Austrians, Frenchmen, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Italians, Belgians, Dutchmen and Jews.

The conditions were very hard; suffice it to mention that as a result of overcrowding, one sleeping place was occupied by two, and in the last weeks before the liberation by even four or five men. Food rations were small. There were not enough bowls to go round, so some inmates ate their meal in their caps turned inside out. All work had to be done at the assigned speed, regardless of what type of work it was. The men pulled heavy loads, transported tree trunks or building materials. In summer they were tortured by heat, in winter by cold. A moment of rest was a comfort of which an inmate could only dream.

Various medical experiments were performed on male inmates, as well as on the female ones. Some men were sterilized. They underwent persecution, torture and various punishments. During the evening roll call, men exhausted from hard work had to additionally perform physical exercises. The known rule-breakers were under the harshest supervision of SS-men. For this reason, many of the punitive measures were used with one purpose in mind: to kill the man in question. One of the tortures used to this end was the "bath", which consisted in directing a stream of ice-cold water towards the inmate's heart until the man fell dead. In the opinion of the German historian Bernhard Strebel, two periods can be distinguished in the functioning of the men's camp at Ravensbrück. The first phase lasted about a year and a half since the creation of the camp and was characterized by a high death rate. Almost half of all inmates were killed by torture, executed, or were so exhausted that the prospect of imminent death was more likely than hope of survival. In the second phase, which lasted until the end of the camp's existence, the situation improved slightly, as the Germans gave up the most brutal harassment and torture.<sup>7</sup>

## *Living conditions and labour in the camp*

Living conditions in the women's camp were as severe as in the men's one. The inmates got up every day at four in the morning. They washed, dressed, made beds and received a cup of black coffee. Then they went outside and arranged themselves in rows for the roll call. The subsequent work period lasted from six to twelve. Then the women returned to camp for the midday meal. To eat it, some columns of inmates had to walk the distance of up to 4km in each

direction. Only a few minutes were allowed for eating. At 1 pm the camp siren sounded, calling for the noon roll call. The afternoon work period initially ended at 5 p.m. and then was extended to 6 p.m. The evening roll call sometimes lasted until 9 pm. Only after its conclusion could the women eat dinner, then they repaired their undergarments, and with the sound of the siren they went to sleep.

The camp food was miserable. At noon, the portion was three-quarters of a litre of soup – the so-called *Eintopf*, a mixture of various vegetables with a little fat or scraps of meat. The evening meal consisted of some soup or possibly three or four potatoes and a lettuce leaf. At dinner, the inmates also received 20 or 25 decagrams of bread as the next day's allocation. On Sunday or holidays they could count on 10 decagrams of margarine, some cheese or 5 decagrams of sausage.

Women worked in the camp and outside it. They were involved in road-building, construction and logging, drainage works, loading and unloading trains, levelling uneven roads, various types of farm work and animal breeding, tending farm plants and flowers. Some of them worked for Siemens, the German company, whose plant was located about 1.5km from the camp. Siemens had twenty production halls there, and women from KL Ravensbrück were forced into slave labour there from the summer of 1942. The plant produced parts for radios and telephones, so the work done by the inmates required accuracy and precision.

The inmates also worked in a sewing room; this was a privileged workplace, where one could get in only by recommendation from a highly qualified dressmaker. They sewed decorative details for garments, such as belts, they carved buttons in wood, embroidered and made lace. Their products were then sold outside the camp or the overseers kept them for themselves. Military uniforms, fur coats for

soldiers fighting in the east, and socks were sewn in *Industriewerke*, and shoes were repaired in the shoemakers' workshops.

The women worked beyond their strength. They were allowed go to the toilet only at specific times; to use it outside the time limit required a doctor's note. Winter work was particularly hard. Because the inmates were lightly dressed, without gloves or scarves, the skin on their hands and face cracked from frostbite. The conditions were hardly better in the summer. Thick dresses and uncomfortable shoes made it difficult to do physical work in the heat. Deprived of water, they died of exhaustion. "The authorities sought to destroy us with these harsh conditions. It was perfectly intentional, the women overseers themselves said that it would be a waste to use a bullet for us, the conditions themselves would destroy us," said Zofia Czajkowska.<sup>8</sup>

Another inmate, Irena Kieruczenko, remembered that in the absence of food, each woman tried to acquire something to eat. Those who worked outside the camp had the opportunity to bring some rutabagas, beets or potatoes. This was, however, risky, because when the *aufseherka* (overseer, female sentry) searched an inmate and found food of any kind, she would immediately put this inmate in the "bunker" (solitary confinement) or the *strafblock*. The *strafblock* prisoners were given the hardest work and had to sing German songs while doing it. In the bunker, they did not receive food and had to last out for several days, sitting in a completely dark room.



Inmates working in the sewing workshop, ca. 1941  
(National Site of Admonition and Remembrance at Ravensbrück,  
photo no. 1679)



Inmates digging earthworks during the expansion of the camp area, ca. 1940  
(National Site of Admonition and Remembrance at Ravensbrück, photo no. 1680)



Inmates making cane mats under the supervision of  
an overseer, ca. 1941 (National Site of Admonition and  
Remembrance at Ravensbrück, photo no. 1688)



Inmates loading a cart, ca. 1941 (National Site of Admonition  
and Remembrance at Ravensbrück, photo no. 1699)

## *The subcamps*

The subcamps, euphemistically called labour camps by the SS, were a part of the KL Ravensbrück complex. It is believed that they began to be established in 1942. Apart from the smaller subcamps located at the land estates belonging to the SS, the first large ones were established in Grüneberg and Neurohlau, in November and December 1942 respectively. Inmates of either gender were required to do heavy labour for the needs of the German war economy. As Germany engaged significant forces on the eastern front, the country's economy experienced an increasing shortage of workforce, especially male workers. Therefore, it was decided to use inmates of concentration camps. The KL Ravensbrück subcamp system reached its peak of development in the summer of 1944, when no less than 37 subcamps were in operation. They were located not only in the territory of the former GDR; some were sited east of the Oder, up to Kalisz Pomorski, 100km from Szczecin. Their traces can also be found in the Sudetenland (today's Czech Republic) and in Austria. After 1944, more subcamps were created. Bernhard Strebel estimates their total number at 42, with the subdivision: small camps (up to 250 inmates), medium-sized camps (250 to 1000 inmates), large camps (above 1000 inmates). Most of the subcamps, eighteen, were medium-sized. They were located in Neurohlau, Klützwitz (Stargard district), Velten, Belzig, Wolfen, Karlshagen II, Genthin, Oranienburg/Auer, Zwodau, Holleischen, Kallies (Kalisz Pomorski), Finow, Schlieben, Berlin-Schönefeld, Königsberg in der Neumark (Chojna), Graslitz, Eberswalde and Schwarzenpfost. The largest subcamps, among which there were many through which thousands of inmates passed, included Rechlin/Retzow, Malchow, Grüneberg, Neubrandenburg, Karlshagen I, Barth, Leipzig-Schönefeld, Magdeburg, Altenburg and Neustadt-Glewe.<sup>9</sup> Particularly noteworthy

is the Neubrandenburg subcamp. Names of over 100 female inmates buried there were discovered after 74 years and are listed on the memorial plaque. 45 Polish women were commemorated with a separate plaque, which was unveiled for the 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the camp in 2019.



51

TYPOWE PRZESTĘPSTWA.

Obóz. *Uckermark* ..... prowincja *Uckermark*

Czasokres. *2.V - 5.V. 1945*

Opis. *Na miejscu alicatoranego niemieckiego obozu obozowego w Ravensbrück otwarto dla dziewcząt i młodych kobiet z terenów zajętych przez Niemców, mających na celu wyeliminowanie nadmiernej gęstości ludności w obozie. W obozie otwarto dla dziewcząt i młodych kobiet z terenów zajętych przez Niemców, mających na celu wyeliminowanie nadmiernej gęstości ludności w obozie.*

Kto wydawał rozkazy i kto wypełniał / jednocześnie wypełnić karty ewidencyjne dla zbrodniarzy wojennych/.....  
*Rozkazy wydawał kierownik obozu Hauptstaabsführer Turyna, głównym wykonawcą był kier. rob. przy. Flaum, którego karty ewidencyjne ratujemy*

Data. *14.V. 1945*

Podpis: *M. Okaidowa Uoel. 1892. Warszawa*  
*Wojewódzka Komisja Przesłuchująca*  
*Przewodniczący M. Molszenhauer*  
*Członkowie Gucimka Golicja*  
*A. Kosińska*  
*T. J. J. J.*

Basic information about the Uckermark camp (AINR, MC 159/66)

# Jugendschutzlager Uckermark

Paul Werner is considered to be the author of the concept of camps for young people, and the decision in this matter was made on 1 February 1940 during a meeting of the Reich Defence Council. Initial construction works in a camp for young women at KL Ravensbrück began in July 1941. Its official opening took place almost a year later, on June 1, 1942. The youth subcamp founded at KL Ravensbrück, called Jugendschutzlager Uckermark, was located 3km away from the main women's camp, in a beautiful pine forest on the shores of the lake. The service regulations stated that "the commandant of the KL Ravensbrück concentration camp for women is also the commandant of the Uckermark preventive youth camp",<sup>10</sup> so during the construction period and at the beginning of its operation, it was supervised by Max Koegel. Lotte Toberentz was delegated to the camp as its director and served in this capacity throughout the entire existence of the Jugendschutzlager Uckermark. Her deputy was Johanna Braach. Apart from straightforward managerial responsibilities, the most important tasks of the camp director included training the young inmates, distributing work, and systematically informing the commandant of progress in "educational work". The camp deputy director was responsible for organizing roll calls and checking the number of attending inmates. She also prepared reports, for example about the inmates' health. It is estimated that the camp held about 1,180 young women., most of them between 18 and 21 years of age. They came to Jugendschutzlager Uckermark not only from KL Ravensbrück, but also from various educational centres. The aforementioned service regulations stated that the stay in this camp was connected with the necessity to carry out a "review of juveniles from the criminal and biological standpoint in terms of their susceptibility to educational activity,

to support those who appear able to live in the national community to such an extent that they would find their place there, as well as to perform the storage and utilisation of non-promising individuals as workforce until their final transfer to a concentration camp, a detention facility or a medical and long-term care facility”.<sup>11</sup> According to the camp personnel, the best educational method was hard work. The girls’ workload was equal to that of adult women inmates of KL Ravensbrück, also at the Siemens factory. Severe penalties were imposed on them in case they shirked work or broke discipline. The process of gradually emptying the Jugendschutzlager Uckermark began in December 1944. The final decision to close it was made in January 1945. The survivors gradually joined the ranks of the inmates at the Ravensbrück camp.

## *Action 14f13*

From 1939, a programme for the physical elimination of mentally ill and intellectually deficient people was implemented in the form of an action codenamed T 4. The number of people killed simply because they had been in, for instance, psychiatric hospitals is difficult to estimate. Action 14f13 was carried out as a part of that programme. This codename, taken from correspondence with the commandants of concentration camps, conceals the murder of camp inmates with disabilities, mentally ill ones and those unable to work. Due to the systematically increasing number of camp inmates, the SS decided to select those who were sick, weak, or unfit for hard and exhausting work for the German industry, who were then labelled as “racially defective” and eliminated, gassed with carbon monoxide in gas chambers. In the case of KL Ravensbrück, the first transport of selected inmates left the camp on 4 February 1942.

Lured by the promise of being transferred to other camps, they did not suspect they were going to their deaths. Bernhard Strebel determined that the number of women executed in Action 14f13 was 1600 in total. They were sent to the gas chamber in the Treatment and Care Centre in Bernburg (Saale).<sup>12</sup> On the lists of women sent from Ravensbrück were not only ones who were disabled or incapable of work, but also those suffering from tuberculosis, asthma, “antisocial” ones suffering from venereal diseases, as well as healthy women classified as “criminals”.

Death certificates issued to the relatives of the victims by the Registry Office contained false data regarding the place and date of death; for example, KL Ravensbrück was entered as the place of death. The inmates’ records, on the other hand, were annotated with a general note “transferred to another camp”. Bernhard Strebel failed to determine where the men from KL Ravensbrück were executed, although it is assumed that, as in the case of women, they died in the gas chamber in Bernburg.

In the second phase of Action 14f13, in 1943–1944, the inmates were killed in the gas chamber of the Care Facility at Hartheim Castle near Linz in Austria. According to eye-witnesses, some sixty of the “black transports”, as the inmates called them, left KL Ravensbrück; fifty to seventy women were transported in each.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, the camp authorities tightened the selection criteria, focusing primarily on the mentally ill. The others, as long as able to work, were sent to industrial plants.

## Medical experiments

Experiments of this type were carried out on female inmates in 1942–1944. The German military command was impatient with the slow progress of treatment of wounded German soldiers on the war front. Various medical experiments were carried out on women from KL Ravensbrück to find new ways to treat wounds. The women were deliberately injured, infected with bacteria, and then observed. They were also given various courses of medication to monitor and assess their effects on health. Medical experiments were carried out on young and often healthy people. Nobody asked them for their opinion or permission. They did not know why they were taken to the operation room. In general, these treatments consisted of:

1) infecting the wounds and monitoring the effectiveness of sulphonamides. The women received an incision in their leg, and then various germs (e.g. bacteria causing gas gangrene and tetanus, *Staphylococcus aureus*) were injected, resulting in an infection. In addition, various materials were applied to the wounds, for example pieces of glass, wood or paper, thus simulating the conditions that could happen on the front during the war. Plaster was put on infected legs. Some women were given sulphonamides, others were not given any medicine.

2) Breaking or cutting the bone and then transplanting the bone from one leg to another. In this way, bone regeneration was observed.

3) Excision of sections of the muscles and nerves in the lower extremities.

These experiments were mainly carried out on Polish inmates of KL Ravensbrück, among others those who came with the so-called Lublin-Warsaw transport on 23 September 1941.<sup>14</sup> 86 inmates are currently known to have died, including 74 Polish women:

Wanda Wojtasik, Maria Gnaś, Aniela Okoniewska, Maria Zielonka, Rozalia Gutek, Wanda Kulczyk, Urszula Karwacka, Władysława Karolewska, Jadwiga Kamińska, Krystyna Iwańska, Alicja Jurkowska, Zofia Kormańska, Janina Iwańska, Maria Karczmarz, Zofia Kawińska, Janina Mitura, Aniela Sobolewska, Krystyna Dąbska, Zofia Stefaniak, Zofia Sokulska, Stefania Łotocka, Stanisława Młodkowska, Maria Pietrzak, Alfreda Prus, Zofia Sas-Hoszowska, Weronika Kraska, Apolonia Rakowska, Maria Nowakowska, Maria Pajączkowska, Weronika Szuksztul, Maria Kuśmierczuk, Kazimiera Kurowska, Maria Kapłon, Czesława Kostecka, Leokadia Kwiecińska, Pelagia Maćkowska, Irena Krawczyk, Aniela Lefanowicz, Zofia Kiecol, Genowefa Kluczek, Stanisława Jabłońska, Jadwiga Łuszcz, Barbara Pietrzyk, Izabela Rek, Stanisława Śledziejowska, Barbara Pytlewska, Zofia Baj, Irena Backiel, Leonarda Bień, Bogumiła Bąbińska, Maria Cabaj, Maria Grabowska, Stanisława Czajkowska, Helena Hegier, Maria Broel-Plater, Krystyna Czyż, Anna Sienkiewicz, Jadwiga Bielska, Wacława Andrzejak, Jadwiga Dzido, Eugenia Mikulska, Jadwiga Gisges, Eugenia Mann, Wojciecha Buraczyńska, Pelagia Michalik, Janina Marczevska, Władysława Marczevska, Janina Marciniak, Stanisława Michalik, Halina Piotrowska, Zofia Modrowska, Helena Piasecka, Stefania Sieklucka, and Joanna Szydłowska. In addition to Polish women, Maria Hreczana, a Ukrainian, Maria Konwitska, a German, and ten disabled inmates of different nationalities were subjected to similar medical experiments. It should also be noted that from 120 to 140 women of the Romani and Sinti ethnic groups were sterilized. All these experiments were performed by Dr Karl Franz Gebhardt, assisted by Dr Fritz Fischer and district physicians: Herta Oberhauser, Rolf Rosenthal and Gerhard Szydłowski (Schidlausky). Other camp doctors were Dr Percival Treite and Dr Walter Sonntag.

At the time of the actual operation, all sanitary staff of the infirmary consisting of female inmates was removed, with only German women, nurses from the SS medical service, remaining. When women tried to learn anything about their operations, they were only told that they should not complain, resist or rebel, because their operations had been “carried out for the benefit of humanity...”<sup>15</sup>

After the war, Alicja Jurkowska presented the course of this experimental operation.

What were the sanitary conditions during the surgery itself, I cannot say because I was anaesthetized before being transported to the operating room. However, based on dressings, I can state that the basic rules of hygiene were not observed: doctors did not wash their hands, often approached open wounds with a cigarette or cigar in their teeth, they took gauze and bandages with dirty hands and put them on wounds. The camp doctors, men, i.e. Rosenthal and Schidlausky, almost always came tipsy or drunk. For example, before my surgery Rosenthal mumbled to us that he had drunk too much that day [...]. My surgery belonged to the muscular infection class. The germs were introduced surgically: my right leg muscles were cut down to the bone at a stretch of about 15cm. I cannot say anything about the type and amount of the introduced germ. Large amounts of pus flowed out of the wound for two weeks. After this period, the whole cut was covered with proud flesh, which was burned out with lapis. I went to have the wound dressed regularly for seven months, but small amounts of pus were still coming out much later, as the wound opened and suppuration returned when it was cold. In addition, my wound was contaminated with small bones, introduced during surgery, which made treatment difficult and caused the wound to reopen. The last such piece came out in November last year, i.e. over four years after the surgery.

For three days after the operation, the leg remained in a cast, while during the next two dressing changes, i.e. about six days, I could not see the wound, because my face was covered with a sheet while the dressing was being put in place. It was only during the third dressing change when I felt that the wound was cleared of pus, I threw the sheet away from my face and saw that there was a 3–4cm wide cut in my leg, through which the bone could be seen. I couldn't see any more, because I was covered again. At the second dressing, when I was still not looking at the wound, I felt that some tendon or muscle band had been separated and stretched so that I had a feeling that the knee and ankle came together, and then I heard the scissors clang and this muscle relaxed, obviously something was cut out [...].

Sometimes Rosenthal, Schidlausky and German nurses applied dressings in a particularly painful way, bruising the wound. When they asked me if it hurt I tried to remain calm, knowing their tendencies, I said that I did not feel any pain, which drove them mad. It was much better when, after a period of three weeks, Polish inmates working in the infirmary began to change my dressings [...].

For about a week after the surgery I had a constant temperature between 39 and 40 degrees, after which it fell gradually and went into a constant low fever. To make observations and experiments more difficult for the Germans, we tried not to give them our real temperature readings. The same applies to our frame of mind, the most painful places and all questions related to the operations.

As a result of surgery, the low fever combined with leg pain keeps returning to this day. Sometimes, for no reason, the leg swells at the ankle, even without the pain. I can no longer walk or stand for longer periods, because my leg tires easily and I strongly feel the weather changes. Near the scar itself there is one place that looks like a growing ulcer; it turns red and swells, itches strongly and is very painful when touched, and after some time it disperses [...].

As for our well-being, despite the fact that each of us felt very depressed within, on the outside we tried to keep in good spirits as much as possible, pretending to be contented and keeping a stiff upper lip. We refrained from mentioning our ailments and emotions in order to create a lighter atmosphere for everyone. This was all the more necessary because we expected a rapid liquidation of the “rabbit”<sup>16</sup> group, especially since some women from our Lublin-Warsaw transport were taken away for executions, and those who had been operated on were among them [...]. In the camp, the Germans tried to foster the opinion that all the “rabbits” had volunteered and the operations were carried out with our consent, but few believed it, and later our protests, which went all the way to the revolt, opened their eyes.

As for the camp’s attitude towards the women who had undergone those experiments, it was extraordinary. All fellow inmates tried to help the “rabbits” at every step and shared food from the parcels they received. Especially deserving of recognition are our fellow inmates who worked in the kitchen, who extracted whatever they could from German warehouses to provide us with food. Similarly, all those who were taken to work outside the camp considered themselves obliged to smuggle in food for those who had been operated on.<sup>17</sup>



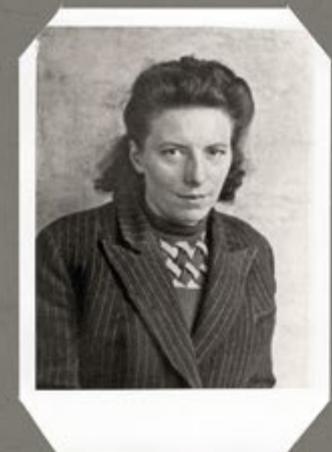
Władysława  
Karolewska



Jadwiga Dzido



Helena Hegier



Maria  
Broel-Plater



Maria  
Kuśmierczak

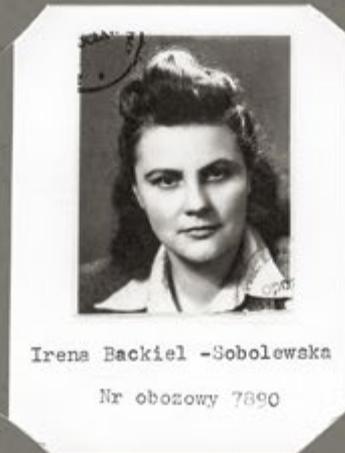


Zofia  
Sas-Hoszowska



Wacława Andrzejak - Gnatowska  
Nr obozowy 7718

Wacława  
Andrzejczak-Gnatowska



Irena Backiel - Sobolewska  
Nr obozowy 7890

Irena  
Backiel-Sobolewska



Bogumiła Bąbińska - Dobrowolska Jasiuk  
Nr obozowy 7690

Bogumiła  
Bąbińska-Dobrowolska Jasiuk



Wojciecha Buraczyńska - Zeiske  
Nr obozowy 7926

Wojciecha  
Buraczyńska-Zeiske



Maria Cabaj - Kalinowska  
Nr obozowy 11306

Maria  
Cabaj-Kalinowska



Grażyna Chrostowska,  
portret zrobiony  
w październiku 18 IV 1942 r.

Grażyna Chrostowska



Zofia Baj - Kotkowska  
Nr obozowy 7685

Zofia  
Baj-Kotkowska



Jadwiga Belska - Mojejko  
Nr obozowy 7122

Jadwiga  
Belska-Mojejko



Maria Broel Plater - Skassa  
Nr obozowy 7911

Maria  
Broel Plater-Skassa



Stanisława Czajkowska - Bafia  
Nr obozowy 7864

Stanisława  
Czajkowska-Bafia



Krystyna Czyż - Wilgat  
Nr obozowy 7708

Krystyna  
Czyż-Wilgat



Krystyna Dąbska - Jaszak  
Nr obozowy 7660

Krystyna  
Dąbska-Jaszak



Jadwiga Dzido -Hassa  
Nr obozowy 7860

Jadwiga  
Dzido-Hassa



Grabowska Maria -zmarła w 1976r.  
Nr obozowy 7674

Maria Grabowska



Jadwiga吉斯  
Nr obozowy 7009

Jadwiga吉斯



Alicja Jurkowska -Serafin  
Nr obozowy 7716

Alicja  
Jurkowska-Serafin



Zofia Kawińska -Ciszek  
Nr obozowy 7935

Zofia  
Kawińska-Ciszek



Zofia Kormańska -Kolańska  
Nr obozowy 7884

Zofia  
Kormańska-Kolańska



Helena Hegier -Rafalska  
Nr obozowy 7096

Helena  
Hegier-Rafalska



Janina Iwańska  
Nr obozowy 7711

Janina Iwańska



Krystyna Iwańska -zmarła w 1958r.  
Nr obozowy 7710

Krystyna Iwańska



Jadwiga Kamińska - Paprocka  
Nr obozowy 7783 - zmarła w 1975r.

Jadwiga  
Kamińska-Paprocka



Urszula Karwacka -Gruszczyńska -zmarła w 1959r.  
Nr obozowy 7920

Urszula  
Karwacka-Gruszczyńska



Władysława Karolewska -Łapińska  
Nr obozowy 7928

Władysława  
Karolewska-Łapińska



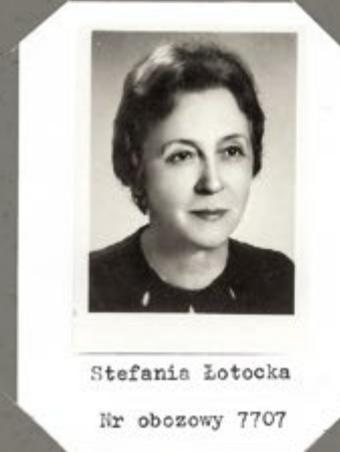
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Karczmarz-tysakowska



Genowefa  
Kluczek-Kącka



Czesława Kostecka



Stefania Łotocka



Jadwiga  
Łuszcz-Fajfer



Pelagia Maćkowska



Wanda  
Kulczyk-Rosiewicz



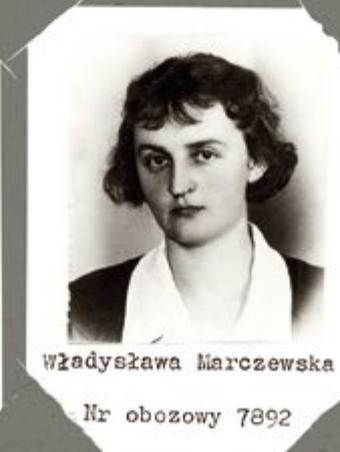
Maria Kuśmierczuk



Leokadia Kwiecińska



Janina  
Marczevska-Sterkowicz



Władysława Marczevska



Janina  
Marciniak-Budiszewska



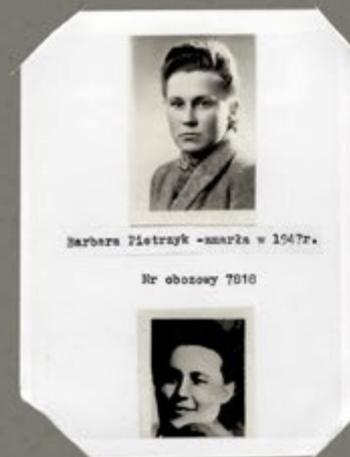
Stanisława  
Młodkowska-Bielawska



Stanisława Michalik



Zofia Modrowska



Barbara Pietrzyk



Maria Halina  
Pietrzak-Skibińska



Halina  
Piotrowska-Wrochno



Maria  
Nowakowska-Kwiatkowska



Aniela  
Okoniewska-Mróż



Helena Piasecka



Alfreda Prus



Barbara  
Pytlewska-Brzozowska



Izabella Rek-Koper



Zofia  
Sas Hozowska-Tietz



Stefania Sieklucka



Weronika  
Szuksztul-Gołębiowska



Stanisława  
Sledziejowska-Osiczko



Wanda  
Wojtasik-Póltawska



Anna  
Sienkiewicz-Zieleniec



Zofia  
Sokulska-Kaczmarek



Zofia  
Stefaniak-Mrówczyńska



Helena Salska



Joanna Szydłowska

## *The rebellion*

Alicja Jurkowska arrived in KL Ravensbrück on 23 September 1941 in the Lublin-Warsaw transport, which contained 420 women. Both she and many other women had no doubt that having concluded the experiments, the Germans would liquidate all inmates used as guinea pigs, because they constituted tangible evidence of their crimes. Taking inmates away to be executed, camp authorities never stated with what aim a particular inmate had been called up, but everyone was perfectly aware of what happened to the selected women, because each time their clothes were soon returned, bloodied, to the camp warehouse. Therefore, when on 2 February 1945 the order came to prepare a transport of all the 64 surviving inmates who had undergone medical experiments, the women decided not to report for the transport, counting on the help of other inmates. This was possible because the camp was overcrowded: in January 1945, inmates from the evacuated KL Auschwitz were sent to Ravensbrück, as well as, earlier, the residents of Warsaw displaced after the pacification of the uprising. The Germans were unaware of the exact number of inmates, they did not know who was alive and who was not, because many deaths in the Oświęcim group went unreported. Years later, Alicja Jurkowska stated that when the order came for the surviving “rabbits” to report to the authorities, women simply did not come forward. They were told that in connection with the anticipated evacuation of the camp, the German authorities wanted to help them and convey them in a separate transport so that they would not have to walk on foot. “Attempts to extract us from the ranks of inmates by force met with firm resistance from the whole camp. Then some of the women operated on put on their dresses the numbers of women from the Auschwitz group who had died, others swapped numbers and barracks and changed

their appearance, and operation scars on the legs were covered with stockings. Five of those operated on dug a hole under their block. Thanks to the swapping of numbers, a dozen or so women from our group managed to leave the camp together with the inmates sent to dig trenches. It would have certainly been difficult for the Germans to find the women they had operated on among the 40,000 inmates, but it would not have been impossible. Maybe, considering the events on the fronts at that time, the camp authorities began to soften and look for certain advantages for themselves. The fact is that they did not order a review of the entire camp and they were reconciled with our group’s rebellion”.<sup>18</sup> After the camp was liberated, Alicja Jurkowska went to Sweden. After the war, she settled in Plymouth in England. Her testimony was used during the trial against the KL Ravensbrück staff which took place in Hamburg in the late December 1946 and early January 1947.

## *Penalties*

Interrogations and punishments meted to inmates for alleged offences were as severe in their effects as the medical experiments. One of those offences was trying to smuggle any amount of food, however small, into the camp. Helping in escape attempts was even more severely punished, as experienced by Elżbieta Kwiczala, who was arrested on 19 April 1943 and charged with aiding two Polish women escapees. She was interrogated by Ludwig Ramdohr, notorious in the camp for organizing a network of secret collaborators among the inmates. He needed to know what the women were talking about and planning when they were alone in the barracks.

Commandant Fritz Suhren and Commissioner Ludwig Ramdohr imposed on Elżbieta Kwiczala a penalty of fifteen weeks in solitary

confinement. It was a cell with a darkened window, without ventilation. Interrogations were held mostly at night. She spent the first eight days without food, sleeping on the bare floor. After eight days, she received 25 decagrams of bread and half a litre of black coffee. She was also provided with a blanket, sheet, towel and bunk without a straw mattress, but her warm dress and underwear were taken away. She was also tortured. As she herself testified, the method of torture was as follows: she was forced into a low squat and her hands were cuffed below her knees, a leather belt was put around the neck and the neck was pulled down to the bound hands. Then six blankets were brought and put over her head. At the bottom, the edges of those blankets were carefully rolled up so that very little air could get inside. The windows were tightly closed and darkened. She was kept in this position for three hours, until she lost consciousness. She spent eleven and a half months in the penal bunker, of which 15 weeks in the darkened room, she was starved for 19 weeks, received 25 lashes and was tortured twice (by strangling and drowning). She spent a total of 80 hours at the hearings.<sup>19</sup>

“There were cases of suicide in the camp, committed by throwing oneself on high-voltage wires,” Maria Moldenhawer testified years later. “To scare the others away, the body was left hanging on the wires for a few days and officially shown to inmates. The block where the suicide happened was punished, and in the event of an unsuccessful attempt, the woman went to the bunker after recovery and was beaten”.<sup>20</sup>

These accounts give a terrible picture of the conditions of camp life. Hard work, starvation rations, severe punishments, medical experiments and interrogations; all this made it easy for inmates to go insane.

## *Mutual relations*

Relationships between the inmates were complex. There are many of testimonies telling of mutual support, encouragement and help. One example is the account given by Elżbieta Gemzer. Because she was often ill, her fear of being sent to Uckermark, which meant going to certain death, was justified. In December 1945 she testified that due to her poor health, it finally became necessary to secretly alter her file. “Women working in the hospital block burnt my proper file and issued me a clean one, where all the diseases I went through in the camp were not marked. This was one of the things that allowed me to survive the camp, I owe my life also to them”.<sup>21</sup>

Providing help to those in need was the main purpose of, among others, the clandestine scouting team called “The Walls”. It was established in 1941, and its name symbolised separation from the difficult reality of the camp. Women scouts helped fellow inmates with their work, acquired food and medicines. They were also involved in artistic, religious and educational activities, and they conducted sabotage actions. They tried to influence others with their smiles and good cheer. The founder of this organization was Józefa Kantor, known as “the parson in a skirt”.

However, living in such extreme conditions is conducive to all pathologies. In the camp, this was evident, for instance, in the frequency of false accusations and mutual denunciations. It should be remembered that in Ravensbrück, apart from women imprisoned for political reasons and arrested for underground activities, there were female prisoners from criminal circles, arrested for fraud, theft and other offences. There were also many prostitutes and mentally ill women. While not making any generalizations, it can be said that conditions in this German concentration camp were

conducive to the development of behaviours that would normally be regarded as antisocial. The Germans themselves contributed to this, cramming thousands of women into the machine of their industry, objectifying them, treating them as cheap labour force. Those women who weakened from hunger and exhaustion were separated from the rest and sent to the former youth camp, the Jugendlager, and there to the gas chambers. Others were intended “for transportation”, which was a euphemistic term for being taken outside the camp, where only death was awaiting them.

In addition, separated from their natural family environments, the inmates were deprived of any support and they suffered from a lack of contact with loved ones. Over time, some began to turn to each other for comfort, which encouraged the development of lesbianism. According to Maria Moldenhawer, the cause of these relationships was loneliness prevailing among women. “Lesbian love, which spread among the German women to an unbelievable extent, also permeated the Polish groups. In many cases, this was due to loneliness and hysteria, but the outward impression that it made was disgusting,” she wrote after the war.<sup>22</sup>

## Children

The first underage inmates were brought to KL Ravensbrück probably in June 1939. They were girls of over 14 years of age. In 1942–1943, probably several hundred Russian, Ukrainian and Polish girls aged 16 and younger were sent to Ravensbrück. They were probably ones previously deported to forced labour in Germany. In addition, there were children of Jewish, Romanian, Hungarian, Portuguese and Spanish origin. From spring 1944, the number of children in the camp increased rapidly. This was related to transports arriving

from the Gypsy and women’s camps in KL Auschwitz, from Warsaw after the Uprising, from the Łódź ghetto and the forced labour camp for Jews in Piotrków. Their fate was not easy. “To the camp management, children were an unnecessary burden, unproductive mouths to feed, and they were treated accordingly. They were subject to special regulations. They were not allowed to leave the block during the day, they could only enter the camp street when accompanied by the block or room overseer. The camp management thought that the children got enough fresh air while standing outside during the morning and evening roll calls. They were not allowed to have toys. They were to sit quietly in the corner of the living room. There was also a ban on teaching older children anything [...]. Children imitate the world of adults in their games. In KL Ravensbrück, they enacted what they saw every day in the adult world: selections for the gas or for transport, standing at the roll call, or dying”.<sup>23</sup>

It is no wonder that when in December 1944 the women decided to stage a Christmas play for children, the young ones did not know how to behave. It was something completely new to them. “They did not have the strength to laugh. They forgot how to laugh,” one of the former inmates testified years later. “Some whimpered quietly, in fear [...]. A few began to scream hysterically and were carried out. The older ones clapped after each scene, but the youngest ones reacted with fear to the sound which undoubtedly reminded them of the slaps they had received”.<sup>24</sup>

Children over 12 years of age were directed to armaments plants, where they worked in shifts, just like adults. Many women in the camp tried to play the role of camp mothers, as far as they were able to cope with this difficult task.

One of the former inmates who after the war gave a testimony regarding the children in KL Ravensbrück was Maria Moldenhawer.

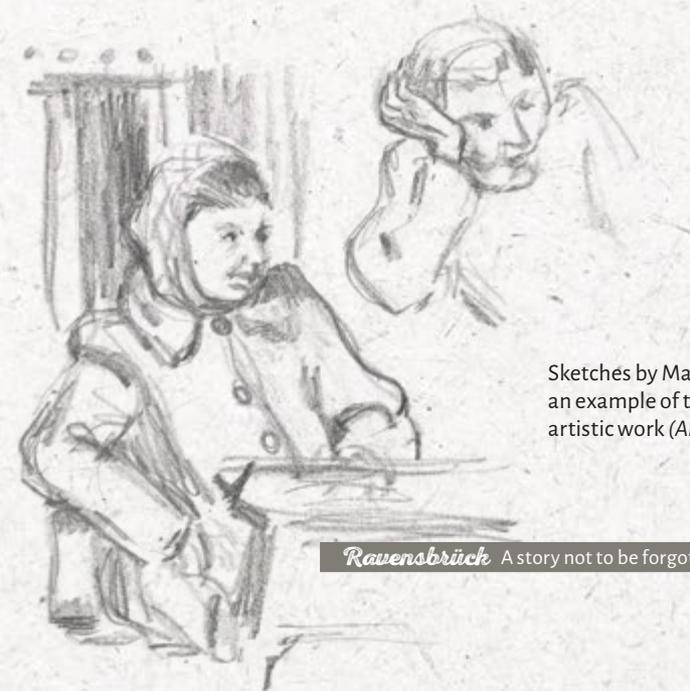
In an interview with an employee of the Polish Research Institute in Lund, she stated that “pregnant women were exempted from work, but they did not receive additional food. Infants were taken from their mothers just after birth, the women were allowed to see them only at feeding times. Children lay, without proper supervision, in a separate room that in winter was hardly heated”. According to Maria Moldenhawer, infant mortality in the camp reached 90%.<sup>25</sup>

## *Artistic, religious and political life*

How did the women deal with the difficult conditions of everyday life in the camp? What could offer respite from this difficult, traumatic reality? Halina Charaszewska-Brückman recalled: “To maintain mental balance, we gathered secretly to talk on various topics, we told, in instalments, the stories from books we had read, we organised singing evenings, there was even a theatre group. Larger festivities united all nationalities, of which a lot arrived in the last six months (Russians, Ukrainians, Yugoslavs, Latvians, Czechs, Estonians, several Frenchwomen, 1 Dutch woman, 1 German woman). The initiators were the Polish women, always the Polish women”.<sup>26</sup>

Maria Moldenhawer’s account adds to this testimony: “The camp’s artistic activity began to develop on a large scale, in which the Polish women were the leaders to the end, even after the arrival of numerous inmates of other nationalities. Poems, drawings, objects carved from buttons or toothbrush handles were at a high artistic level. A number of lectures and discussion meetings on literary topics, as well as camp nativity shows, allowed some relaxation and respite”.<sup>27</sup>

“In the studio next to me sat two lady painters: Maria Hiszpańska-Neumann, known as Myszka [Mouse], and Maja Berezowska, and they painted portraits of overseers to bribe them,” recalled Alicja Gawlikowska-Świerczyńska years later. Thanks to this, they were left in peace. “Hiszpańska depicted everything dramatically: emaciated figures, and she did not quite manage with drawing the overseers,” said Alicja Gawlikowska-Świerczyńska. “And Berezowska made a beauty out of every one, so they were delighted when they received their portraits as a gift. Maja won on this, and poor ‘Mouse’ got in trouble. She made beautiful, authentic drawings from the camp. However, it was difficult for her to paint in a positive manner and make generously endowed ladies out of our overseers [...]. She had a different way of painting, a different look, and it cost her a lot of effort to beautify these women. She had to fight and force herself, and she tried a little. But she did not draw as naughtily as Berezowska. Because Berezowska drew the overseers with their busts almost out. She had such style, and she had such looks, too. Hiszpańska was asthenic: introverted, emotional, sad, taciturn, thin, miserable, with black eyes, black hair [...]. Berezowska was an optimist and Hiszpańska, a pessimist”.<sup>28</sup>



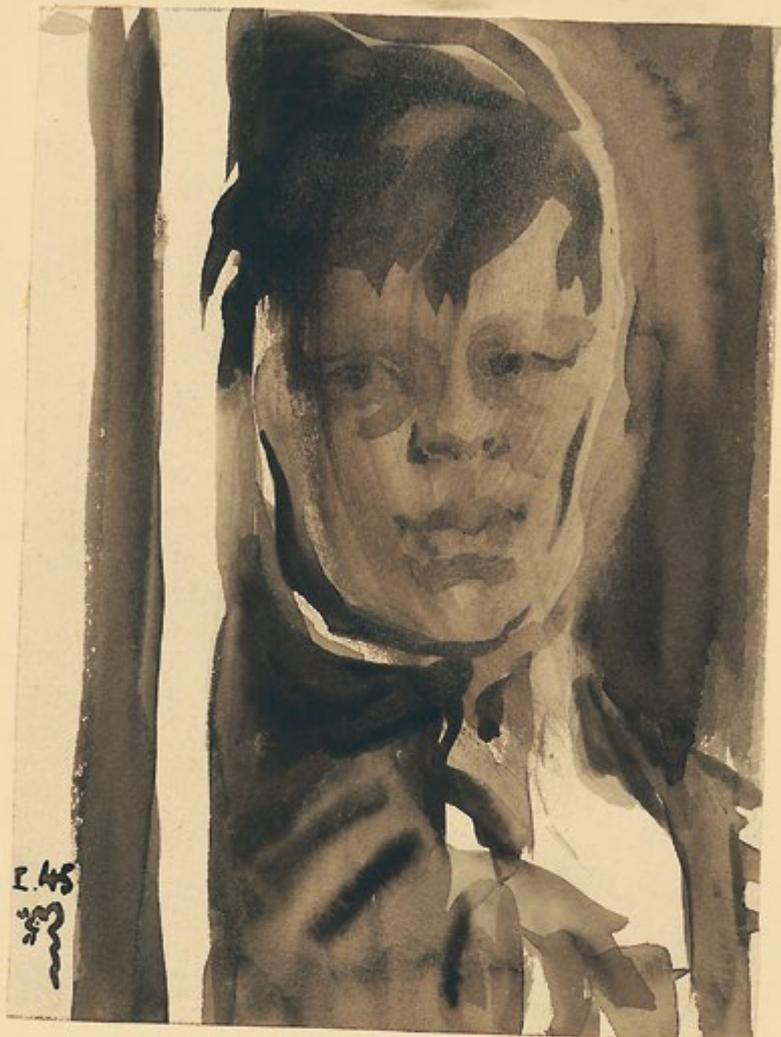
Sketches by Maria Hiszpańska-Neumann as an example of the Ravensbrück camp inmates’ artistic work (AINR 3056/1-22)



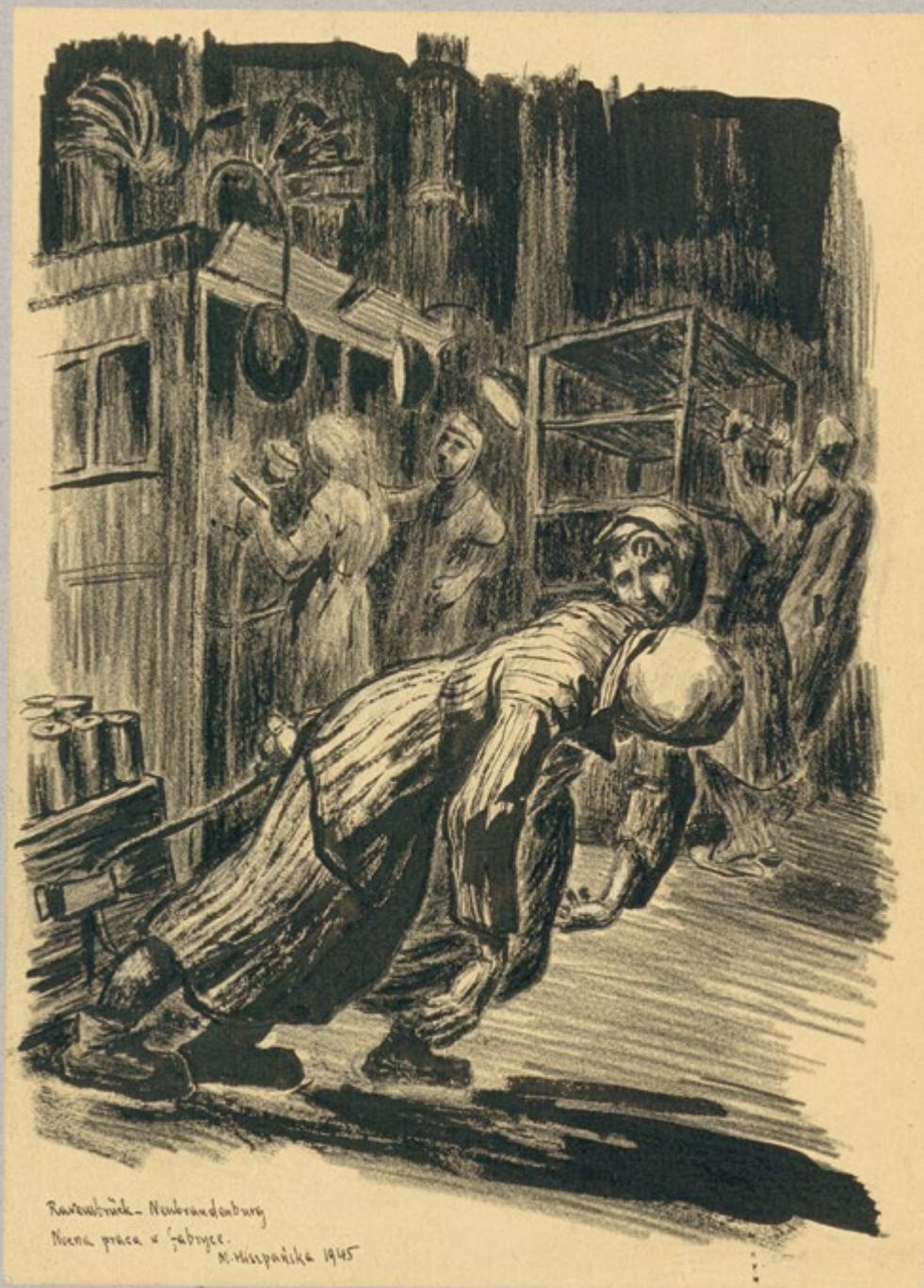
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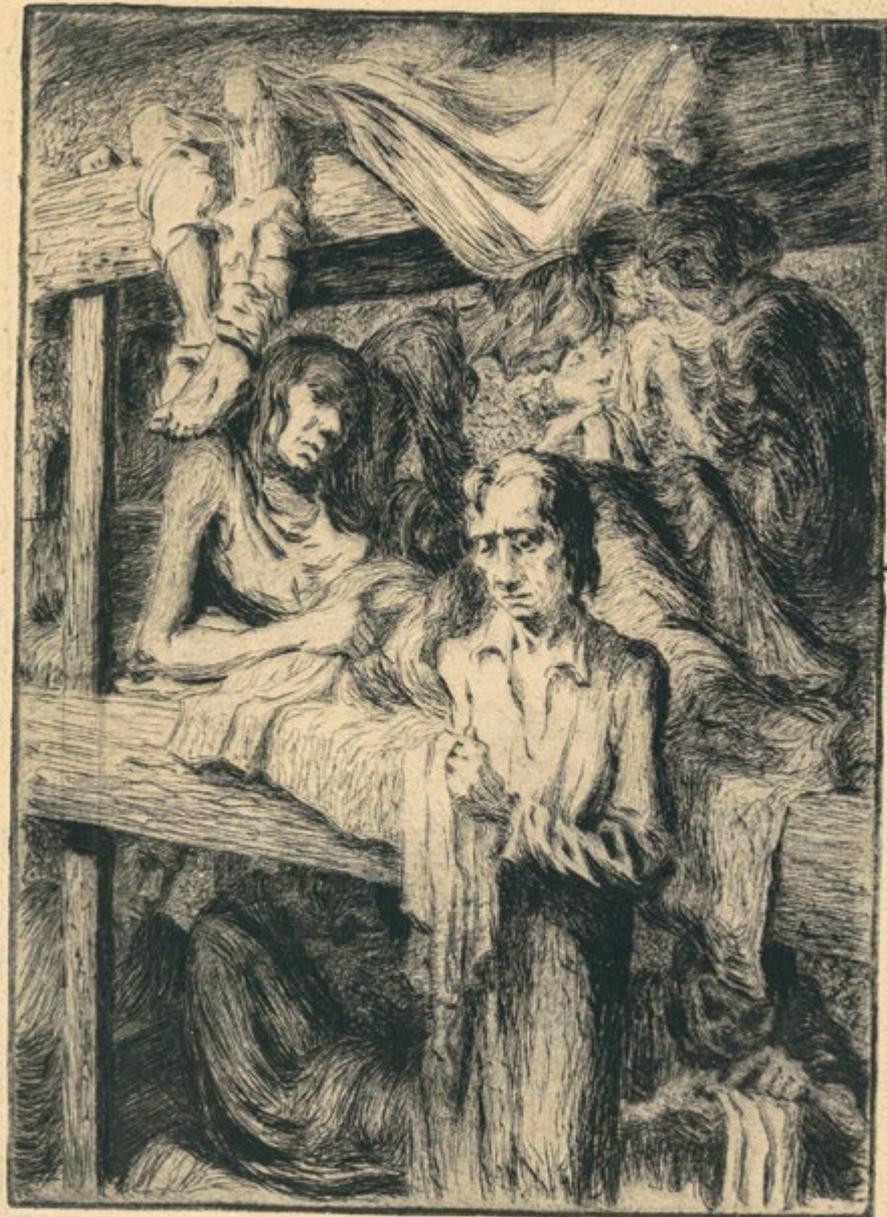
Włosa starsz. kobiety. NBrand. 1945

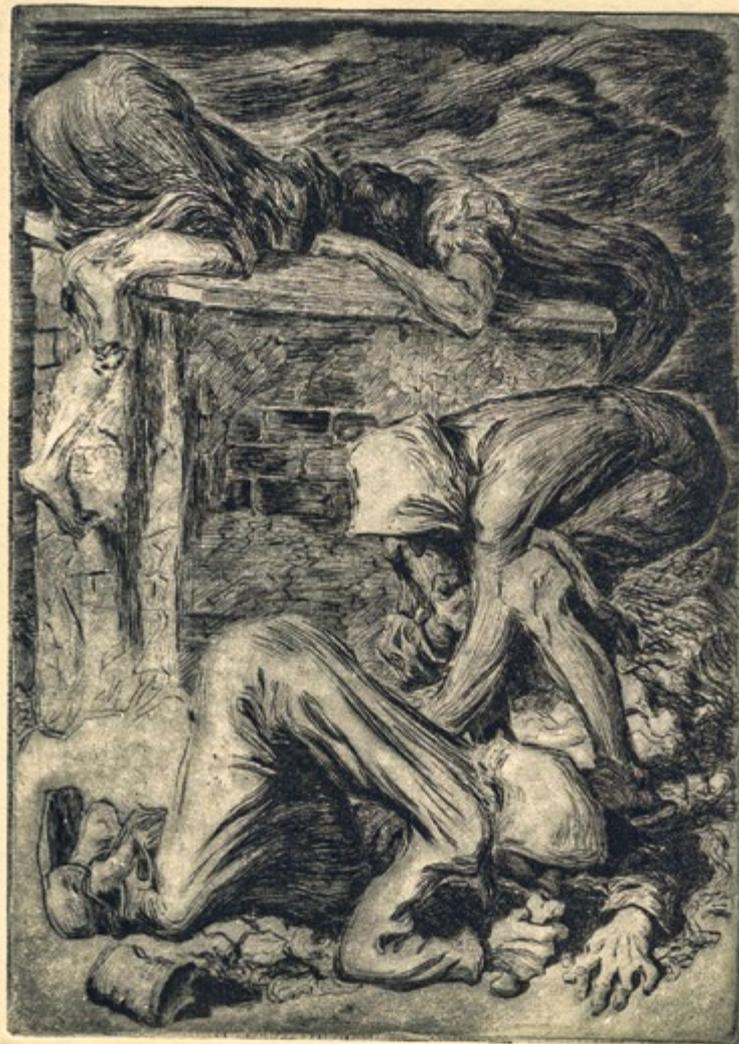
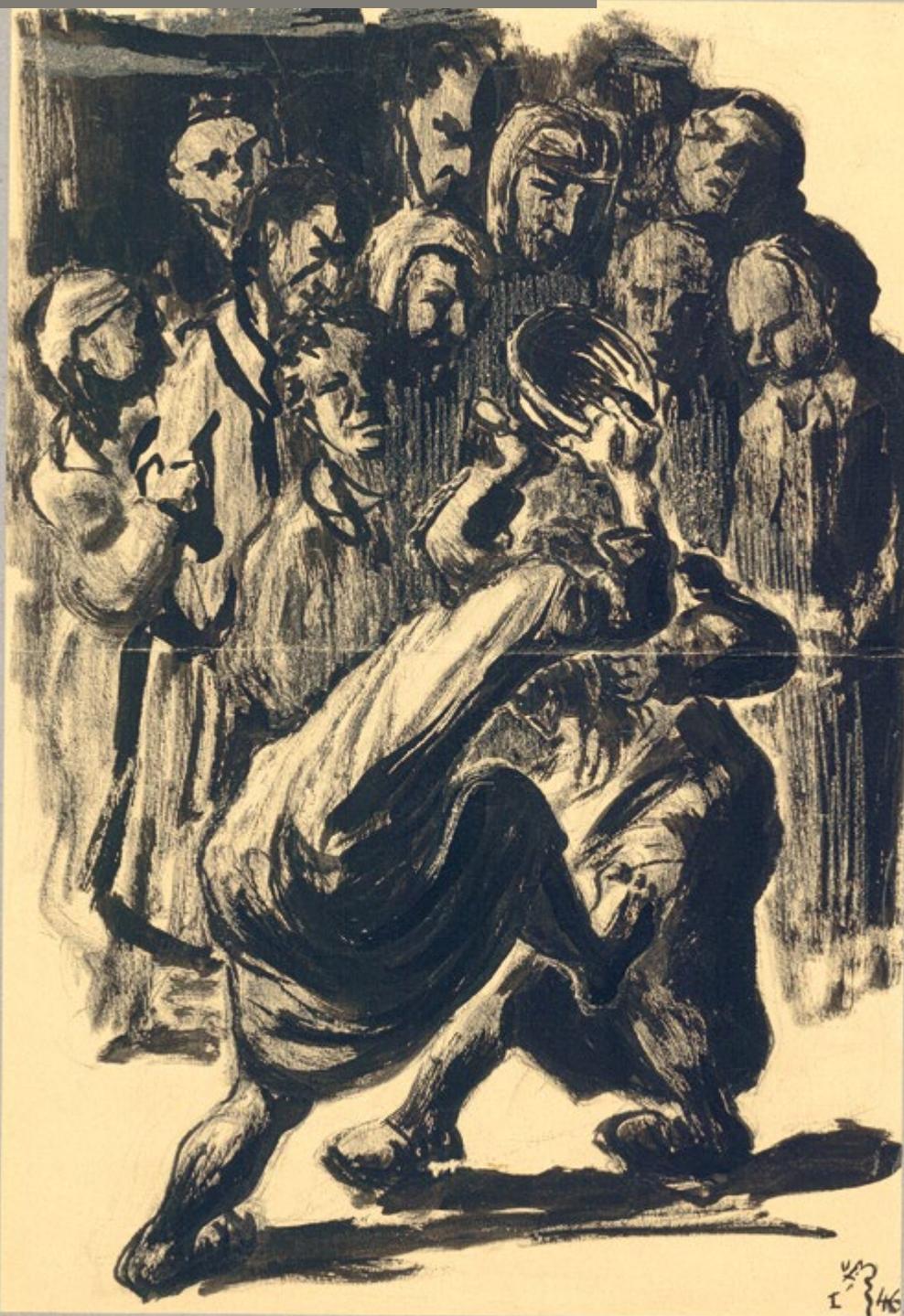


Jadzia. NBr.I.45



Ravensbrück - Neubrandenburg  
Niemiecka praca w fabryce.  
M. Hiszpańska 1945







Typy więźniarek. Neuhausenberg 1944.

Life in the camp was conducive to establishing contacts. Women took advantage of the opportunity to learn foreign languages. They talked about literature, wrote poems, expressing in them their emotional states. Grażyna Chrostowska, Halina Golcowa, and Maria Rutkowska-Kurcyuszowa were among the most famous poets. Literature, poetry and painting became a form of escape from the harsh living conditions in the camp. They gave respite and strengthened the inmates mentally.

The women of Ravensbrück did not shy away from political activity. Communists, who held political education meetings in smaller groups, were at the fore in this respect. Their meetings took place on Sunday, in summer sometimes also on other days of the week, mainly after the evening roll call. In acquiring knowledge, inmates could count only on themselves, although sometimes they used training materials smuggled into the camp, relating to, for instance, the short course of the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The lecturers were women who had taught at the party school in Odessa before the war.

The believers, in turn, were concerned with the proper religious life. Halina Charaszewska-Brückman spent the last year and a half of the war in the Grüneberg camp near Berlin. She came there from KL Ravensbrück. Her brother, Canon Charaszewski from Dobrzyń, died in May 1940 in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. In her testimony, she mentioned that on Sunday, whenever possible, the women held group services, although this was strictly prohibited. "Every day, when the lights were out, we said prayers in our rooms. One of the prayers constantly said by all Polish inmates was a litany I composed during my work in the factory, in the period of the greatest persecution and blackmail. I give its contents below:

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us...  
 From pestilence, famine, fire and war, save us, O Lord...  
 From a sudden and unexpected death, disability  
 and hostile intrigue, save us, O Lord...  
 Allow us to survive enslavement with honour, O Lord.  
 Support those weak and fragile in soul and body,  
 heal the sick, we beg you, O Lord...  
 May unity, valour and sober reason  
 strengthen us, we beg you, O Lord...  
 Enlighten the hearts and minds of our enemies, we beg you, O Lord...  
 From the turmoil of war, from labour camps  
 and prisons, lead us out, O Lord...  
 Inspire our consciences with justice, we beg you, O Lord...  
 Do not let the blood of the innocent ever stain our hands, O God,  
 But in rightful anger support our arm,  
 give us strength and courage, we beg you, O Lord...  
 From fratricidal struggle and domestic quarrel, save us, O God...  
 Through your holy mercy, let peace and freedom  
 return to us, we beg you, O Lord,  
 In our native land, under the familial thatch or under the open sky,  
 allow us to meet our loved ones, we beg you, O God...  
 To begin new creative work in health and strength, allow us, O Lord...  
 Those of good will, who follow the path of truth and love,  
 bless, O great God,  
 To the sinners who acknowledge their faults, be merciful, O Lord,  
 Those who bear Your holy name in their hearts but still suffer  
 for the faults of their forefathers, forgive, O just God...  
 Let the eternal light shine upon the souls of those who fell or died  
 for the sacred cause of our independent homeland...  
 And if by Your judgement we are to die soon,  
 let our death not be in vain, O Lord,  
 But, Almighty God united in the Trinity, we beg you,  
 Allow us to leave the labyrinth of this terrible darkness of  
 enslavement and to create the light of true freedom.  
 We sinners beg you, hear us, Lord.

Jesus, forgive us, Jesus, hear us, Jesus, the Son of the True God,  
 Open Your loving Heart to us like a living book that we may read it  
 and draw strength and righteousness for our souls from it.  
 Holy Spirit, send us the grace of Your wisdom,  
 so that we always know how to act.  
 Mary, Mother of the Son, you who gave birth from God's inspiration,  
 But to whom human tears and earthly sufferings  
 were not unknown, intercede for us.  
 All male and female Saints, in whose hearts  
 God's spark flamed so strongly  
 That you have become like Christ, pray for us.  
 O spirits of our great ancestors,  
 give the breath of your genius to our thought and our will.  
 O souls of our beloved dead, keep watch over us  
 That we fall not into our old sins and mistakes  
 as we go forward. Amen."<sup>29</sup>

Prayer was strictly forbidden. Any manifestation of religious life was punished with exemplary harshness. Despite this, some situations lifted the inmates' spirits and allowed them to endure difficult moments. One of those was recounted, in Vrigstad in Sweden, by Helena Gieburowska, who had spent five years in KL Ravensbrück as a political prisoner. Her story is about the clandestine Holy Communion. "In 1944, in August, a host consecrated by a Catholic priest was brought to the camp twice, reportedly from the sanatorium. One of the women working in a column in a sanatorium received this host from the priest, a German, and then from one of the nuns; one of the inmates administered it. I took Holy Communion myself and I know that several dozen also took it in secret. After a few years [without it], it was a great joy and a reason for celebration. I know that one of those who took it, a woman transported from Pawiak, was executed by shooting the next day. Going to her death, she was very happy about having taken it, which is why before

entering the Black Maria she prayed to St. Rose and said, 'Yesterday gives me strength and great happiness...'. For me, this moment of Holy Communion was one of the most beautiful and happiest in my life and it gave me a lot of strength to endure to the end. I remember that this was a great experience for everyone and this one Holy Communion was an inexhaustible topic – 'Jesus, You are with me, and I am with You, until the moment of the liberation...' – we told ourselves".<sup>30</sup>

## *Clandestine education*

Carrying out clandestine education undoubtedly required great courage. Women scouts, among whom there were many teachers, were the leaders in this respect. One of them was Urszula Wińska. Her first contact with the camp was extremely painful. Having her head shaved and then spending three days in the cellar of the bunker strongly affected her mental state. She lost her ability to think logically, sentences trailed off when she spoke, as if suddenly her thoughts vanished and she had no words to finish the utterance. A chance to get over this trauma was to undertake the task of teaching young girls, who turned to her with this request. "It was hard for me to prepare for this first lesson in the camp," she later recalled, "the siren's roar made me realize that the night was over and I did not know what to say. But when I stood in front of a group of students, something broke inside me: I felt like a teacher, aware of my actions, of my responsibility [...]. This saved me. I was needed and I could act".<sup>31</sup> From December 1941, a group of young Polish women met to study Polish history and literature under the guidance of Urszula Wińska. Classes were held every day for half an hour, mainly in block no. 15. The initial group of six women quickly

grew to twenty. Older inmates also took part in the classes while standing on the threshold of the barrack; they gave a secret signal when an unauthorized person approached. Conducting classes was very difficult. Clandestine education was one of the many aspects of life in the camp in which women showed their unbreakable spirit. Imagine inmates returning to the camp after twelve hours of hard and exhausting work. Fed with miserable food, living in an atmosphere of constant fear, with a complete lack of a sense of security, they still had enough courage and strength to study consistently or teach others. This is how Wanda Kiedrzyńska described their situation: "It was at the expense of such short hours of sleep and rest after exhausting, 12-hour work. The constant turmoil and threat of danger coming from everywhere made it difficult to focus and prepare the topic of the lesson".<sup>32</sup> During classes in mathematics and physics, equations were very often written on the camp's sandy ground. Pieces of German newspapers or cardboard boxes left from some packaging served as makeshift notebooks. All of this had to be properly hidden, so that if the block was searched, these materials would not be discovered. Some teachers managed to organize teaching at the gymnasium level; then the lessons covered not only Polish literature and history, but also many other subjects from the pre-war gymnasium curriculum. When in 1944 a transport of inmates from the evacuated Warsaw arrived, the number of children in the camp increased significantly. They were provided with primary school education. One of the teachers was Karolina Lanckorońska, who lectured on, among other topics, the history of Rome, the Greek culture and the Middle Ages. Wanda Kiedrzyńska assessed that clandestine education was "one of the most important bastions of the defensive struggle against the spiritual devastation and the abuse of human dignity. Both the schoolgirls and the teachers detached themselves from the overwhelming hopelessness

and barren life; they created a separate world for themselves, a world of intellectual interests, to which they could escape from the gloomy reality".<sup>33</sup> Clandestine education was continued in the camp until the end of the war.

## Letters

When the inmates wanted to inform their relatives, worried about the lack of news, about what happened inside the walls of the camp, they resorted to a trick, which consisted of writing letters with "sympathetic ink", namely, their own urine. This technique relied on writing with a colourless substance. The best for this was an acidic liquid, which is why the inmates used urine. To read the hidden message, paper had to be heated. The recipients of this unusual correspondence ironed the letters, which made the urine brown and legible. The one to come up with the idea of writing letters with urine was Nina Iwańska. Krystyna Czyż acted as a scribe, entrusted with this task because of her neat handwriting. A thin stick was used instead of a pen.

The inmates tried to send as many letters as possible, providing information about themselves and the situation in the camp. In 1943, they wanted to inform their relatives of the medical experiments carried out in the camp. The list of 74 women from the Lublin transport subjected to these experiments was conveyed in this way. They also wrote about life in the camp and subsequent transports to KL Ravensbrück.

The secret text was placed on the inside of the envelopes or written between lines of official letters, which were clichéd and banal in their content. In this way, for example, Krystyna Czyż sent out encrypted information for her brother. Knowing that her official

letter would be read by the camp authorities, she mentioned in it how she and her brother read *Szatan z siódmej klasy*, a novel for young people by Kornel Makuszyński, together. The point was that its main character wrote a letter in which the first lines of text formed an encrypted message.

Letters to families were also smuggled out of the camp by women working outside. Put into mailboxes, they were sent to the families and friends of Ravensbrück inmates.

## The Uckermark death camp

Initially, those who died in the camp were cremated in the municipal crematorium in Fürstenberg. In 1943, the SS ordered the construction of a crematorium outside the camp wall, which was expanded a year later. A barrack that had previously served as a warehouse stood nearby. At the beginning of 1945 it was converted into a gas chamber.

Meanwhile, the Uckermark camp for young inmates became a death camp. Towards the end of the war, the elderly and the sick were being sent there. After the war, Kazimiera Wardzyńska testified that on 22 January 1945 about 1,500 inmates were sent there from KL Ravensbrück. Over the next few days, this number increased to 4,000, and a little later another 2,500 were taken there.<sup>34</sup> Women were tempted to go there with promises of relaxation from very hard work. The reality would turn out to be quite different. Life in Uckermark was hell. Instead of working, women were subjected to strict selection. The thinnest, bloated, elderly or disabled were chosen. During the selection they were pushed and beaten, and after when a roll had been made, they were locked in a barrack. After dark, a truck came to pick them up, and they were beaten and pushed again.

They were thrown into the rear of the vehicle, swung into it by arms and legs. The truck took women to the gas chamber next to the KL Ravensbrück camp and immediately returned for the next batch. After fifteen minutes, the bodies of the victims were transferred from the gas chamber to the crematorium; tongues of fire rising from the chimneys were observed from the camp barracks for days.

Maria Kamińska recalled this grim place after the war. She was transferred there in early January 1945. She confirmed that this camp, initially intended for young people, eventually became a place where the elderly and the infirm were sent and transported to gas chambers from there. That camp was full of seriously ill people. Whoever came to it, did not leave. There was no way of escaping. She knew of two escape attempts, but she did not remember the details. She only said: "I and my group of ladies often observed the removal [of inmates] from block 6 and we noticed that after loading, the car returned in a maximum of 10 minutes; it was too short a time to get to the KL Ravensbrück camp, and in the meantime we heard a series of rifle shots. This led us to suppose that those people must have been executed in nearby forests. Such transports took place every evening, around 9:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.<sup>35</sup> Death rate in the camp was very high. According to Maria Kamińska, about twenty people per day died as a result of ill-treatment and very difficult living conditions, not counting those who were taken away and shot. However, it can be assumed that death rate there was much higher, maybe even twice as high. After all, the conditions were very hard, and the medical staff were forbidden to provide any help to those most in need.

Kazimiera Wardzyńska provides data on the number of people who went to the crematorium. According to her, on only one day, 27 February 1945, 167 women from block 4a were executed, and 49 from block 4b, 216 women in total. They were Polish women from the Warsaw transports, with numbers from 57000 to 59000,

from 65000 to 67000 and from 73000 to 76000. On the same day, two hundred women were selected from other blocks and met with a similar fate. This shows the size of the operation of killing off camp inmates which the Germans carried out at the time. Men also went to the gas chamber; there were some Poles among them.<sup>36</sup> Kazimiera Wardzyńska estimates that between 4,250 and 4,500 women of different nationalities were killed in Uckermark, including 700 Polish women.<sup>37</sup> It is difficult to state indisputably how many women died. The number of victims may have been higher, some estimates say 5,000 to 6,000. They show the extent of criminal activities carried out at Uckermark, given that the camp existed for less than three months.

According to Bernhard Strebel, the crew of this death zone included, among others, Ruth Neudeck, Elfriede Mohnecke, Margerete Rabe and Anni Rauschenbach. Apart from the overseers supplementing the list of those seconded to Uckermark, there were two paramedics: Franz Köhler and Rapp, both of them notorious for cruel treatment of female inmates. Both of them disappeared after the war and never stood trial.

There is no doubt that the transformation of the youth camp into a death camp was linked with the overcrowding of KL Ravensbrück and the desire to eliminate the most emaciated inmates, who would be unable to walk long in the event of the evacuation of the camp. Very hard work, beatings, hunger, and physical and mental fatigue were the factors that caused the exhausted, sick women to be taken to the former youth camp: they were those for whom the camp personnel had no use at all. According to Kazimiera Wardzyńska, in April 1945 the Uckermark camp was closed. The survivors returned to KL Ravensbrück.<sup>38</sup>





Convoy of the Swedish Red Cross buses in Friedrichsruh during the campaign (public domain).

It is difficult to determine exactly how many people managed to evacuate to Sweden in 1945. Initially, this action was more or less coordinated by the Germans, but as the war was drawing to an end, chaos ensued and as many people were put on the buses as could be accommodated. The problem lies in the lack of accurate records. In his book, the Swedish researcher Sune Persson cites a document of the Swedish Red Cross, which shows that a total of 20,937 women and men went to Sweden. The division into nationalities in this group was as follows: 8,000 Danes and Norwegians, 5,911 Poles, 2,629 French, 1,615 Jews, 1,124 Germans, 632 Belgians, 387 Dutch, 290 Hungarians, 191 Balts (citizens of the Baltic States), 79 Luxembourgers, 28 Slovaks, 14 Britons, 9 Americans, 6 Romanians, 5 Finns, 4 Italians, 3 Spaniards, 9 people of other nationalities.

However, Sune Persson himself believes that the number of survivors reached 17,555 at the most.<sup>40</sup> As usual in such cases, only estimated data can be used, specifying the minimum and maximum

limits, because the actual number of rescued persons may be difficult to specify due to, among others, the lack of documents and the chaos accompanying the evacuation of former inmates of KL Ravensbrück. However, data are not the most important issue. The most important issue is that some lives were saved, and the survivors could testify after the war.

## *The number of victims*

The exact number of women who died in KL Ravensbrück is as difficult to determine exactly as the number of inmates evacuated from the camp by the Swedish Red Cross. In his already cited book, Sune Persson estimates that about 92,000 women were killed. He also reports that the death rate in the camp was 70%, which means that about 132,000 women passed through KL Ravensbrück.<sup>41</sup> Bernhard Strebel has a slightly different opinion on this subject: in his view, the number of 92,000 fatalities given by the British prosecutor in the first Hamburg trial of the KL Ravensbrück personnel was too cursorily determined and was not supported by documents. The number of victims of the KL Ravensbrück male camp, in turn, including the subcamps operating until the end of the war, is estimated at about 28,000, of which 1,990 would have been killed in KL Ravensbrück.<sup>42</sup> This estimate is shared by Sarah Helm. The British journalist, whose interest focuses solely on the KL Ravensbrück women's camp, is not satisfied with the 92,000 estimate given by the British during the trials of KL Ravensbrück in Hamburg. "The British calculations were too crude and took no account of releases over the years, or of women released from subcamps, says the study. But these new calculations should be treated with caution too. Digging rather than academic analysis

might produce more truth – it would certainly produce more ashes, more mass graves”. In conclusion, she states: “The original estimate of 90,000 dead was almost certainly too high. A figure of between 40,000 and 50,000 – depending on which deaths are included – is probably as close as it is possible to get to the truth. But does the precise number of dead really matter? Survivors think names are more important than numbers”.<sup>43</sup>

Polish women who died at KL Ravensbrück are commemorated by a plaque unveiled on 19 June 1997 in a museum established there in honour of the victims. The long and difficult history of its placing is recounted by Wanda Póltawska in her book. The plaque bears the following inscription:

Ravensbrück 1939–1945

To the memory of Polish women

40,000 Polish women, girls and children were imprisoned here

200 were shot

74 underwent medical experiments

Many thousands died of malnutrition or were gassed

8,000 lived to see the liberation

If the echo of their voices fades, we shall perish.<sup>44</sup>

Former inmates of KL Ravensbrück-Eberswalde, photograph taken after the liberation, in Sweden (AINR 1234/12)





Former inmates of KL Ravensbrück-Eberswalde, photograph taken after the liberation, in Sweden (AINR 1234/12)



## *Trials of the KL Ravensbrück personnel*

Before the trials of the KL Ravensbrück personnel took place, doctors who performed criminal medical experiments on people during the war were tried in Nuremberg, before the First American Military Tribunal, in the period from 9 December 1946 to 19 August 1947. Most of them were sentenced to death.

From the end of the war until 1948, seven court trials took place in KL Ravensbrück. The first of them went on from 5 December 1946 to 3 February 1947, against sixteen camp officials. Among them were Ludwig Ramdohr, Rolf Rosenthal, Gerhard Schidlausky, Dorothea Binz and Percival Treite. After the trial, eleven death sentences were carried out by hanging; four sentences were to imprisonment for 10 to 15 years. All the death sentences were carried out on 2 and 3 May 1947, except for Dr Percival Treite, who had committed suicide 8 April. Fritz Suhren was also to be tried, but he managed to escape. He was captured in 1949 and handed over to the French authorities. He was shot on 12 July 1950.

The second trial of the KL Ravensbrück officials took place from 5 to 27 November 1947. The only defendant was Friedrich Opitz, the SS-man managing one of the factories in which the inmates worked. He was sentenced to death by hanging. The sentence was carried out on 26 February 1948.

The third trial was the trial of the Uckermark extermination camp personnel and took place from 14 to 28 April 1948. It concerned persons responsible for selecting women to be sent to gas chambers and their mistreatment. Of the five defendants, three were found guilty and two were acquitted as they had not served in Uckermark in the period when it was an extermination camp.



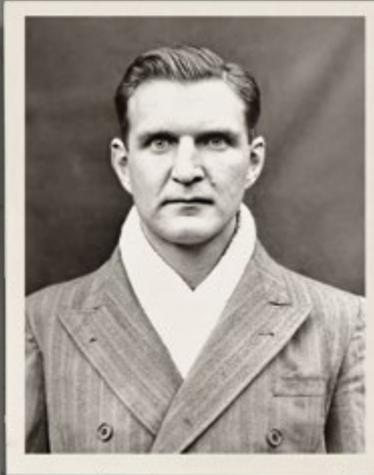
Otto Max Koegel, commandant of KL Ravensbrück from May 1939 to August 1942 (*public domain*)



Dr Karl Franz Gebhardt, personal physician to Heinrich Himmler. He supervised and conducted criminal pseudo-medical experiments, also at KL Ravensbrück (*public domain*)



Dr Herta Oberheuser, camp doctor at KL Ravensbrück (*public domain*)



Dr Fritz Ernst Fischer, camp doctor at KL Ravensbrück (*public domain*)



Carmen Mory, a kapo at KL Ravensbrück (*public domain*)

Karl Brandt, an instigator of human experimentation in German concentration camps, listening to the sentence during the Doctors' Trial at Nuremberg (9 December 1946 – 20 August 1947) (*public domain*)



Dr Herta Oberheuser listening to the sentence during the Doctors' Trial at Nuremberg, 20 August 1947 (*United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, public domain*)

The fourth trial took place in May and June 1948 against five of the KL Ravensbrück medical personnel. One of them was Dr Walter Sonntag, sentenced to death by hanging. The sentence was carried out on 17 November 1948.

During the fifth trial of the KL Ravensbrück personnel, in June 1948, three SS-men were charged with murdering camp inmates. All were found guilty of the charges. Arthur Conrad was sentenced to death by hanging, Walter Schenk was imprisoned for 20 years, and Heinrich Schafer for 2 years.

A month later, during the sixth trial, the next two SS-men: Kurt Lauer and Kurt Rauxloh were accused of abusing camp inmates. They were sentenced to 15 and 10 years' imprisonment.

The seventh trial was underway in the same month, this time against six former SS guards serving in KL Ravensbrück. The charges against them were related to selecting and transporting inmates to gas chambers. The guards were also accused of beating and torturing women. Two of them (Anne Klein and Christine Holthower) were acquitted for lack of evidence, Ilse Vettermann was sentenced to 12 years, and Luise Brunner to 3 years in prison. Emma Zimmer and Ida Schreiter were sentenced to death. Both sentences were carried out on 20 October 1948.<sup>45</sup>

Wounds on the bodies and souls suffered by Polish women as a result of medical experiments, a visible sign of the pain and suffering inflicted on them, were not the only memento of these traumatic events; another one was a testament, containing a commitment to take action to preserve peace and prevent new military conflict that could inflict on new generations sufferings similar to the ones they had experienced. According to one of its authors, the contents of this document was as follows:

### **The testament of the Ravensbrück “rabbits”**

We, the undersigned, Wanda Wojtasik-Póltawska, camp number 7709, Stanisława Śledziejowska-Osiczko, camp number 7712, and Wojciecha Buraczyńska-Zeiske, camp number 7926 on behalf of the whole group of Polish women, former inmates of the Ravensbrück camp operated on during medical experiments (the so-called “rabbits”), declare that at the turn of 1944/1945 while in the camp we wrote a will, the content of which we remember. References to this document can be found in:

1. Wanda Póltawska, *I boję się snów* [And I am afraid of dreams], Warsaw 1962, 1964, 1967, Kraków [1964]
2. *Aby świat się dowiedział. Nielegalne dokumenty z obozu w Ravensbrück*. [That the world would know. Illegal documents from the Ravensbrück camp], Oświęcim 1989, pp. 48–49.

Being sure that we would not return from the camp, we did a strange thing, as for that time and place: we wrote a royal last will and testament. We did it on the initiative of Władka Dąbrowska. The rabbits wrote a testament in which, aware that they might not return from the camp and hoping the Germans would lose the war, they expressed their wish that a school, a large educational institution for women, be established after the war. This establishment would bring up women who with their attitude and activities would prevent war and criminal experiments on people such as were carried out on us in Ravensbrück, from occurring again; a school under the sign “No more war”.

This testament was signed by all the rabbits still living in the camp at that time. This document was sent secretly through a column of prisoners working in Neustrelitz and handed over to Polish prisoners of war in the local Stalag.

Since the original testament has not been found so far, we are reproducing content that we have preserved intact in our memories and hearts forever, in the hope that it may be implemented.<sup>46</sup>



## Conclusion

The problems of the victims of the concentration camps did not end with the cessation of hostilities in 1945. Victims set up various organizations that aimed to promote the awareness of German crimes. The necessity to pay compensation to former inmates who had suffered as a result of medical experiments became important. At a government meeting on 26 July 1951, the German authorities adopted a resolution on helping victims of those experiments. A committee was set up to give opinions on relevant proposals in this matter. The following forms of compensation were planned: treatment financing, disability pensions and financial compensations. Unfortunately, the German government for a long time avoided paying compensations to Polish victims of medical experiments residing in Poland, their explanation being the absence of diplomatic relations with our country. The case acquired an international character. It was described in the West European and American press. On 5 May 1960, only after the issue had gone international and under the pressure from the public opinion, the Bundestag adopted a resolution with the recommendation to provide “Polish women and girls who as victims of concentration camps suffered the most serious damage to health [...] with adequate compensation without delay”. In the following years the compensation payment procedure was carried out, although not without problems. One of the contentious issues was whether a one-off compensation should be paid or a permanent pension should be granted.

The history of KL Ravensbrück is brought to us by the activities of the “Family of the Inmates of KL Ravensbrück German Concentration Camp” Association, which has its headquarters in Kraków and its president is Ms. Elżbieta Kuta. Many documents regarding concentration camps can be found at the Institute of National Remembrance, at the Witold Pilecki Centre for Totalitarian Studies, in the collections of the National Library in Warsaw, in the of the “Karta” Centre Archive, the Central Archives of Modern Records (AAN) in Warsaw and other state archives and museums. Unique artefacts from KL Ravensbrück, including letters written with urine, can be found in the “Pod Zegarem” Museum of Martyrology, a branch of the Lublin Museum. In Germany, in turn, the memory of KL Ravensbrück is cultivated by the National Site of Admonition and Remembrance at Ravensbrück (Mahn- und Gedenkstätte Ravensbrück), in operation since 12 September 1959. It encompasses, among others, the crematorium, the prison and a part of the original camp wall. In the recent years, this institution has extended the range of its activities, and various informative and educational materials it has prepared make it easier for visitors to navigate the former camp complex. The original records from interviews with former inmates of German concentration camps are in the library of the University of Lund in Sweden.

It should therefore be noted that accessing information on KL Ravensbrück is not a major problem. It is also worth noting that a 2013 declaration of the Senate of the Republic of Poland made April the month of remembrance of the KL Ravensbrück inmates. A question may arise why texts such as this are written; why, when so many years have passed since the war ended, advertise the crimes committed in such camps as KL Ravensbrück? First and foremost, because the memory of suffering in concentration camps cannot be forgotten. When witnesses to the events described above are

*opracował by*

POLSKI INSTYTUT ŹRÓDŁOWY  
W LUND

Magister praw Bożysław KUROWSKI, przyjmujący protokół asystent Instytutu

PROTOKÓŁ przesłuchania świadka 146.

Staje Pani : GIEBUROWSKA Helena , urodzona : dn.21.V.1894 r.  
w : Gniezno , zawód : nauczycielka  
wyznanie : rzym.kat. , imiona rodziców : Zygmunt i Wanda  
ostatnie miejsce zamieszkania w Polsce : —  
obecne miejsce zamieszkania : Wrigstad  
pouczona o ważności prawdziwych zeznań, oraz o odpowiedzialności i skutkach fałszywych zeznań, oświadcza co następuje :

przebywałam w obozie koncentracyjnym w : RAVENSBRUCK  
w czasie od : 25.V.1940 do : 25.IV. 1945 jako więzień polityczny  
pod numerem : 3580 i nosiłam trójkąt koloru : czerwonego  
z literą : "P"  
przebywałam w fortach w Poznaniu  
od : 16.V.1940 do : 24.V.1940  
aresztowana według rozkazu Gestapo pod zarzutem nielegalnej działalności przeciwko Państwu Niemieckiemu.

Na pytanie, czy w związku z pobytem, względnie pracą moją w obozie koncentracyjnym mam jakieś szczególne wiadomości w przedmiocie organizacji obozu koncentracyjnego, trybu życia i warunków pracy więźniów, postępowania z więźniami, pomocy lekarskiej i duchowej oraz warunków higienicznych w obozie, oraz szczególnych wydarzeń, tudzież wszelkiego rodzaju przejawów życia więźniów w obozie, podaję co następuje :

Zeznania zawierają ręcznego pisma stron o s i e m i w treści swej obejmują co następuje :

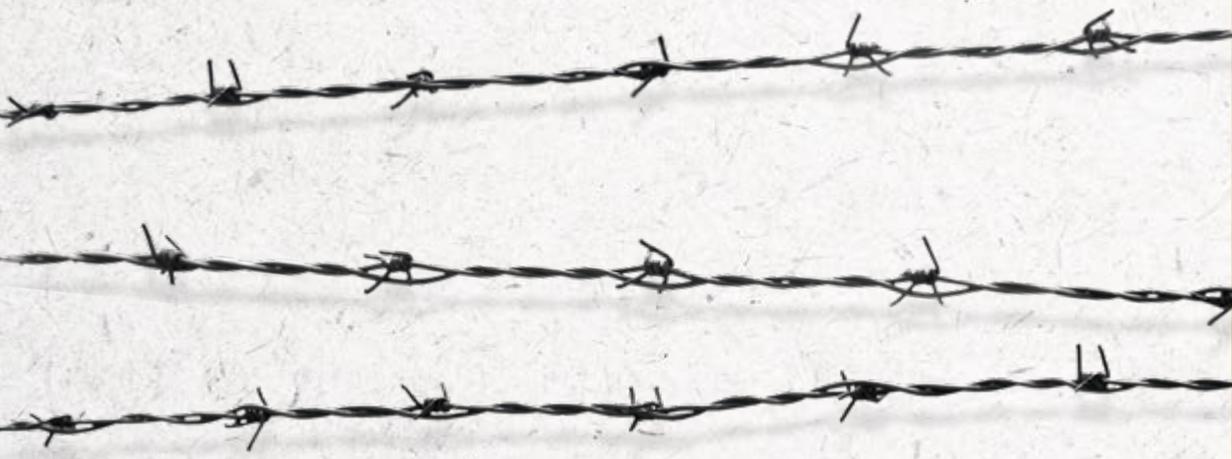
1. W fortach w POZNANIU w maju 1940 r.: Pierwsze wrażenia - Bicie nahażką, szczucie psami - Wychudzone twarze mężczyzn, głód, wszy, wilgoć i odór. Tortury na dziedzińcu: ćwiczenia w podskokach pod górę fortu, w przysiadzie i z rękoma założonymi na kolanach, przy równoczesnym biciu do utraty przytomności. - Rozstrzeliwania.
2. W RAVENSBRUCK : przyjęcie, pierwsze wrażenia - Aufseherki w kapturach z psami. - Stałe szczucie i ujadanie psów - Odbiór wszystkich rzeczy osobistych - Kobiety nago na oczach SS-manów mężczyzn - Boso do późnej jesieni - Kary za dodatkowe okrywanie się papierem - Kara bunkra - Piękny wschód słońca. - Wyniszczanie młodych kobiet ciężką pracą, a starych wyzębieniem - Rygory w bloku - Drętwienie z zimna w nocy - Głasy z bunkra - Głód - Po wizycie HIMMLERA - Ośmiotygodniowa praca nocna w ramach przygotowywanego transportu śmierci - Walka ze snem i kary - Pierwsza Komunia św. w obozie.

W Fortach w POZNANIU.

Trudno mi opisać grozę widoków i pierwszych wrażeń w Fortach. Z pow. Kościańskiego w transporcie do Fortów było nas osiem kobiet i 80 mężczyzn. Kiedyśmy wchodziły, prawie każda z nas była bita nahażką, a ponadto byłyśmy szczute psami. Przeszłyśmy korytarz w forcie i na wstępie zaraz zauważyłyśmy mężczyzn strasznie wychudzonych, z oczyma pełnymi zgrozy, współczucia, a zarazem dumy. Mieli miotły w rękę i biega od nich pewność siebie, jakby nam chcieli przez to powiedzieć : "Nie bójcie się, głowa do góry!" Widziałam

no longer alive, human imagination will still be stirred by their memories and accounts contained in various types of publications. These publications are thus a kind of warning, and appeal to the whole world: No more war!

A tale of KL Ravensbrück is not easy to read. On the one hand, it constitutes a testimony, on a scale that is sometimes difficult to understand, of objectification, even the degradation of a fellow human being; on the other hand, however, it shows that in extremely difficult conditions there were still people who could afford true valour.



Zeznania świadka GIEBUROWSKA HELENA, urodz. dn. 21.V.1894 r. w Gnieźnie.

Widziałam za kratami więźniów, niepodobnych wogóle do ludzi, szczątki istnienia, ale z tym samym wyrazem oczu i z tą samą dumną postawą. Równocześnie widziałam, jak ~~nam~~ mężczyźni dokonywali odzwazawienia bielizny i ciała. Straszny ten widok podział na mnie i nas wszystkich raczej dodatnio, aczkolwiek w pierwszej chwili byłam przygotowana zupełnie na śmierć i z tym się pogodziłam. Teraz zdecydowane byłyśmy na wszystkie cierpienia z tym przekonaniem, że one na marne nie pójdą i z wiarą, że Bóg jest nad nami i Matka Najświętsza królową naszą. Wyraźnie z podniesioną głową kroczyliśmy przez długie korytarze, ciemne, pełne straszego odoru. Czem tu oddychać? Czem ci biedacy oddychają? - nasuwało się pytanie.

Po drodze odłączono mężczyzn, a nas wepchnięto do celi. Było nas w tej celi 60 kobiet, w piwnicy, na podłodze cienką warstwę rozłożoną słomą. Spałyśmy bez koców, chyba, że która z nas miała swój własny koc. Było bardzo ciasno w celi, i zimno również. Siedziałyśmy przez te kilka dni bezczynnie. Każda z nas była przesłuchiwana, niektóre były bite w czasie przesłuchań, ja bita nie byłam.

Jedzenia prawie wogóle nie było, gdyż dziennie dawano kawałek chleba i ciepła woda, zapruszona lekko ziarnkami kaszy. Dawano raz dziennie kawę i nic poza tym. Paczki od rodzin były dozwolone i niektóre z nas otrzymywały, ale tylko w naszej celi, t.j. te które były przeznaczone do obozu koncentracyjnego. W innych celach otrzymywanie paczek było niedopuszczalne i panował straszny głód. Kiedyś raz dziennie wychodziły do toalety, nieraz z uchylonych przypadkiem drzwi widziało się wyciągniętą, wychudzoną rękę i słyszało się głos błagalny: "Siostry, chleba!" Od tego czasu zawsze, idąc do toalety, zabierałyśmy dla nich pożywienie w rękę. Ciągłe słyszało się jęki z celi, i dzień w dzień widziało się tę samą zgrozę. Codziennie widziałyśmy przez okna celi, jak mężczyźni przechodzili straszne tortury na dziedzińcu.

Mianowicie pamiętam ćwiczenia w podskokach w przysiadzie, z rękoma założonymi stale na kolanach, przyczem skakać trzeba było pod górę Fortu oraz z góry. Każdy kto robił ćwiczenie nieudolnie był przez umundurowanych Niemców gestapowców bity do utraty przytomności, oblewany wiadrami wody, jeżeli wstać nie mógł. Była to stale stosowana metoda. Ćwiczenia te odbywały się cały dzień, widocznie na zmianę i wykonywali je mężczyźni, starsi i młodsi, bez względu na wiek, do zmierzchu, partiami po 30-40 - o ile można wzrokiem przez okienko więzienne sięgnąć. Nie wolno było nam przypartywać się przez okno i razu pewnego oddano nawet strzał do nas, rozbito okno, ale żadna z nas zraniona nie została. - Wilgoć, odór i spżyficzne zapachy piwniczne w Fortach szczególnie też dokuczały. Codziennie zaś skoro świt, wyjeżdżały więźniarki (kryte więzienne samochody) z Fortu "niewiadome". Przeczucie i świadomość nasza mówiły nam wyraźnie, dokąd więźniarkami wywożono. W celi modlitwy: "Boże, zlituj się nad nimi..." i "Zdrowaś Maryjo". Potem słychać było salwy. Szloch w sali i: "Wieczny odpoczynek racz im dać Panie..."

W celi panowało nastawienie religijne i modlitwą utrzymywałyśmy się i krzepiłyśmy na duchu. Powyżej opisane okoliczności, to tylko słaby obrazek z kilku dni tego, co się działo na naszych oczach. To zaś co działo się w piwnicach, ciemnicy, bunkrach - było dla nas tajemnicą, ale mówiły o tem

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oczy i twarze tych, których czasem widziałyśmy, i jęki, które dochodziły naszych uszu poprzez ściany. -

#### W R A V E N S B R Ü C K .

Jechałyśmy w wagonach 4-ej klasy i leżałyśmy na ziemi. Wagony jednakże były mieszane. Dnia 25.V. stanęłyśmy w RAVENSBRÜCK. Dostałam na wstępie odraza porządnego kopniaka od SS-mana i wypadłam na skutek tego z więźniarki. Prawie każda została przyjęta biciem i kopaniem. Aufseherki w Kapturach z psami zrobiły na nas przykre bardzo wrażenie w momencie, kiedyśmy wyskoczyły z więźniarek na placu obozu. Stałe ujadanie psów, spędzających nas w gromadę, miało utrzymać nas w zastraszeniu. Odebrano nam wszystko, absolutnie wszystko, nawet krzyżyk - pamiątka po matce, z zaciśniętej dłoni zabrała mi w łasni Aufseherka i rzuciła w kąt o ścianę. W włosach rozpuszczonych zupełnie, przeprowadzono rewizję i poszukiwanie za przedmiotami wszelkiego rodzaju, zabrano szpilki, grzebienie. Najstraszniejsze jednak przeżycie było dla nas, kiedyśmy stały nago wszystkie na oczach SS-manów, mężczyzn. Stałyśmy tak nago po kąpielii w kolejce do lekarzy od rana do 23-ej godziny w nocy, głodne, skurczone z zimna. Wieczorem dopiero otrzymamyśmy pasiaki drylichowe, i dali drewniaki, które potem zabrano w krótkim czasie i chodziliśmy boso całe lato do późnej jesieni. Na apelach rannych nogi nam poprostu przymarzały. Szukało się śladów stóp, żeby w ten sposób położyć nogę na miejscu ogrzanym przez inne stopy.

Apel był przed wschodem słońca i dlatego przymrozki były dotkliwe, tym więcej, że nie było się nam wolno niczem dodatkowym okryć. Ratowałyśmy się papierem gazetowym i toaletowym, który pozostał nam jako jedyna dodatkowa możliwość. Papier kładłyśmy pod stopy i pod odzież drylichową na plecach. Jednakże, o zgrozo! jeżeli Aufseherka zauważyła papier, to tytułem kary pozostawało się bez obiadu i bez kolacji na kilka dni (wówczas jeszcze był obiad i kolacja). Zdarzało się to w najlepszym razie, bo w innych wypadkach dawano za to karę bunkra i bicia. - Pamiętam jak 20-letnia nauczycielka ze Śląska (nazwiska dziś nie mogę sobie przypomnieć) o imieniu "Ala", dla ratowania siebie zrobiła sobie z tektury podkładkę pod nogi i naszyła ją resztkami wełny. W pojęciu władz był to wielki sabotaż. Otrzymała więc karę bunkra, w którym przez okres 2 tygodni dawano codziennie rano kawę, a jedzenie co 4-ty dzień i ponadto 25 uderzeń na koźle. Co się z nią stało dalej - nie wiadomo, a o powyższej karze wiem od tych, które w tym samym czasie były z nią w bunkrze i z bunkra wróciły. Takich wypadków stosowania tej kary było bardzo wiele i za najmniejsze przekroczenia, zwłaszcza w okresie od 1940-1943 r.

W czasie wschodu słońca, który okresami był szczególnie piękny, przeżywałyśmy go bardzo silnie i w szeregach na apelu słychać było tylko szept modlitwy. To piękny wschód słońca krzepił nasze nadzieje i unosił w modlitwie do Boga i w wierze w lepsze jutro.

#### Ostre rygory w bloku.

tanąć

Najgorsze lata były 1940/41 oraz 1942 r. Młodzież wyniszczano ciężką pracą oraz torturami przy pracy. Pamiętam codzienny obrazek z tych czasów ze stycznia 1941 r., kiedy kolumna dziewcząt lekko ubranych, w ciężkim obuwiu męskim z pola walki wziętym, wychodziła do pracy wozenia ziemi na taczkach. Aufseherki szczyły psami te, które nie mogły nadążyć w pracy, w tym pochodzie z taczkami, napełnionymi ziemią tak, że nie wolno im było stanąć

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na moment, jak dopiero u celu, gdzie ziemię wysypywano. Dziewczeta przychodziły z pracy zupełnie wyczerpane, bo cały dzień pracowały ostatkami sił w obawie przed karą i szczeniem psami. Zdarzało się przytem często, że na bloku jedząc, stać musiały, albowiem blok był codziennie celowo szorowany, co uniemożliwiało wypoczynek południowy. Zakazywano bowiem siadać na stołkach, które były świeżo szorowane i na pokaz czystości dla Aufseherek. Równocześnie też zauważam, że nie wolno było też wchodzić do bloku w obuwie (przeważnie w całym obozie). Zziębnięte musiały dziewczeta zdejmować obuwie zostawić je na korytarzu i następnie przebywać w pończochach w jadalni słabo ogrzanej, przy otwartych często na roścież oknach, oraz na mokrej i zmarzniętej od szorowania podłodze. Zdarzało się, że kolumny całe, względnie blok cały w przerwie obiadowej stać musiał tytułem kary przed blokiem bez obiadu, na mrozie. Kolumny odmaszerowały po przerwie ~~wykładają~~ do pracy bez obiadu, a reszta pozostających na bloku, niezdolnych do pracy i starszych, stać musiała nadal przed blokiem do wieczornej syreny na koniec pracy.

Pozostające na bloku w ciągu dnia, niezdolne do pracy, zajmowały się dzień w dzień porządkowaniem bloku i szorowaniem na dworze przy najsilniejszych mrozach, dochodzących 30° C (klimat w Ravensbrücku wogóle był bardzo zimny) stołów, stołków zimną wodą, przy której ścierki zamarzały w rękach. W ten sposób wyniszczano młode przy pracy, a starsze kobiety i chore przy porządkach. Częstość zaś cierpiała po pracy wskutek zimna panującego w bloku, gdyż ziośliwe i sadystyczne blokowe Niemki o kryminalnej przeszłości (w tych latach tylko Niemki z czarnym i zielonym trójkątem desygnowano na blokowe) otwierały wszystkie okna, a nawet wyjmowały okna na całą noc i cały dzień.

Miałyśmy po dwa koce, i dla nas nieprzyzwyczajonych, nakrycie to wydawało się szczególnie niewystarczające. Drętwiałyśmy z zimna w ciągu nocy. Dzienna odzież musiała pozostawać w jadalni na noc. W tych latach miałyśmy jeszcze koszule nocne iienne. Pamiętam, jak jedno młode dziewczę z Poznania, chore na płuca, chcąc się ratować, ubrało pod sukienkę także koszulę nocną w dzień w czasie ciężkich mrozów, bo pracowała poza murami obozu. Przy rewizji na placu znaleziono u niej koszulę i za to przez 10 dni po apelu wieczornym, po pracy, do syreny wieczornej spoczynku nocnego, musiała stać na dworze pod bunkrem, bez kolacji.

Pamiętam jak p. Zamojska, która cierpiała na katar pęcherzów, miała zakaz wychodzenia w nocy do ubikacji, w konsekwencji tego przechodziła straszne męczarnie i razu pewnego słyszałam, że była wodą zimną zlewana, a później widziałam, jak z mokrym prześcieradłem okryta musiała stać przez kilka godzin na mrozie.

W tym też czasie wypadki śmierci w czasie apelu na placu były bardzo częste. Omdlewające kobiety w czasie apelu nie było wolno ratować przed ukończeniem apelu.

Z bunkra słyszałyśmy nieraz wołania w różnych językach: "Mamo, mamoo..." "Mutti, retten Sie mich..." Z drugiej strony muru, za którym był obóz męski, dochodziły nas jęki mężczyzn bitych, i te głosy przyprawiały nas zawsze o płacz i cierpienia moralne. Wydawało nam się zawsze, że mężczyźni więcej cierpią i mniej są wytrzymali na cierpienia. Głód był straszny u mężczyzn, przerzucałyśmy za mury porcje chleba dla nich i nieraz udało nam się

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przenieść wiadro jedzenia.

Walka ze snem przy pracy nocnej.

W 1942 r. przyjechał HIMMLER do Ravensbrück i stwierdzając mały zgon więźniarek, zarządził zaostrzenia m.i. dla starszych kobiet, które pracowały przy "Strickerer" w liczbie około 100 osób. Wprowadzono pracę nocną stałą (od godz. 6-ej wiecz. do 6-ej rano) zamiast dziennej. Siedziałyśmy w pozycji prostej całą noc, bez żadnego ruchu wypoczynkowego i robiłyśmy pończochy, przepisaną ilość. Walka ze snem dokuczała bardzo, zwłaszcza, że w ciągu dnia w bloku nie było warunków do spania - w najlepszych warunkach spało się dwie do trzy godziny. W ciągu dnia bowiem, co rusz, blokowa Niemka wywoływała nas z łóżek<sup>7/8</sup> powodu źle ustawionego naczynia w szafie, i w ten sposób złościwie nam sen przerywała. Kiedyś więc w nocy, niewyspane, musiały wykonać dużą ilość wyznaczoną pracy, pośpiech w pracy, tudzież senność męczyły nas strasznie.

Pamiętam, jak pewnego razu SS-man BINDER wskoczył przez okno i dokładnie pobił starszą kobietę, która w momencie ze znużenia głowę opuściła. Zanęczenie w czasie pracy było szczególnie w każdym Betriebie karane. Również otrzymałam po twarzy, kiedy ze zmęczenia skłoniłam na chwilę głowę. Wiedziałyśmy, że chodzi w tej nocnej pracy i warunkach snu dziennego o przygotowanie nas do transportu na wykończenie, który istotnie niebawem - w liczbie kilkaset kobiet - został wysłany. Modliłyśmy się wszystkie w czasie pracy dużo, odmawiałyśmy różaniec, a w godz. 4-ej rano godzinki. Modliłyśmy się ukradkiem, ale ja już się ze zmęczenia nieraz modlić nie mogłam i wymawiałam tylko słowo "Jezu..." Ta wiara doprowadziła nas przy modlitwie naszej do tego, że żadna z nas nie poszła na transport. Mimo głodu (wówczas paczek jeszcze nie było), jaki szczególnie w tym roku panował, i wysiłku skierowanego na przygotowanie nas do transportu - utrzymałyśmy się w takiej postawie fizycznej i moralnej, że zakwalifikowanie nas do transportu śmierci nie udało się. Nocna praca trwała 8 tygodni.

Komunja św. w obozie.

Dwa razy w obozie, w 1944 r. w sierpniu, przeniesiono z zewnątrz, z sanatorium podobno, ~~komunję św.~~ przez księdza katolickiego. Komunję św. otrzymała któraś z pracujących w kolumnie w sanatorium od wspomnianego księdza Niemca, i następnie jedna z sióstr zakonnych-więźniarka rozdzielała. Sama również jeden raz przyjęłam i wiem, że kilkadziesiąt w tajemnicy komunję św. przyjęło. Była to po kilku latach duża radość i uroczystość. Wiem, że jedna z tych przyjmujących, z PAWIAKA, następnego dnia poszła na śmierć przez rozstrzelanie i była z tego bardzo szczęśliwa, czemu przed wchodzeniem do karetki więziennej dała wyraz wobec śr. Róży mówiąc, że "dzień wczorajszy daje mi siłę i szczęście duże..."

Dla mnie chwila tej komunji św. była chwilą jedną z najpiękniejszych i najszczęśliwszych w życiu, i dała dużo sił do wytrwania do końca. Pamiętam, że dla wszystkich było to przeżycie wielkie, i niewyczerpane były tematy tej jedynej w obozie komunji św. - "Jezu, jesteś ze mną, a ja z Tobą aż do chwili wyzwolenia..." mówiliśmy sobie.

Przeczytano, podpisano, przyjęto

(-)  
B. Kurowski  
asystent Instytutu

(-)  
Gieburowska Helena  
świadek

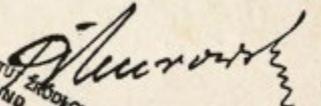
Zeznania świadka GIEBUROWSKA Helena, urodz. dn. 21.V.1894 r. w Gnieźnie

Uwagi asystenta przyjmującego protokół :

Świadek, p. GIEBUROWSKA zeznaje powoli, dokładnie i prosto waży swoje słowa w odniesieniu do rzeczywistości. Świadek jest osobą w pełni wiarygodną.

( - )  
B. Kurowski  
as. Instytutu

Za zgodność odpisu z oryginałem :

  
Polski Instytut Źródłowy  
w LUND  
Asystent Instytutu

## Endnotes

- 1 S. Helm, *If This Is A Woman: Inside Ravensbrück: Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women*, New York 2015. In the writing of the current text, the Polish translation was used: *Kobiety z Ravensbrück. Życie i śmierć w hitlerowskim obozie koncentracyjnym dla kobiet*, translated by K. Bażyńska-Chojnacka, P. Chojnacki, Warsaw 2017, p. 33.
- 2 Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance in Szczecin (hereinafter AINR Sz), file no. 753/245, pp. 3–15A.
- 3 AINR Sz, file no. 753/9, pp. 1–2.
- 4 With the exception of *laczki*, which is a western-Poland regionalism, terms from camp argot found in the current text are German words used with Polish plural and case endings, e.g. *Betriebe* (Ger.: workshops) became *betrieby* (editor's note).
- 5 AINR Sz, file no. 753/44, pp. 1–3.
- 6 Quoted in: B. Strebel, *Das KZ Ravensbrück: Geschichte eines Lagerkomplexes*, Schoeningh Ferdinand GmbH, 2003. In the writing of the current text, the Polish translation was used: *KL Ravensbrück. Historia kompleksu obozów* [KL Ravensbrück. History of the camp complex], introduction by G. Tillion, translated by A. Milewska, M. Kurkowska, introduction to the Polish edition by A. Gawlikowska-Świerczyńska, J. Muszkowska-Pensen, Gdańsk 2018, p. 373.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 403.
- 8 AINR Sz, file no. 753/9, p. 3.
- 9 B. Strebel, *op. cit.*, pp. 549–550.
- 10 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 462.
- 11 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 472.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 425.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 432.
- 14 AINR Sz, file no. 753/181, p. 5. The list of names is as found in the documentation of the inquiry conducted by Prosecutor K. Bukowski.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 16 The name for the group comes from the Polish term *królik doświadczalny*, i.e. a rabbit kept for experiments; the English equivalent is the guinea pig (editor's note).
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 2–5.
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.
- 19 AINR Sz, file no. 753/250, pp. 1–2

- 20 AINR Sz, file no. 735/245, p. 7.
- 21 AINR Sz, file no. 753/3, p. 3.
- 22 AINR Sz, file no. 735/245, p. 7.
- 23 Quoted in: B. Strebel, *op. cit.*, pp. 218–219.
- 24 Quoted in: S. Helm, *op. cit.*, p. 639.
- 25 AINR Sz, file no. 735/245, p. 14.
- 26 AINR Sz, file no. 735/220, p. 8.
- 27 AINR Sz, file no. 735/245, p. 14.
- 28 D. Zaborek, *Czesalam ciepłe króliki. Rozmowa z Alicją Gawlikowską-Świerczyńską* [I combed warm rabbits. Interview with Alicja Gawlikowska-Świerczyńska], Wołowiec 2014, pp. 67–68.
- 29 AINR Sz, file no. 735/220, pp. 8–9.
- 30 AINR Sz, file no. 753/399, p. 5.
- 31 U. Wińska, *Zwyciężyły wartości. Wspomnienia z Ravensbrück* [The values have won. Memories from Ravensbrück], Gdańsk 1985, pp. 19–20.
- 32 Quoted in: B. Strebel, p. 703.
- 33 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 705.
- 34 AINR Sz, file no. 735/362, p. 1.
- 35 AINR Sz, file no. 753/7, pp. 4–5.
- 36 AINR Sz, file no. 753/362, p. 3.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 AINR Sz, file no. 753/44, p. 9.
- 40 S. Persson, *Escape from the Third Reich: Folke Bernadotte and the White Buses*, Barnsley 2009. In the writing of the current text, the Polish translation was used: *Białe autobusy. Pakt z Himmlerem i niezwykła akcja ratowania więźniów obozów koncentracyjnych*, translated by Z. Kunert, Warsaw 2012, p. 264.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 221.
- 42 B. Strebel, *op. cit.*, pp. 649–652.
- 43 S. Helm, *op. cit.*, p. 865.
- 44 Quoted in: W. Póltawska, *I boję się snów* [And I am afraid of dreams], Częstochowa 2009.
- 45 Oddziałowa Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu w Szczecinie [Departmental Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation in Szczecin], file no. S. 32.2017. Zn, vol. 1, pp. 94–97.
- 46 *Ibid.*, vol. 31, p. 6269.

## References

(English titles given in square brackets are for the Reader's convenience only; the texts have not been translated into English)

- Brzosko-Mędryk Danuta, *„Mury” w Ravensbrück* [“The Walls” in Ravensbrück], Warsaw 1979
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