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‘Enfer Des Femmes’: Britain and The Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trials

By

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**Thesis submitted
For Masters by Research**

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Abstract

Between December 1946 and June 1948 a series of seven Trials were conducted by a British Military Court. Known as the Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trials (RHTs), the defendants were former guards, doctors, nurses and prisoner functionaries (Kapos) from Ravensbrück Concentration Camp. These Trials are part of a number of forgotten trials concerning Nazi war crimes. Ravensbrück's status as the largest women's Camp during the Second World War means that evidence from the Trials sheds an important light on the experiences of women in concentration camps, as prisoners and perpetrators. This thesis has two aims; firstly to produce a history of the RHTs, unveiling political decisions made by Britain and the Allied powers leading up to and during the Trials. These include decisions that were influenced by the growing Cold War, such as Britain's refusal to hand Ravensbrück defendant's to Warsaw in 1946, and the reasons behind the Trials fading from public memory. The second aim is to utilize evidence from the Trials to evaluate the role of Ravensbrück within the wider history of concentration camps, exposing the atrocities that took place therein and sharing the experiences of female prisoners.

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Abbreviations

AMTs	American Military Tribunals
BAOR	British Army on the Rhine
BFO	British Foreign Office
CI	Counter Intelligence
CIC	Counter Intelligence Corps
DAAG	Deputy Assistant Adjutant General
DJAG	Deputy Judge Advocate General
FIS	Field Investigation Section
FO	Foreign Office
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IMT	International Military Tribunal
JAG	Judge Advocate General
KL	Nazi Concentration Camp
NMT	Nuremberg Military Tribunal
RHTs	Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trials
SS	Schutzstaffel (means Protection Squadron in German)
SU	Soviet Union
TexLed	Association for Textile and Leather Utilization
TNA	The National Archives
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNWCC	United Nations War Crimes Commission
US	United States of America
WCIU	War Crimes Investigation Unit
WCG	War Crimes Group

Prologue

Impressions of Ravensbrück

On the morning of Wednesday, 31 August 2016 I arrived at Fürstenberg Train Station, only two kilometres away from the Ravensbrück Memorial Site. Karolin Steinke reveals that ‘all trains carrying prisoners would stop at Fürstenberg’ before they were taken to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp.¹ She states the ‘well-preserved railway station used today by visitors reveals nothing about the prisoner’s brutal reception’.² Upon disembarking the train I was surrounded by a peaceful village. It was difficult to imagine such horrors had taken place within such a beautiful setting. The first thing I noticed when approaching the Memorial Site was reflective tiles painted on the ground. These were designed by local school children, the idea being to follow the tiles which lead you straight to the Site. The tiles consisted of two designs, one a black and white painting of barbed wire, and the other blue and white stripes resembling the pyjama like uniform that prisoners wore during their time at Ravensbrück.

As I neared the Memorial Site I spotted a wooden beam with the words Ravensbrück carved on the side. When the Camp was active this would have been part of a fence that divided the Concentration Camp from the village of Fürstenberg. I was nearly there! This made me feel uncomfortable. It would be the first and only time that I visited a Nazi concentration camp. It is one thing researching the violence inflicted on female prisoners of Ravensbrück, but another entirely visiting the former Concentration Camp and seeing the disturbing reality.

I walked to the Memorial Site along the original road, passing some grand houses which were lived in by male SS guards (and their families). Although abandoned these houses were still intact. Walking into the Site itself, the first thing I saw was the former living quarters of the Aufseherinnen (female guards). These buildings were less impressive than the houses designed for the SS men, but still looked comfortable. Today the living quarters are being used as a Hostel. The thought of people staying within rooms of former Aufseherinnen unnerved me.

Opposite the Aufseherinnen living quarters was the SS Headquarters which now exhibits the Concentration Camp’s history. The building was impressive inside but basic. The upstairs rooms were empty, apart from exhibits displayed on the walls and the odd table. There were images provided to show visitors how the rooms would have looked, and what they would have been used for. On the ground floor there were more exhibits. These focused on the prisoners held at Ravensbrück. One of

¹ Karolin Steinke, *Trains to Ravensbruck: Transports by the Reichsbahn 1939-1945* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2009), p. 24

² *Ibid*

the rooms was solely dedicated to the thirty nationalities that were held there, and stories behind their various captures.

The exhibits were laid out in order from start to finish, beginning with the construction of Ravensbrück in May 1939, and ending with the Camp's liberation in April 1945. The exhibit that mostly captured my interest was 'Resistance'. Even though these women were forced into slave labour, brutally beaten by SS guards and, after 1942, some of them savagely murdered, they still found the strength to rebel against the SS in various ways. For example, the 'Resistance' exhibit displayed a pair of grey army socks in a clear plastic box. Women deliberately produced faulty military uniforms for the German Army. One way of doing this was to sabotage their socks. The description claimed that many older women, who were forced to work in the knitting workshop of the textile plant owned by TexLed (the SS Enterprise), made the heels of socks narrow or defective. This gave soldiers painful blisters on their feet.

Walking away from the Headquarters, towards where prisoners were held, gave me a sickly nervous feeling. The huts where prisoners were forced to sleep were no longer there. Although they had been demolished I could see the foundations of where they once stood, indicating their approximate size. It was saddening to think of the thousands of poor victims that would have been crammed into such a small space. At the end was what I believe to be the biggest building in the Site, the textile mill. If I could describe this building in one word, it would be eerie. In the main entrance was an art exhibit designed to echo the victims' suffering. In front of me were around a dozen deteriorated figures, spears pierced through their bodies. It startled me, putting me on edge for the rest of my time in the textile mill.

The textile building consisted of long, spacey halls where female prisoners were forced to make uniforms for camp prisoners and German soldiers. The rooms were substantial but not big enough to squeeze hundreds of slave workers into. I left this building swiftly, only to be confronted by the prison.

The prison contained women who continued to prove difficult, and was a place where immense violence was inflicted. Only the cells upstairs were open to visitors, the downstairs was under construction. Upstairs the layout of each room was extremely thoughtful. Each prison cell was dedicated to a different country – thirty in all - in memory of all prisoners held there. Opposite the back entrance to the prison was the crematorium. I could not bring myself to go into the actual building. I forced myself to glimpse inside, but it was too emotionally draining to see where the SS used to burn the bodies of their innocent victims after they were murdered. Thankfully, the gas chamber that was installed in 1945 had been demolished. Where it once stood was marked with ground tiles, and a memorial statue that looked out onto the lake. The setting around the former Camp

at Ravensbrück is exceptionally picturesque. It deeply disturbed me how something so cruel could be hidden amongst something so beautiful. It was the perfect disguise.

My overall experience was unsettlingly haunting. It truly moved me and I will never forget my visit. It gave me a disturbing education. Before I visited the Memorial Site I was unaware that towards the end of the Second World War the Camp had installed a gas chamber. I was also unaware that men were held at Ravensbrück. These men were used to expand the Camp. I was unable to see where the SS held male prisoners, as this area was undergoing development, and therefore closed off to visitors. To a certain extent this gave me a sense of relief. I had been emotionally disturbed enough and was more than ready to once again embark the train and continue my quiet and thoughtful journey back to my hotel.

Introduction

Ravensbrück and War Crimes in Historical Perspective

Between December 1946 and May 1947 sixteen former Ravensbrück camp personnel stood in the dock of the Curiohaus Building in Hamburg, as defendants of the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial. They included camp guards, SS officers, doctors, nurses and Kapos (prisoners assigned supervisory roles by camp guards). The Trial was the first in a series of seven that took place between December 1946 and July 1948 before British Military Courts.³

Ravensbrück Concentration Camp was erected in May 1939, and was operational until April 1945. It was intended as a labour camp for female prisoners, making it the only wartime Camp to exclusively hold women. A small men's Camp was added in 1941 holding approximately twenty thousand prisoners over the course of Ravensbrück's existence. The women's Camp held approximately one hundred and twenty-three thousand inmates. Female prisoners registered at Ravensbrück were mainly political. A large proportion of these were Jehovah Witnesses. The population of the Camp was made up of women from at least thirty different countries, including France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union (SU) and Italy. From 1942 female prisoners were transported from Ravensbrück to Auschwitz where they died in the gas chambers. After January 1945 one of Ravensbrück's satellite camps (the Uckermark Concentration Camp) was adapted into an extermination camp and a temporary gas chamber was installed at Ravensbrück.⁴

Witness testimonies at the RHTs by female camp survivors outline the maltreatment, murder and medical experiments that took place at Ravensbrück. Thirty-eight individuals were charged with the ill-treatment and killing (or selection for killing) of female prisoners. Medical staff received additional charges for participating in medical experiments conducted on female prisoners. Most of the accused were sentenced to death. Some were given long prison sentences or committed suicide out of defiance.⁵

Ravensbrück's status as the largest women's Concentration Camp means that evidence from female camp survivors highlights ways in which women learned how to survive at Ravensbrück, and also exposes traumas they faced such as sterilization, pregnancy and forced abortion. The RHTs were the first to accuse women of war crimes in what previously seemed an all-male affair. The Trials revealed how the female staff at Ravensbrück could be as brutal as their male colleagues. Female guards and

³ Michael J. Bazyler and Frank M. Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials of the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), pp. 137-138

⁴ Alyn Bessmann and Insa Eschebach (Eds), *The Ravensbrück Women's Concentration Camp* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2013), pp. 11-12

⁵ Bazyler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, pp. 137-138; Paul Wendling, *Epidemics and Genocide in Eastern Europe, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 315

nurses were employed by the SS, becoming more involved in the day-to-day life of prisoners. This enabled them to decide who survived. Despite all this the RHTs became forgotten Trials and have faded from public consciousness.⁶

Most literature concerning Nazi war crimes trials focuses on The Nuremberg Trials (November 1945-April 1949) and the Trial of Adolf Eichmann (1961-1962). The Nuremberg Trials (NMT) were divided into two parts, the International Military Tribunal (November 1945-October 1946) which dealt with major war criminals such as Albert Speer and Hermann Göring, and the American Military Tribunals (1946-1949). Scholars who have studied the International Military Tribunal (IMT) include Guénaél Mattraux, Hans Leonhardt, F. B. Schick and George A. Finch. A debate has revolved around the legitimacy of the Trials and whether the charges were based on an *ex post facto* principle, as the war crimes established through the London Agreement ('crimes against humanity' and 'peace') did not exist before the establishment of the IMT. Scholars such as Willis Smith argue that crimes prosecuted at the IMT already existed in accordance with the enforcement of German internal penal law. For example, crimes embedded within 'crimes against humanity' (arson, enslavement, murder and extermination) already existed.⁷

Kevin Heller, Hilary Earl and Donald Bloxham have devoted studies to the second round of Nuremberg Trials (the American Military Tribunals). The American Military Tribunals (AMTs) comprised of twelve consecutive war crimes trials involving major war criminals such as Karl Brandt, Viktor Brack and Otto Ohlendorf. Heller and Earl demonstrate that these Trials were important in establishing the idea of genocide as a 'crime against humanity'. They use the Einsatzgruppen case (ninth American case) to illustrate this, as it was the first to deal with the systematic murder of a large group (Soviet-Jewry), demonstrating unprecedented brutality. Yet the AMTs are forgotten Trials. They are overlooked by historians such as Mattraux, Leonhardt, Schick and Finch, as they took place after the IMT and not in front of an international military court.⁸

The second Nazi war crimes Trial that is closely investigated is the Eichmann Trial. Academic controversy surrounding the Eichmann Trial began with the publication of Hannah Arendt's

⁶Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, pp. 6-9: Jensen C. Szejnmann (Eds.), *Ordinary People as Mass Murderers: Perpetrators in Comparative Perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 124

⁷Guénaél Mattraux (Eds), *Perspectives on the Nuremberg Trial* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. xi: Hans Leonhardt, 'The Nuremberg Trial: A Legal Analysis', *Cambridge University Press*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (1949), pp. 449-476: F. B. Schick, 'The Nuremberg Trial and the International Law of the Future', *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (1947), pp. 770-794: George A. Finch, 'The Nuremberg Trial and International Law', *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (1947), pp. 20-37: Willis Smith, 'The Nuremberg Trials', *American Bar Association Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 7 (1946), p. 393

⁸Kevin Jon Heller, *The Nuremberg Military Tribunals and the Origins of International Criminal Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 1: Donald Bloxham, 'From the International Military Tribunal to the Subsequent Nuremberg Proceedings: The American Confrontation with Nazi Criminality Revisited', *The Journal of the Historical Association* (2013), p. 567: Hilary Earl, *The Nuremberg SS-Einsatzgruppen Trial, 1945-1958: Atrocity, Law, and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 296

Eichmann in Jerusalem (1963) which famously describes Adolf Eichmann as the ‘banality of evil’.⁹ Later, Deborah Lipstadt returned to the Trial and found that the Eichmann case changed the overall perception of the Holocaust. Eichmann became universally known as one of the leading Nazis who organized and carried out genocide. The Trial was widely publicised and centred around the ‘greatest crime committed during the Holocaust’ (extermination of the European-Jewry). This allowed the public to discover the truth behind the Holocaust through the voices of Jewish victims. Whilst the Nuremberg and Eichmann Trials were extensively studied and widely publicised, others were neglected by scholars and remained hidden from history.¹⁰

As noted earlier, the RHTs were part of the British War Crimes Tribunals. These Tribunals have been examined by academics such as Bloxham, Anthony Glees and A. P. V. Rogers, who focus on the wider political background that surrounded the British Military Tribunals.¹¹ Bloxham’s article, *British War Crimes Trial Policy in Germany, 1945-1947: Implementation and Collapse* (2003) briefly refers to the RHTs as being unusual due to the Camp being situated outside the British zone and inside Soviet-occupied territory. Bloxham notes literature is weighted towards the Nuremberg Trials and the prosecutions of less important Nazi criminals have been neglected. His article discusses the British Tribunals that took place directly after the Second World War. He criticises the British for conducting inadequate screening. He stresses that many investigations were not followed up which resulted in Nazi criminals escaping or avoiding trial. He does, however, take into consideration the thousand or more who were tried and that substantial ‘efforts went into trying them’.¹²

Lorie Charlesworth discusses British War Crimes Tribunals in broader terms. She criticises previous studies, such as Priscilla Jones’s, *British policy towards German Crimes against German Jews* (1991), for only paying attention to Britain’s political decision to end the trials which led to guilty Nazi criminals avoiding prosecution. She argues that historians such as Bloxham, who have attempted to study the ‘minor’ war crimes tribunals, have failed to provide readers with a ‘sense of what was achieved or attempted’. Charlesworth concludes that engaging with the ‘minor’ trials challenges the orthodox account which argues the German population had no Holocaust awareness whilst these trials were taking place. She states that the German public were forced to engage personally with the British trials and confront what happened, due to Britain and its Allies enforcing denazification (eliminating

⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), p. 252

¹⁰ Deborah Lipstadt, *The Eichmann Trial* (New York: Random House Inc, 2011), p. 188

¹¹ Donald Bloxham, ‘British War Crimes Trial Policy in Germany, 1945-1957: Implementation and Collapse’, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2003): A. P. V. Rogers, ‘War Crimes Under The Royal Warrant: British Practice 1945-1949’, *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 39 (1990), pp. 780-800: Anthony Glees, ‘The Making of British Policy on War Crimes: History as Politics in the UK’, *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1992), pp. 171-197

¹² Bloxham, ‘Implementation and Collapse’, pp. 91-118

what remained of Nazi ideology). Importantly the British trials allowed victims to demonstrate courage by confronting their abusers.¹³

This year Dan Plesch released a book titled *Human Rights After Hitler* (2017). He notes that ‘thousands of Nazis and their Allies were indicted as war criminals’ after the Second World War, but ‘despite this large number of prosecutions, the world’s historical memory is limited to the few dozen top officials who were tried before the International Tribunals in Nuremberg’. Plesch’s book unveils thousands of Allied War Tribunals against the Nazis, and other Axis war criminals which have been missing from collective memory. His book discusses cases which he argues provided underlying principles for human rights in the twenty-first century. These include accusations held against perpetrators of the Holocaust, whilst the Nazi extermination camps were still in operation. Plesch’s book gives well deserved credit to the United Nations War Crimes Committee (UNWCC), and stresses that ‘only recently’ has the UNWCC ‘been given attention by scholars’. He concludes that the UNWCC ‘is a major and historical source of reinforcement for the politics and law of international criminal justice today’. He stresses that, as the violent hatred of foreigners rises again, ‘the story of the UNWCC provides [a] warning’ and is a ‘badly needed role model’.¹⁴

The forgotten trials, including the RHTs, have been studied by Charlesworth, Michael Bayzler and Frank Tuerkheimer. They include the Kharkov Trial of 1943 which was arguably the first post-war tribunal. The Trial lasted three days, taking place before Soviet Military Courts. Three Nazi personnel and a Russian collaborator were tried. The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial (1963-1965) is another forgotten Trial, at which Germans who operated the death Camp at Auschwitz were charged by West German prosecutors under their national criminal law.¹⁵

Bayzler and Tuerkheimer offer the reader a snapshot of ten forgotten war crimes trials which were conducted under British, Russian, American and French Military Courts in their own occupied zones of Germany. Their book includes one of the few studies dedicated to the RHTs. Bayzler and Tuerkheimer note that the RHTs were first to develop an understanding of women as Nazi criminals, and victims of concentration camps. The authors argue that the RHTs contained four major characteristics.¹⁶

¹³Lorie Charlesworth, ‘Forgotten Justice: Forgetting Law’s History and Victims’ Justice in British “Minor” War Crimes Trials in Germany 1945-8’, *Amicus Curiae*, Issue 74 (2008), pp. 3-10; Priscilla Dale Jones, ‘British Policy Towards German Crimes against German Jews, 1939-45’, *The Leo Baeck Institute* (1991); Donald Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)

¹⁴Dan Plesch, *The Lost History of Prosecuting Axis War Crimes: Human Rights After Hitler* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), pp. 1-2 and 206

¹⁵Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, pp. 6-11

¹⁶*Ibid*

Firstly, Bayzler and Tuerkheimer state that female witnesses gave indispensable information on their experience at Ravensbrück. Secondly, women were exposed as Nazi war criminals. The authors cite that women were ‘classified as Weibliche SS-Gefolge’ (female SS workforce) and were unable to hold top positions within concentration camps. Women were at the bottom of the SS hierarchy. Only four women stationed at Ravensbrück achieved the rank Erste Oberaufseherin (Chief Senior Guard).¹⁷ Thirdly, the RHTs paid close attention to the mass murder of Jewish and non-Jewish victims. This developed a ‘slow formation of memory’ regarding the murder of European Jews that ‘would emerge years later as the Holocaust. Finally, many of the defendants were medical personnel who practiced with deadly medicines and imposed experiments on prisoners. Most of the medical staff were tried in the fourth Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial, known as the ‘Doctors and Nurses Case’.¹⁸

Numerous studies have been dedicated to Nazi medicine. The first prominent study was Robert Lifton’s *The Nazi Doctors* which considers how ordinary people become socialized to genocide. Lifton’s psychological analysis is concerned with theories such as ‘doubling’ and ‘separate reality’ which he developed from first-hand interviews with camp doctors and prisoners. Lifton defines ‘doubling’ as ‘the division of the self into two functioning wholes’. He uses Auschwitz doctors as an example, stating they justified killing by using five characteristics of ‘doubling’, one being the ‘avoidance of guilt’. Medical staff saw their second self as doing the ‘dirty work’ and their original self as a humane physician or loving husband. Lifton’s ‘separate reality’ theory involves doctors discussing Auschwitz as if it was in a separate dimension. The environment of Auschwitz was extremely diverse compared to their ordinary setting. Doctors were convinced that their second self was in a separate reality, numbing the thought of killing.¹⁹

Studies by Michael Burleigh, Benno Müller-Hill, Michael Kater, Hugh Gallagher and Robert Proctor deepen our understanding of the practice of medicine in concentration camps. Proctor, in particular, criticises previous literature for solely focusing on how science was corrupted and abused by the Nazis. His approach discusses ways in which politics influenced the practice of science during the Nazi era and concludes that, even though the Nazi racial policy dominated the medical and science spheres, not everyone in the profession was a Nazi. Many tried to voice medical alternatives which the Nazis considered as ‘resistance’, and their lives were often taken.²⁰

¹⁷Bazyler and Tuerkheimer, ‘The Hamburg Ravensbrück Trials in British-Occupied Germany’, in *Forgotten Trials*, p. 130; Daniel Patrick Brown, *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System* (Surrey: Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 2002), p. 8

¹⁸Bazyler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 132

¹⁹Robert J Lifton, *Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide: The Nazi Doctors* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), pp. 419-447

²⁰Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance: Euthanasia in Germany 1900-1945* (London: Pan, 2002); Benno Müller-Hill, *Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selections of Jews, Gypsies and Others – Germany 1933-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Michael Kater, *Doctors Under Hitler* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 1989); Hugh Gallagher, *Be Trust Betrayed: Patients, Physicians, and the License to Kill in the Third Reich*

Bayzler and Tuerkheimer conclude that the ten forgotten trials illuminate the ‘wide ranging legal enterprise’ of Allied Military Courts and point out two common themes that run through all ten trials. The first being that defendants were prone to anti-Semitism, and believed that mass killing of the Jewish population was acceptable. The second being that in every case the defence acknowledged the facts presented by the prosecution, but pleaded ignorance. Most of the accused stated that they were not present when the crimes took place, or they were following orders.²¹

Ulf Schmidt’s study titled “*The Scars of Ravensbrück*” focuses on the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial. He discusses Polish extradition requests submitted to Britain prior to the first Trial. He states that the Polish Foreign Office argued that certain medical personnel (who were stationed at Ravensbrück) should be tried in Poland, as practically all the victims involved in medical experiments were Polish. Schmidt concludes that British legal authorities refused ‘to comply with [Polish] requests issued to the London Government’.²² British legal experts felt that prosecuting the medical personnel in a British Military Court ‘would ensure that unethical medical practices [stopped] in Germany and [were] not spread’ to other European countries. Britain ‘aimed at coordinating the Allied denazification policy’ and ‘liaising with US policies’.²³

Evidence gathered at Allied Post-War Tribunals has proven an important source for historians studying the history of Nazi concentration camps. During the decades following the Second World War this history was mainly shaped by camp survivors who released memoirs of their experiences. Most memoirs, including Primo Levi’s *If This is a Man* (1959), focused on the mass killing of the European-Jewry and the suffering that took place within wartime camps. Levi was one of hundreds of survivors to base their memoirs on the biggest and deadliest wartime camp of them all, Auschwitz. Perhaps, inevitably, the history of concentration camps was dominated by the Auschwitz story.²⁴

Laurence Rees concludes in his book, *Auschwitz: The Nazis and the ‘Final Solution’* (2005) that Auschwitz was the ‘physical embodiment of the fundamental values of the Nazi State’. Decisions leading to the mass killing of the European-Jewry at Auschwitz represented what historians have called ‘cumulative radicalisation’ (deriving from Hans Mommsen).²⁵ Cumulative radicalisation can be

(New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1989): Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis* (London: Harvard University Press: 1988), p. 297

²¹ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, pp. 303-312

²² Ulf Schmidt, “‘The Scars of Ravensbrück’: Medical Experiments and British War Crimes Policy, 1945-1950’ in *Atrocities on Trial: Historical Perspectives on the Politics of Prosecuting War Crimes* (Washington: Published in association with the United States Holocaust Museum Memorial, 2008), pp. 150

²³ Schmidt, “‘The Scars of Ravensbrück’”, pp. 147-150

²⁴ Primo Levi, *If This is a Man* (New York: Orion Press, 1959)

²⁵ Laurence Rees, *Auschwitz: The Nazis & The ‘Final Solution’* (London: BBC Books, 2005), p. 8

outlined as the ‘radicalisation, dynamic, and structure-destroying inbuilt characteristics of Nazism’.²⁶ Rees suggests that perpetrators pursued what they thought to be the desire of Hitler.²⁷

Hermann Langbein seeks to give a voice to other Auschwitz victims including, Gypsies, Soviet POWs, Jehovah Witnesses and Polish prisoners. He focuses on the day-to-day life of these victims, and the ways in which perpetrators justified their behaviour. He uses Dr Wirth (Langbein’s former Director) as an example, stating that Wirth was a ‘lost man’ who willingly accepted the Nazi principles of controlling human beings.²⁸

Nikolaus Wachsmann’s recent major study has redefined Nazi concentration camp (or KL) history. He argues that until now studies have fragmented KL history and created an ‘unassembled puzzle’ that needs to be pieced back together. Wachsmann acknowledges that Auschwitz will always be known as the ‘largest and most lethal’ in the KL system, but that does not mean concentration camp history should be limited to Auschwitz. He identifies that the KL system ‘normalized extreme violence, torture and murder’ in Nazi Germany. His study is significant as it has opened up new avenues of research.²⁹

Wachsmann’s book draws upon existing scholarship, including survivor memoirs, articles and books. He makes extensive use of primary sources, including reports gathered from post-war trials and SS records, now accessible in archives. He concludes from sources that previous accounts of Nazi concentration camps appear to be from completely different worlds, when in reality they were all connected. The camp system set in place during the 1930s (which consisted of basic rules and organization) remained unchanged throughout the Nazi era. The extermination programme was added later which ‘left an important legacy for the Holocaust’.³⁰

Ravensbrück is vital to the history of concentration camps as it opens a window to the experiences of women. Jack Morrison, Rochelle Saidel and Sarah Helm are historians who have attempted to give Ravensbrück prisoners a voice.

Morrison studies the social dynamics of Ravensbrück through examining relationships between prisoners. He argues women dealt with camp conditions better than men, and concludes the survival of female inmates was based upon abilities unique to women. Women developed skills within society, enabling them to act as caregivers and homemakers to survive the hardships of Ravensbrück. They

²⁶ Anthony Court, *Hannah Arendt’s Response to the Crisis of her Times* (Amsterdam: Pretoria Rozenberg Publishers, 2008), p. 189

²⁷ Rees, *Auschwitz*, p. 8

²⁸ Hermann Langbein, *People in Auschwitz* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. xii-3 and 522

²⁹ Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (London: Little, Brown, 2016), pp. 14-19

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 626

acted as mothers, sorted out social attribution and counselled young children. They also provided emotional support for one another by sympathetically listening to each other's concerns. Morrison concludes that female prisoners demonstrated a greater coping mechanism than men who did not possess the same skills. He stresses that Ravensbrück was not a community as it was too diverse; instead it was a 'series of sub-cultures largely based on language and nationality', in which women demonstrated 'cultural creativity and intellectual energy' in the most insufferable conditions.³¹

Saidel argues that previous studies have neglected the Jewish sector that made up around fifteen percent of the overall camp population. She highlights the jurisdiction of the Camp Memorial was placed under the SU after World War Two, and later the German Democratic Republic (GDR) until the 1990s. This led to Ravensbrück's Memorial Site foregrounding the histories of communist heroines and neglecting Jewish victims. Saidel attempts to give Jewish women a voice. She concludes that by sharing their stories, they have filled a gap in Holocaust history. Their recollections enrich our understanding of women's experiences.³²

Sarah Helm's book *If this is a woman* (2015) stresses the way in which the Cold War split the camp history in two. In East Germany Street names and schools were dedicated to communist heroines, whereas in the West, Ravensbrück vanished from historical memory. Evidence given at the RHTs remained closed to the public for fifty-nine years. Camp survivors remained quiet, assuming their stories would not be believed.³³

Helm states that historians often describe concentration camps as an 'entirely masculine world', ignoring the experiences of women. Helm and Morrison share similar conclusions that victims of Ravensbrück survived due to relationships formed within the Camp. Helm recognises that luck was a key ingredient to surviving such conditions, but also stresses these women would not have survived without forming friendships which kept them sane. She suggests women followed their social instincts, forming surrogate families, giving them the strength and courage to survive.³⁴

A study of Ravensbrück poses the question of gender. Saidel argues that gendered behaviour played a crucial role in Ravensbrück and that being a women influenced life and death. 'Social, political and economic relations between men and women' imposed different behavioural expectations and norms, meaning men and women experienced life inside the camps in different ways. Women were trained

³¹ Jack Morrison, *Ravensbrück: Everyday Life in a Women's Concentration Camp 1939-45* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000), pp. 308-310

³² Rochelle Saidel, *Jewish Women of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), pp. 3-11

³³ Sarah Helm, *If This is a Woman: Inside Ravensbrück: Hitler's Concentration Camp for Women* (London: Abacus, 2015), pp. xiii-xiv

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 726

from childhood to be modest. Therefore female inmates experienced mental and physical stress when forced to parade naked in front of other women and SS guards.³⁵

Saidel discusses 'gendered activities' at Ravensbrück. For example women exchanged gifts and wrote recipe books, helping female prisoners to remember home, keeping their spirits high. Saidel highlights this phenomenon was unique to women. She states 'gendered activities' were related to homemaking and nurturing skills that women were taught growing up during this era. Female prisoners looked after each other when ill, and preserved hygiene by washing and sewing clothes. They endured the traumas of menstruation while interned, and the risk of pregnancy. Pregnant inmates were forced to have abortions, usually resulting in the death of both mother and baby. Should the mother survive she was often inflicted with mental and physical trauma. Women's bodies were used for prostitution in men's camps such as Buchenwald. Saidel argues that the victimization of Ravensbrück prisoners, to pleasure male prisoners, demonstrates that there was a patriarchal system in concentration camps, reflecting the wider society.³⁶

Ironically women were arrested in Nazi Germany for prostitution and incarcerated at Ravensbrück. Saidel argues these women were 'victims of a gendered patriarchal system' because prostitutes were considered 'asocials', yet 'men who frequented them had no such stigma attached'.³⁷ Jane Caplan's research finds that originally 'more men were detained than women for political reasons' as women were seen as politically immature.³⁸ This changed in 1935 when Jehovah Witnesses fell under persecution for refusing 'the oath of loyalty to the Führer' (Adolf Hitler).³⁹ Men were then more likely to be labelled as workshy or criminals, whereas women were commonly detained as resisters, supporting Jehovah Witnesses.⁴⁰

The most recent study to assess women's experiences in concentration camps is Zöe Waxman's *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History* (2017). Her book approaches the Holocaust from a gendered but feminist point of view. She builds on existing work drawing attention to the different experiences of men and women, and focuses on the 'female voice' which is commonly drowned out by an 'overwhelmingly male narrative'. She explores experiences exclusive to women, for example menstruation, abortion and pregnancy. Her book employs testimonies of women who survived

³⁵Saidel, 'Gender and Women's Bodies', in *Jewish Women of Ravensbrück*, pp. 204-209

³⁶Ibid

³⁷Ibid, p. 213

³⁸Jane Caplan, 'Gender and the Concentration Camps' in *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 88

³⁹Tony Redding, *Bombing Germany: The Final Phase: The Destruction of Pforzheim and the Closing Months of Bomber Command's War* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Aviation, 2015), p. 94

⁴⁰Caplan, 'Gender and the Concentration Camps', pp. 88-92

concentration camps to expose the disempowerment they faced before, during and after the Holocaust.⁴¹

The aim of this study is twofold; firstly to produce a history of the RHTs by discussing the motives behind them, legal proceedings and outcomes that took place. Secondly to use evidence produced at the Trials to evaluate Ravensbrück's role within the wider history of concentration camps. Studying Ravensbrück through the lens of the RHTs makes it possible to focus on the experiences of female prisoners, and the role of women as Nazi perpetrators. Chapter one of this study will discuss political decisions made by the four Allied powers (in particular Britain) in the years leading up to the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial. It will examine political obstacles faced by Britain as a result of the Trials, for example Britain's reluctance to hand Ravensbrück defendants to Warsaw prior to the first Trial. Furthermore it will analyse why the French press criticised the British way of justice during the first Trial.

Chapter two will focus on legal proceedings that took place within the courtroom at Hamburg. It will examine who, and why they were tried, and sentences given by the British Military Court. Above all this chapter will evaluate why such a unique set of Trials faded from public memory, becoming forgotten Trials.

The final chapter will utilize evidence from the RHTs (including depositions of female prisoners who survived atrocities within the camp and reports by the British War Crimes Committee) to produce a history of Ravensbrück. Actions taken by male and female staff stationed at the women's Camp resulted in thirty-eight former personnel being tried for war crimes. In summary, this study aims to answer four key research questions. These being: Why were the Trials handled by the British? What was the impact of the evolving Cold War? Why did the Trials disappear from public memory? And what did female prisoners experience at Ravensbrück?

Most of the primary sources within this study have been retrieved from the National Archives in London. It should be noted that, as the RHTs were conducted by a British Military Court, depositions used were translated into English at that time.

⁴¹Zöe Waxman, *Women in the Holocaust: A Feminist History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017) pp. 150-151

Chapter One

When ‘Conceptions of Justice Do Not Always Tally with Our Own’:

Human Rights and Bipolar Politics Prior to the First Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial

During the aftermath of the Second World War it became the responsibility of the four Allied powers (Britain, France, America and the SU) to prosecute thousands of war criminals who had committed criminal offenses in concentration camps during wartime (such as killing and carrying out medical experiments on inmates). This resulted in the four Allied powers holding domestic and international war crimes tribunals in their individual zones of occupied Germany. This chapter will foreground political decisions made by the Allies, particularly Britain, during the period before and throughout the course of the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial. It will examine disputes that arose from decisions made by the Allied powers, namely Britain’s reluctance to hand Ravensbrück defendants over to Warsaw in 1946, and the French press criticising Britain’s justice system in 1947. Ultimately, this chapter will discuss how the growing Cold War impacted Britain’s decision to hold the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial.

In 1941 Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt declared ‘the punishment of Nazi crimes should now be counted among major goals of the war’.⁴² Churchill and Roosevelt formally discussed war crimes during the summer of 1942 and agreed to ‘set up an international commission to investigate alleged atrocities’. Shortly after the British cabinet formed a War Crimes Committee directed by Lord Simon (Lord Chancellor).⁴³ Pressure from exiled governments led to the Committee establishing the United Nations War Crimes Commission (UNWCC) in October 1943. The UNWCC’s purpose was to ‘collect and assess all available evidence with a view to establishing responsibility of those individuals guilty of war crimes’. This way, the number of criminals tried at the end of the war could be limited. The two leading figures of the UNWCC were Sir Cecil Hurst (British representative) and Hebert C. Pell (American representative). Investigations were taken seriously. The UNWCC even ‘tried to deal with matters outside its mandate’.⁴⁴ It was the ‘first body to consider in detail the issue of punishment’ and was uniquely international. Fourteen Allied nations participated, not including the SU.⁴⁵

In November 1943 Josef Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt issued the Moscow Declaration. This stated that ‘those responsible for war crimes would be tried in the countries where the crimes had been

⁴² Donald Bloxham, ‘The British War Crimes Trial Policy in Germany’, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 42, No.1 (2013), p. 93

⁴³ Roger Chickering et al, *A World at Total War: Global Conflict and the Politics of Destruction 1937-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 371

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Bloxham, ‘British War Crimes Trial Policy’, p. 93

committed'.⁴⁶ The Moscow Declaration established jurisdictional principles for future legal proceedings, inspiring the Allies to sign the London Agreement in August 1945 (from which the IMT was established). The London Agreement gave the Allies jurisdiction to deal with three categories of crimes, these being crimes against peace, humanity and war crimes. After December 1945, Allied legislation was defined by Control Council Law No. 10, which granted prosecution of war criminals in Germany (besides those already tried at the IMT).⁴⁷

After Germany surrendered to the Allies in May 1945, the country was split into four sectors under the Berlin Declaration. This had been signed in June 1945, giving the four Allied powers supreme authority over Germany. Territorial settlements were made at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, resulting in the SU gaining control of the Eastern Sector, whilst the United States (US), Britain and France divided the Western Sector into three. Unlike the Eastern Sector, the Western Sector was 'mostly sovereign' with British, French and American influence. The four major powers conducted trials in their respective zones of occupied Germany.⁴⁸ During the Potsdam Conference the Allies agreed to implement the policies of denazification, demilitarization and democratization.⁴⁹ Denazification can be defined as a 'process of cleansing the German people of the disease of Nazism, seeking justice for the terrible crimes committed'.⁵⁰

Britain held three hundred and fifty-eight trials and convicted one thousand and eighty-five individuals. British trials (including the RHTs) were conducted under the legal mechanism of the Royal Warrant of 1945. This granted 'British Military Commands a right and duty to hold military war crimes courts in which common law rights were denied to the accused'.⁵¹ Military Officers (not qualified lawyers) acted as judges and 'followed the general procedure of military law'. They were advised by a Judge Advocate General (JAG) on substantive and procedural court matters.⁵² The Royal Warrant permitted qualified lawyers from Britain or any other jurisdiction to represent the accused on the defence counsel. The defence counsel at the RHTs consisted of German lawyers whose fees were

⁴⁶ Chickering, *World at Total War*, p. 371

⁴⁷ Schmidt, "'Scars of Ravensbrück'", p. 124

⁴⁸ Timothy C. Dowling, *Russia at War: From Mongol Conquest to Afghanistan, Chechnya and Beyond* (London: ABC-CLIO, 2014), p. 598; David N. Entwistle, *Integrative Approaches to Psychology and Christianity: A Introduction to World View Issues, Philosophical Foundations and Models of Integration* (Leeds: Cascade Books, 2015), p. 180

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 72

⁵⁰ Russell Hart and Stephen Hart, *World War II: Northwest Europe 1944-1945* (New York: Rosen Publishing, 2010), p. 88

⁵¹ John Carey et al, *International Humanitarian Law: Origins, Challenges and Prospects* (New York: Transnational Publishers, 2002), p. 295

⁵² Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 129

funded by the British military. The Warrant conditioned that the accused could not appeal death sentences to a higher court, but could submit a petition which was reviewed by the JAG.⁵³

In 1945 a British War Crimes Committee was set up. This group was originally known as ‘the 21st British Army Group’, but in April 1945 the name changed to ‘the British Army on the Rhine’ (BAOR).⁵⁴ BAOR investigated atrocities that took place at Ravensbrück, and six other concentration camps located inside the Anglo-American zone (Mauthausen, Dachau, Buchenwald, Flossenburg, Belsen and Neuengamme). A report was constructed by the Brigadier of BAOR on 17 January 1946, which stated ‘War Crimes Investigation in BAOR is carried out by three War Crimes Investigation Teams, 24 investigators and 9 interrogators’.⁵⁵ These investigators were ‘given all of the available information about the alleged criminals’ and tasked with tracing them under the code names Operation Haystack and Operation Fleacomb.⁵⁶ Operation Haystack was coined by Captain H. Saunders (Group Captain Officer of War Crime Group) in a memorandum to the JAG’s Office on 7 October 1947. Saunders stated ‘as far as the search side is concerned I feel that something along the lines of Haystack should be [started] in S.E. Europe’, indicating that attempting to find Nazi war criminals would be like finding a needle in a haystack.⁵⁷

Operation Fleacomb could be considered a metaphorical term for denazification. It suggests that BAOR were combing away the fleas (Nazis) within their zone. The objectives of Operation Fleacomb were outlined by the War Crimes Group (WCG) at BAOR Headquarters on 7 March 1947 in a drafted report entitled ‘Operation Fleacomb’. Objectives were ‘to ascertain the number of persons categorised as war criminals against whom sufficient evidence exists to justify their being brought to trial before Military Courts, and to reduce the number of persons held in Counter Intelligence Corps (CICs) as war criminals’. To achieve these objectives, BAOR implemented the method of ‘sifting out war criminals at each CIC, categorising them into one of four groups’. These being:⁵⁸

<u>CATEGORY 1</u> : Persons to be tried by a British Military Court
<u>CATEGORY 2</u> : Persons to be held for extradition to an Allied country
<u>CATEGORY 3</u> : Persons to be tried by a German Tribunal under the provisions of Zone Executive Instruction No. 54 i.e. members of organisations found to be criminal by the International Military Court at Nuremberg
<u>CATEGORY 4</u> : Persons to be released from war criminal categorisation

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Schmidt, “‘Scars of Ravensbrück’”, p. 125

⁵⁵ Brigadier, ‘Report on War Crimes Investigation in BAOR’, 17 January 1946, The National Archives (hereafter TNA): WO 309/372

⁵⁶ Ulf Schmidt, *Justice at Nuremberg: Leo Alexander and the Nazi Doctors’ Trial* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 127

⁵⁷ Captain H. Saunders to JAG Office, ‘Operation Haystack’, 7 October, 1947, TNA: WO 311/650

⁵⁸ War Crimes Group at BAOR Headquarters, ‘Operation Fleacomb’, 7 March 1947, TNA: WO 309/476

An internal division situated in Hertford, England had the responsibility of reviewing and interrogating former camp staff at various CICs. The Hertford division were in possession of Counter Intelligence (CI) questionnaires. Their cooperation was essential. Five officers from the Field Investigation Section (FIS) were in charge of screening. Screening officers collected CI questionnaires and files from Hertford before interviewing war criminals. They produced a list of 'persons held in the CIC' who were members of concentration camps within the Anglo-American zone. Lists of the accused were then forwarded to the 'Extradition Sub Section'. Here individuals, who belonged to camp cases being tried by Allied countries, were offered to the country concerned. If interested they would complete an extradition request before any persons were released into their custody.⁵⁹

Ravensbrück's case was unusual because it was one hundred and eighty miles from British-occupied Hamburg, and inside the Soviet zone of Germany. The SU was formally responsible for trying Ravensbrück war criminals, but refused for two reasons. Firstly, many of the accused fled to the West (Northern Germany) hoping for a fairer trial. The SU were uninterested in submitting time-consuming extradition requests to Britain. Secondly, the Soviets were aware that a large percentage of Ravensbrück prisoners were Polish, thus Warsaw insisted that some of the accused be tried in Poland. Refusing the Trials meant the SU avoided potential conflict with Poland.⁶⁰

On 31 May 1946 Dr Mieczyslaw Szerer (Polish representative of the UNWCC) formally requested the extradition of Dr Karl Gebhardt, Dr Fritz Fischer, Dr Herta Oberheuser and Dr Rolf Rosenthal, all of whom engaged in medical experiments at Ravensbrück between 1942 and 1944, and were 'listed by the UNWCC as war criminals wanted by Poland'. The medical personnel were in the hands of BAOR. Szerer stated in his extradition request that the Polish government wanted these specific individuals because 'almost all operations were conducted on patients-inmates who were Polish nationals - women'. He added that 'many of the victims are at present in Poland and therefore will be available as witnesses before Polish courts'. Polish judicial authorities had conducted investigations on the issue, and had collected substantial evidence against the accused.⁶¹

Although BAOR were aware that Polish prisoners were the main victims of medical experimentation at Ravensbrück (as revealed in interim reports that were constructed by BAOR prior to the RHTs), they were reluctant to hand defendants to Warsaw. British investigations into Ravensbrück, therefore, came to a standstill in October 1945, while negotiations took place between London and the Polish-government-in-exile concerning 'the jurisdiction of cases involving Polish citizens'. BAOR were ordered by the British government to 'suspend all preparation for trials of war criminals where victims

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 137

⁶¹ Dr Mieczyslaw Szerer to BAOR, 'Polish Extradition request', 31 May 1946, TNA: FO 371/57645

were solely persons of Polish nationality'.⁶² This raises the question, why were BAOR so reluctant to hand defendants to Poland?

One possible explanation for this, suggested by Doriane Lambelet, is that Britain wanted to uphold the International Human Rights Law of 1945, in accordance with the founding charter of the recently formed United Nations (UN). After World War Two the power in post-war Poland fell into the laps of Polish communists, placing it under the Soviet sphere of influence.⁶³ Britain believed that Poland were sympathetic to a different perception of Human Rights in line with that of the SU.⁶⁴ This is evidenced by a telegram from the British Foreign Office (BFO) to Captain Yeoman (Captain of War Crimes Branch) on 1 May 1946 concerning Polish extradition requests for Ravensbrück war criminals. The BFO stated they 'would prefer that the evidence submitted when requests emanate from countries like Poland and Yugoslavia, where the conceptions of justice do not always tally with our own, should be more carefully examined than in cases put forward by for instance the Americans'.⁶⁵

Lambelet argues there are innate disparities between the Western and Soviet sphere's perception of Human Rights, the most important being that the SU's conception of Human Rights was a product of Marxist-Leninism; therefore the State ('the perfect embodiment of the Soviet people') granted 'rights which were a product of the collective will of the people'. The Western sphere believed Human Rights were 'innate', and 'a product of natural law'.⁶⁶ Western perception of Human Rights is prominent within the UN Charter of 1945 which pledged to 'reaffirm faith in fundamental Human Rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person in equal rights to men and women and of nations large and small'.⁶⁷ Though the SU were one of fifty-one nations to sign the UN Charter in San Francisco on 26 June 1945, they did not share the same views on Human Rights, as evidenced by their refusal to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in December 1948. The main premise of the UN Charter was 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war', which 'twice has brought untold sorrow to man-kind'.⁶⁸ The Western sphere felt that their perception of Human Rights 'could limit the risk that formally legitimate governments might commit crimes and

⁶² Schmidt, "'Scars of Ravensbrück'", p. 126

⁶³ Justyna Zajac, *Poland's Security Policy: The West, Russia and the Changing International Order* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 12

⁶⁴ Doriane Lambelet, 'The Contradiction between Soviet and American Human Rights Doctrine: Reconciliation through Perestroika and Pragmatism', *Boston University International Law Journal*, Vol. 7, Issue 61 (1989) pp. 61-63

⁶⁵ BFO to Captain J. A. Yeoman, 'Telegram concerning Polish extradition requests', 1 May 1946, TNA: FO 371/57645

⁶⁶ Lambelet, 'Soviet and American Human Rights', p. 64

⁶⁷ Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice, 26 June 1945, accessed at: <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf>

⁶⁸ Ibid

cruelties in the name of a majority or nation, as was the case in Nazi Germany'.⁶⁹ Like Nazi Germany, the Soviet sphere was based upon communitarianism which did not value the individual.⁷⁰ For this reason, the Western sphere was sceptical of the Soviet sphere's willingness to adhere to the International Human Rights Law, and Britain was reluctant to exchange defendants with Warsaw, or any other nation, under the influence of the SU.

Yet Britain was demanding Human Rights in communist or communist sympathising regimes, while turning a blind eye to her own crimes and those of her Western Allies. This is substantiated by the Mau Mau rebellion of 1952, where Kikuyu-dominated groups fought for freedom from British rule. Britain responded to this rebellion by declaring a State of Emergency between October 1952 and December 1959, imprisoning 'up to 1.5 million Kikuyu (nearly the entire population of the country's largest ethnic group) in detention camps'. Here they were tortured with the 'intention of putting down the Mau Mau rebellion'.⁷¹ Britain justified her actions by accusing the Kikuyu of committing 'acts of barbarity against British settlers'. In reality Britain ignored the concept of Human Rights, and ill-treated the Kikuyu to restore her own authority. This demonstrates that Britain had, and still has, double standards, as she remained in control of countries such as Africa and India until the collapse of the British Empire in 1997, whilst promoting the concept of 'equal rights' or 'larger freedom' for nations large or small.⁷²

A more convincing argument as to why Britain did not trade war criminals with the Soviet Bloc is that Anglo-Soviet relations deteriorated from autumn 1945, and Britain recognised the SU were a potential threat towards 'Britain's interests in Europe and the Empire'.⁷³ Britain felt that following the Second World War the main Soviet grievance should have been directed towards the US, but instead attacks were made against Britain in the Soviet press. This is demonstrated in a telegram from Frank Roberts (British Minister of the SU 1945-1947) to Ernest Bevin (Foreign Secretary of Labour government 1945-1951) on 31 October 1945. Roberts states 'it is the Anglo-Soviet rather than American-Soviet relations which are passing through a difficult and in some respects critical phase'. Roberts suggests that the Soviet attacks against Britain were a result of the SU feeling that Britain was 'meddling in affairs of South East Europe, where we have no major interests, and refusing to recognise vital Soviet interests'. Yet Roberts argues, 'in Greece, Iran and above all in Turkey, Soviet policy has become increasingly embarrassing to us and there are signs that the Soviet government

⁶⁹ Scott Sheeran and Sir Nigel Rodley, *Routledge Handbook of International Human Rights Law* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), p. 10

⁷⁰ Lambelet, 'Soviet and American Human Rights', p. 64

⁷¹ Duncan Okoth-Okombo, *Challenging the Rulers: A Leadership Model for good Governance* (Kenya: East African Educational Publishers, 2011), p. 120

⁷² Alison Brysk and Gershon Shafir, *National Insecurity and Human Rights: Democracies and Debate Counterterrorism* (Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press, 2007), p. 101

⁷³ Stephen Brooke, *Reform and Reconstruction: Britain After the War, 1945-51* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 67

may wish to force some at least of these countries to abandon their special relations with us for exclusively Soviet connexion [sic]'. Roberts recognises that 'Soviet interest in the Arab world is increasing and the orthodox-church is becoming an instrument of Soviet propaganda throughout the near East'. Therefore the SU's attitude towards Britain may have 'become increasingly embarrassing in India, the Middle East and in our Colonies, quite apart from Soviet attempts to prevent British influence consolidating itself in Western Europe and elsewhere'.⁷⁴ Michael Schmid concludes that 'the Middle East had been Great Britain's colonial power and Britain, though realizing that [her] reign in the Arab world was coming to an end, was not willing to give up every sphere of influence [she] possessed for so long'.⁷⁵ Britain wanted to hold onto the limited amount of colonies she had, namely India which Britain declared 'the "Jewel in the Crown" of its worldwide empire' in 1876.⁷⁶

On 21 March 1946 Roberts provided Bevin with an 'influential assessment of Soviet intentions'.⁷⁷ Roberts stresses that the SU's 'long term ambitions are dangerous to vital British interests' due to the Soviet regime being dynamic and 'expanding though admittedly not as yet beyond areas where Russian interests existed before the revolution'.⁷⁸ C. F. A. Warner (Assistant Principle of Foreign Office in 1946) responded to Roberts' telegram on 2 April 1946 in which was arguably the 'first clear articulation of a Cold War position against the Soviets'.⁷⁹ Warner gives a good indication of Britain's mind-set towards the SU at the time. He accuses Russian policy of being 'entirely selfish', but 'at the same time ideological'. He states that Britain had been 'selected as the weaker of the two protagonists of the liberal, democratic and Western conceptions' which had been 'proclaimed by the Soviet leaders as rivals of Marxist-Leninism' (the two protagonists being Britain and America). The SU had made it clear that they had 'decided upon an aggressive policy based upon militant Communism and Russian chauvinism'.⁸⁰ The SU were threatening British interests and the 'democratic principles' they stood for.⁸¹

On 5 March 1946 Winston Churchill gave his famous Iron Curtain Speech at Westminster College in Missouri. His speech was the most famed articulation 'of the burgeoning Cold War', due to Churchill's recognition that 'an iron curtain' had 'descended across the continent'. The Iron Curtain Speech is particularly pertinent with regards to Britain's reluctance to hand defendants over to Warsaw. It stated that 'all the famous cities' (including Warsaw, Prague and Budapest) had become

⁷⁴ Frank Roberts to Ernest Bevin, 'Anglo-Soviet Tensions', 31 October 1945, cited in Stephen Brooke, *Reform and Reconstruction: Britain After the War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 68

⁷⁵ Michael Schmid, *Did Desert Shield Lead to Desert Hate? A Case Study of Anti-Americanism in Saudi Arabia* (Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing, 2012), p. 27

⁷⁶ Judith E. Walsh, *A Brief History of India* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), p. 89

⁷⁷ Brooke, *Reform and Reconstruction*, p. 68

⁷⁸ Roberts to Bevin, 'Soviet Intentions', 21 March 1946, cited in Brooke, *Reform and Reconstruction*, p. 69

⁷⁹ Brooke, *Reform and Reconstruction*, p. 69

⁸⁰ C. F. A. Warner Memorandum, 'Russian Policy', 2 April 1946, cited in Brooke, *Reform and Reconstruction*, p.

70

⁸¹ Warner Memorandum

part of what Churchill coined the Soviet sphere. Churchill stressed that all of these cities had become ‘subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow’. Churchill used Warsaw as an example, stating ‘the Russian-dominated Polish government has been encouraged to make enormous and wrongful inroads upon Germany’. He elaborated that ‘mass-expulsions of millions of Germans’ were happening in Warsaw at this time, ‘on a scale grievous and undreamed-of’.⁸² It is fair to suggest that Britain’s reluctance to hand war criminals to Warsaw was a segment of a wider problem. Britain ‘viewed the Soviet backed Polish government with suspicion’ as a result of building Cold War tensions and deteriorating Anglo-Soviet relations.⁸³ Britain was unwilling to cooperate with Warsaw when the SU’s influence was challenging Britain and trying to weaken her influence at every opportunity.⁸⁴

This resulted in Lord Montgomery (Chief of BAOR) proposing that ‘each nation should try in its own courts the people it already holds for crimes at Ravensbrück’.⁸⁵ Prior to autumn 1945 Britain focused on cases that involved British subjects, passing other cases onto requesting nations. This changed in December 1945 after Control Council Law No. 10 was issued, strengthening the position of the JAG.⁸⁶ During that December the JAG informed the War Office (WO) ‘that plans had been made to try all cases that had been initially offered to the Polish government’.⁸⁷ The JAG justified his decision by stressing that BAOR had gathered a substantial amount of evidence during the foregoing months on leading Ravensbrück defendants, and handing defendants to Warsaw would endanger the successful establishment and outcome of their own Ravensbrück Trial. Thus Britain concerned themselves with war criminals that had ‘no direct national interest’.⁸⁸

As Montgomery suggested, nations did try war criminals held in their own courts, resulting in former Ravensbrück personnel being tried in various parts of Europe, including West and East Germany, France, Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia and the Netherlands. The trials held in Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia and the Netherlands were special tribunals known as ‘People’s Courts’, at which people were tried for committing crimes against nationals of respective countries.⁸⁹ In Hamburg the British Military Courts added French and Polish members to the judging panel, who sat beside five British members. These ‘non-British members of the prosecution and the court’ were included ‘in recognition that many victims were either Polish or French’.⁹⁰ A letter was sent from Lieutenant-

⁸² Winston Churchill, *Sinews of Peace*, 5 March 1946, accessed at:

<https://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/the-sinews-of-peace>

⁸³ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 137

⁸⁴ Brooke, *Reform and Reconstruction*, p. 70

⁸⁵ Quote taken from Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 137

⁸⁶ Schmidt, *“Scars of Ravensbrück”*, pp. 126-127

⁸⁷ *Ibid*

⁸⁸ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 137

⁸⁹ Bessmann and Eschebach, *The Ravensbrück Women’s Concentration Camp*, p. 296

⁹⁰ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 139

Colonel G. Barratt to the JAG Office on 7 May 1948 indicating that Britain had introduced non-British members to ease criticism in Poland and France, particularly from Ravensbrück prisoners who desired justice against their captors.⁹¹

In the closing days of the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial it became apparent that Britain's gesture of adding French and Polish judges to the bench was 'regarded as insufficient'.⁹² In France the first Trial generated much criticism within the press, producing negativity from the general public and difficulties for Britain who, over the course of the Trial, had arrested an additional twenty-four Ravensbrück personnel (above the sixteen defendants tried during the first Trial). Britain had to decide whether the twenty-four defendants in their custody should be tried by a British Military Court, or given to French authorities to avoid further criticism. Most criticism came from French Ravensbrück survivors who felt it was unfair that their captors were being tried by a British Military Court, when approximately fifteen British prisoners were held at Ravensbrück compared to eight thousand French.⁹³ An article entitled 'French Criticise the British Way of Justice', published in the Manchester Guardian on 20 January 1947, reported a press conference by three former inmates (Genevieve de Gualle, Anise Girard and Maria Claude Vaillant). The survivors protested 'in carefully measured tones against the manner in which the trial of sixteen former camp doctors and guards' was being conducted by five British judges at Hamburg.⁹⁴

The Manchester Guardian summarised the women's complaints. They were firstly angered by the fact that sixteen defendants were tried when almost '147,000 women were interned' and '8,000 were murdered in gas chambers', whilst a further '50,000 died from exhaustion and ill-treatment'. Secondly, the survivors criticised 'the British procedure and rules of evidence [as] quite unsuitable'. They argued the court 'concentrated on detailed evidence against the individual accused' rather than the overall camp system. For this reason the women stressed that Britain did not 'permit a general indictment'. Thirdly, they protested that 'since there has been no preliminary investigation on the lines of French instruction, everything depends on the evidence given under cross-examination by German lawyers in court' which lacked detail. The women argued camp survivors were expected to remember details such as exact dates, and objects they had been struck with after months of trauma in Ravensbrück. Finally, they stated that the judges 'failed to appreciate the atmosphere in which prisoners lived', and gave an example of a judge who suggested a witness was prejudice towards a female warden because it was the warden's duty to guard them.⁹⁵

⁹¹ G. Barratt to the JAG Office, 'non-British members added to judging panel', 7 May 1948, TNA: WO 311/510

⁹² Schmidt, "*Scars of Ravensbrück*", p. 149

⁹³ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 86; Bessmann and Eschebach, *Ravensbrück Women's Concentration Camp*, p. 61

⁹⁴ 'Our Correspondent' article in the Manchester Guardian, 'French Criticise the British Way of Justice', 20 January 1947, TNA: WO 309/420

⁹⁵ *Ibid*

In response, Major Stephen Stewart (Lead Prosecutor of the RHTs) sent a letter to the Manchester Guardian on 10 February 1947 counter arguing that none ‘of the three ladies who held the press conference, to protest against the manner in which the Trial was conducted, were present at the Trial’. This suggests these women had misinterpreted what happened. He refuted the cross-examination issue by stating that ‘thorough investigations had been made in this case and well over two hundred depositions taken from witnesses belonging to fifteen nationalities; of those twenty-five were chosen to appear in court to give evidence’. Stewart added that witnesses were subject to cross-examination as it was ‘one of the fundamental safeguards of criminal justice, though it may be somewhat irksome to the witness’. He argued that the court considered all defendants a ‘cog in the machinery of the Camp’, and responsible for conditions prevailing within. Thus the overall camp system was taken into account.⁹⁶

Stewart addresses what he perceived to be the ‘second main argument’ from the press conference; which the Manchester Guardian failed to consider, that ‘an overwhelming majority of victims were Continentals’. He sympathised that ‘one or more of the Continental nations should have been in charge of the Trial’ as ‘there were only a few British nationals in the Camp’, but argued that ‘this applied to all the camp cases tried during the last year in the British and American zones’. Stewart stressed that these camp cases were undertaken by British authorities because no ‘other nations were willing or in a position to undertake them’.⁹⁷

Despite Stewart’s efforts to protect the British justice system, on 18 March 1947 Colonel Olivier (Head of French War Crimes Mission, BOAR Headquarters) sent a correspondence to Stewart suggesting that Britain should offer France twenty of the additional twenty-four accused for three main reasons. Firstly, it would ease ‘public opinion in France’. Secondly, Olivier argued that Britain had conducted the first Trial, therefore, France should have the opportunity to conduct the second ‘in which people who are equally important as the first 16 will be tried’. Thirdly, Olivier stated it would be more expedient for the French to try these war criminals, as ‘most of the witnesses will be French, Belgian or Dutch’.⁹⁸ This demonstrates that criticism levied against the British judges and Trial was taken seriously in London, as it was important how British justice was perceived abroad.⁹⁹ BAOR decided to suspend investigations into the twenty-four Ravensbrück personnel ‘until they were aware that they, and not the French, were completing the Trials’.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Stephen Stewart to Editor of the Manchester Guardian, ‘Letter refuting press conference held by three French Ravensbrück survivors’, 10 February 1947, TNA: WO 309/420

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Colonel Olivier and Stephen Stewart, ‘Recorded conversation about offering France Ravensbrück defendants’, 18 March 1947, TNA: WO 309/420

⁹⁹ Schmidt, “Scars of Ravensbrück”, p. 149

¹⁰⁰ Major Worchester, ‘Legal note regarding suspension of War Crimes Investigations’, 1 April 1947, TNA: WO 309/420

The French authorities did not accept Britain's offer. They refused to concur with the press who stated Britain was conducting the Trials incorrectly. On 19 April 1947 Stewart sent a letter to Olivier stating that the French authorities perceived the reaction of the press as 'a lack of faith in British justice', and if Britain delegated her authority to the French, instead of conducting a second Trial, the British justice system may be attacked for lacking efficiency.¹⁰¹ This resulted in Captain A. Somerhough (Head of BAOR's Investigation Unit) sending a memorandum to the JAG Office on 19 March 1947 suggesting that 'a controlled press release should be made' by the Office, after written confirmation of French refusal had reached London. Somerhough proposed that 'in view of some criticism in the French press during the Ravensbrück Trial at Hamburg', the press release needed to acknowledge that 'the British authorities had seen fit to offer the French authorities 20 major Ravensbrück accused'. This is because 'public opinion in France was very concerned about the fate in which a great number of French nationals suffered in Ravensbrück'. Yet the offer was 'turned down by the French'. The press conference was designed to inform the general public of Britain's actions, and suppress future criticism.¹⁰²

Somerhough's letter suggested that the press release offer the public an explanation why the twenty-four Ravensbrück personnel in British custody were not tried during the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial. He states 'they either had not been apprehended or that their location had not been known'.¹⁰³ However, a report was constructed by the FIS of the WCG on 18 April 1946 stating that 'only a small number of accused were tried' during the first or 'main' Trial to 'avoid a very large and complicated trial'. The report explained that the remaining defendants were divided into six groups 'with the object of trying each group separately'.¹⁰⁴

French authorities claimed to reject the twenty Ravensbrück defendants so Britain could save face, as evidenced by Stewart's letter to Olivier. However, Sean Greenwood and Stanford Lyman suggest that during the time of the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial (1946-1947) France was heavily reliant on Britain and the US for post-war reconstruction.¹⁰⁵ The French 'desired incorporation of German coal and steel-producing lands into the French economy', and therefore pursued a 'harsh policy in their occupation zone incorporating the Saar into France's economy, and demanding French incorporation of, or international supervision over, the Ruhr and the Rhineland'.¹⁰⁶ Britain and

¹⁰¹ Stephen Stewart to Colonel Olivier, 'Letter concerning French rejection of Ravensbrück defendants offered by Britain', 19 April 1947, TNA: WO 309/420

¹⁰² A. G. Somerhough to JAG Office, 'Press release to avoid further criticism in France and elsewhere,' 19 April 1947, TNA: WO 309/420

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ FIS of War Crimes Group, 'Why Britain conducted more than one trial', 18 April 1946, TNA: WO 309/416

¹⁰⁵ Sean Greenwood, *The Alternative Alliance: Anglo-French Relations Before the Coming of NATO 1944-48* (London: Minerva Press, 1996), pp. 227-229

¹⁰⁶ Stanford M. Lyman, *NATO and Germany: A Study in the Sociology of Supranational Relations* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1995), p. 49

America did not respond positively to these demands, and ‘a French obstructionist policy’ was introduced in ‘the Allied Control Commission in Germany’. This was accompanied by ‘a steady incorporation of the Saar into the French economy’. However, France ‘realized the difficulties of their position’, after ‘their hopes of Soviet support were rudely dashed’ by the SU’s unsympathetic attitude towards French fears. France had no allies in East Germany, and had no choice but to ‘rely more and more on the Anglo-Americans’.¹⁰⁷

Britain and the US promised France they would ‘maintain a material as well as moral interest in Western Europe’, including ‘special safeguards promised against a resurgent Germany’. The two Western powers provided France with ‘continuous economic aid’, especially during the Indochina War which took place between December 1946 and August 1954 (starting the same month as the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial).¹⁰⁸ Britain and America wanted to ‘contain the spread of communism in Asia, but also ensure France remained a staunch ally against the Soviets in Europe’.¹⁰⁹ Ironically, the cause of the Indochina War was the ‘French refusal to recognise the end of the colonial era’, a problem that both France and Britain shared. Perhaps due to their reliance on Britain, the French authorities did not want to jeopardize their relationship by siding with the French press. As a result Britain resumed their plans, and the six groups of Ravensbrück defendants were tried separately, resulting in seven consecutive RHTs taking place in total. The judging panel in the later Trials consisted of five British military officers. No non-British judges were present.¹¹⁰

Overall, the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial caused diplomatic problems for Britain. This was because of political tensions between Britain and Poland, and later Britain and France. Britain’s reluctance to hand defendants to Warsaw, which led to Britain conducting the first Trial, was a very different issue to the dissatisfaction aired by the French press towards the closing months of the Trial. Yet the two were linked in one predominant way; that in both political disputes Britain made decisions which allowed her to save face, and maintain the position of power that she possessed in a time when Cold War tensions were growing rapidly. With regard to Poland, Britain did not want to hand defendants to a nation under the influence of the SU. This was due to Anglo-Soviet relations beginning to collapse, resulting in the SU challenging Britain’s position in Europe and the Empire. In addition, Britain tried diffusing criticism within the French press as quickly as possible, as the way in which Britain was perceived abroad was of great importance. This resulted in Britain offering defendants to France, who refused in order to maintain neutral relations with Britain who they relied upon after the war.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Spencer Tucker, *U.S. Leadership in Wartime: Clashes, Controversy and Compromise*, Volume 1 (Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2009), p. 755

¹¹⁰ Report by FIS, WO 309/416

Chapter Two

The Seven Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trials

This chapter focuses on the courtroom in which the seven RHTs were conducted. It examines who was tried, why they were tried, and the legal proceedings that took place between December 1946 and July 1948. It also considers how the growing Cold War influenced Britain and her Western Allies to release all German war criminals during the 1950s, and discusses why such a unique set of Trials faded from public memory.

The First Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial

The first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial commenced on 5 December 1946. Seven female and nine male defendants, former personnel of Ravensbrück, were seated in two rows in the dock at the Curiohaus Building. They included Johann Schwarzhuber (Deputy Camp Leader) who was the lead defendant, five medical doctors, a nurse, five camp guards, a Gestapo inspector and three Kapos.¹¹¹

Originally Fritz Suhren (Camp Commandant of Ravensbrück between 1942 and 1945) was due to be the lead defendant. However, he escaped from British custody in November 1946. Three years later Suhren was arrested by the American military and handed over to the French who tried Suhren at Rastatt in South West Germany. Suhren was found guilty and sentenced to death. His execution took place in June 1950.¹¹²

The General Commander-in-Chief of BAOR stated in a report on 9 October 1946 that one charge was placed against all of the accused at the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial: that all were ‘concerned in the ill-treatment and killing of Allied nationals’ interned at Ravensbrück, between the years 1939 and 1945.¹¹³ Initially Captain Somerhough proposed a separate trial for the medical personnel, who were labelled the ‘Hohenlychen Group’ by British investigators due to their association with the Hohenlychen Sanatorium.¹¹⁴ Somerhough stressed that the case against general camp personnel was ‘essentially different from that against the medical staff’, as the ‘Hohenlychen group’ travelled to Ravensbrück to perform, or help perform, human experiments. As a result of Somerhough’s proposal the investigations into Ravensbrück ‘first developed along two different lines: one being the ill-treatment of Allied nationals by camp staff, including medical personnel, and the other focusing on criminal medical experiments carried out by the Hohenlychen group’.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, it proved

¹¹¹ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, pp. 138-143

¹¹² *Ibid*

¹¹³ General Commander-in-chief of BAOR, ‘Report on First Hamburg-Ravensbrück Trial’, 9 October 1946, TNA: WO 235/315

¹¹⁴ Captain A. G. Somerhough to JAG Office, ‘Letter proposing a separate First Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial’, December 1945, TNA: WO 309/468

¹¹⁵ Schmidt, *“Scars of Ravensbrück”*, p. 131

difficult to separate the investigations, as the division between the two groups was ‘conceptual in nature rather than substantive’.¹¹⁶ Consequently, the investigations were merged and the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial focused on the ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners of Ravensbrück.¹¹⁷

The sixteen accused were represented by twelve German attorneys. As it was difficult keeping track of sixteen defendants in one dock, each defendant was identified by a number worn across their chest.¹¹⁸ The prosecution consisted of Stephen Stewart, John de Cunha (Junior Counsel) and Madame Aline Chalufour (French Attorney). Stewart and Cunha were British attorneys. After fleeing from Vienna to England in 1938, to avoid capture by the Nazis, Stewart trained as a lawyer in Austria and was assigned to JAG services after joining the British military in 1939. After the war he was promoted to JAG Major and participated in the Belsen Trial (September-November 1945) and Neuengamme Trial at Hamburg (March-May 1946). Cunha joined the JAG services as an investigator, but was assigned Junior Counsel due to previous barrister training at Cambridge. Madame Chalufour was a member of the prosecution at the IMT and was ‘one of the few women lawyers to participate in Nazi war crimes tribunals’.¹¹⁹

Major Stewart’s opening speech empathized that practically all of Ravensbrück’s victims were women who were ‘Allied nationals’. He drew attention to the ill-treatment (beating) of these women, rather than the unethical medical experiments that took place. Stewart applied James Leslie Brierly’s (Oxford Law Professor) definition of ‘war crimes’ before asserting that ‘this is a question a court will have to answer. Can this killing which would normally be murder, can this injury which would normally be unlawful wounding – be defined as an act of war? If not, it will be a war crime’.¹²⁰

The first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial was expected to last around six weeks. It concluded on 3 February 1947. All defendants were found guilty of their indictment. Table 1 reveals the names of each defendant and the sentences given.¹²¹ All executions were carried out by Albert Pierrepoint (British hangman) at Hamelin Prison.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Ibid

¹¹⁷ Somerhough Letter, WO 309/468

¹¹⁸ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 128

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p.139

¹²⁰ Stephen Stewart, ‘Opening Address at the First Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial’, 5 December 1946, TNA: WO 235/305

¹²¹ BAOR, ‘Report on First Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial’, 24 August 1951, TNA: WO 235/315

¹²² David Lowther, *Liberating Belsen: Remembering the Soldiers of the Durham Light Infantry* (Durham: Sacristy Press, 2015), p. 108

Table 1:

Defendant	Position within Camp	Charges	Sentence
Johann Schwarzhuber	Deputy Camp Leader	-The ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners at Ravensbrück	Death (executed on 3 May 1947)
Ludwig Ramdohr	Gestapo Inspector	“ “	Death (executed on 3 May 1947)
Heinrich Peters	Camp Warden	“ “	15 years imprisonment (released on 20 May 1954)
Gustav Binder	Camp Warden	“ “	Death (executed on 3 May 1947)
Gerhard Schidlausky	Medical Doctor	“ “	Death (executed on 3 May 1947)
Rolf Rosenthal	Medical Doctor	“ “	Death (executed on 3 May 1947)
Adolf Winkelmann	Medical Doctor	“ “	Died of heart disease on 1 February 1947
Percival Treite	Medical Doctor	“ “	Death (Committed suicide before execution)
Martin Hellinger	Camp Dentist	“ “	15 years imprisonment (released on 14 May 1955)
Greta Boesel	Head of Labour Department (Aufseherin)	“ “	Death (executed 2 May 1947)
Dorothea Binz	Assistant Chief Warden (Oberaufseherin)	“ “	Death (executed 2 May 1947)
Elisabeth Marschall	Nurse	“ “	Death (executed 2 May 1947)
Vera Salvequart	Kapo	“ “	Death (executed on 2

			May 1947)
Carmen Mory	Kapo	“ “	Death (Committed suicide before execution)
Eugenia von Skene	Kapo	“ “	10 years imprisonment (released on 21 December 1951)
Margaretha Mewes	Prison Warden	“ “	10 years imprisonment (released 26 February 1952)

The first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial was the only Trial (out of seven) to receive ‘intensive press and radio coverage’ in Britain and elsewhere, as the victims involved came from all over Europe. This included a film that was released by British Pathé on 10 February 1947 incorporating footage of the sixteen defendants individually approaching the dock to receive their sentences.¹²³

In Britain the Trial was broadcasted by the BBC, and reported in newspapers such as the Daily Express, Daily Mail and Belfast News-Letter. Some shared stories of former prisoners who had witnessed the actions (both good and bad) of those on trial. For example, on 21 January 1947 the Belfast News-Letter published an article on defendant Vera Salvequart, which discussed the testimony of a camp survivor who claimed to be British, Ann Sheridan. Sheridan stated that Salvequart was known as ‘Black Angel’ by camp internees, and recalled a time when she hid Salvequart in the Camp as the SS threatened to kill her in retaliation for helping prisoners.¹²⁴

Yet a report completed by Lord Russell of Liverpool (Brigadier) in March 1947, which discusses the evidence gathered by BAOR regarding the sixteen accused listed above, suggests that there was nothing remotely angelic about Salvequart. According to this report, Salvequart was a prisoner at Ravensbrück who, after being arrested by the Gestapo in November 1944, was sent to Ravensbrück in December. Here she was ‘immediately put in charge of Jugendlager hospital’ (satellite camp of Ravensbrück).¹²⁵ The report utilizes depositions of camp survivors to demonstrate the brutality exercised on inmates by the sixteen accused and, in Salvequart’s case many witnessed that she administered the lethal injection and white powder (poison) to fellow prisoners, which led to the British Military Court sentencing her to death. Salvequart denied everything she was accused of, and

¹²³ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 138

¹²⁴ Belfast News-Letter, ‘Black Angel of Ravensbrück’, 21 January 1947, access at: <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000038/19470121/100/0003>

¹²⁵ Lord Russell of Liverpool, ‘Evidence gathered by BAOR regarding the sixteen accused from the First Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial’, March 1947, TNA: WO 309/420

instead maintained that she ‘saved hundreds from dying by falsifying lists of [the] dead’.¹²⁶ However, there was substantive evidence suggesting otherwise. Witness Epker recalled Salvequart giving white powder to patients who, as a result, immediately ‘fell asleep’.¹²⁷ The next day these women would still be asleep, but you could tell they were alive by the way they snored. By the evening the snoring stopped as these women had died. Witness Lotte Sonntag testified that Salvequart gave her a pair of boots that previously belonged to a prisoner who Salvequart murdered by ‘poisonous powder’. Sonntag also stated that prisoners refused to accept the powder from SS members, but trusted Salvequart because she was a fellow prisoner who had a kind face and was ‘superficially friendly’ to inmates.¹²⁸ Furthermore, Russell’s report states that witnesses recalled Salvequart giving injections to women who were then seen by witnesses ‘lying incapable on the floor of the washing rooms’, writhing, groaning and calling out for water.¹²⁹

Defendant Elisabeth Marschall was an Oberschwester (Matron) in the main hospital at Ravensbrück from April 1943 until 1945, and claimed in her deposition that she was allegedly sent to Ravensbrück as punishment for giving two French prisoners food at Brunswick hospital (in north-central Germany) where she was Head Nurse.¹³⁰ Contradicting this, Russell’s report states that Marschall was ‘no Florence Nightingale’, and cared very little ‘for the high traditions of the nursing service’. The report reveals that ‘there is evidence that while Matron, she stole food from Red Cross parcels, was brutal to many of her patients (including starving babies) and refused treatment to ill persons on many occasions’.¹³¹ Witness Le Coq testified on 12 March 1947 that Marschall was ‘extremely hard towards the sick’. In one instance Marschall left five women who were dying lying on their backs in barrows. Le Coq recalled walking over ‘to touch them to see if anything could be done for them’. Shortly after Marschall walked in and shouted at Le Coq, prohibiting her from helping them, even though three of the women were still alive. They died within a couple of hours.¹³²

Russell’s report reveals that lead defendant, Schwarzhuber, joined the SS in 1933 and trained at Dachau before the war began. The report suggests that Schwarzhuber ‘must have been a promising pupil as between 1935 and 1944 he received a systematic promotion’. Graduating from Dachau, ‘he acquired professional knowledge at Sachsenhausen and Auschwitz’. He arrived at Ravensbrück on 12 January 1945, where he was appointed ‘camp leader and second in command’. Russell’s report tells us that when Schwarzhuber first arrived at the women’s Camp, over twenty-five thousand prisoners were interned there. However, when the Camp dissolved ‘three and a half months later’, there were

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ Witness Epker quoted in Lord Russell’s report, WO 309/420

¹²⁸ Lotte Sonntag, ‘Deposition’, 17 August 1947, TNA: WO 311/510

¹²⁹ Report by Russell, WO 309/420

¹³⁰ Elisabeth Marschall quoted in Lord Russell’s report, WO 309/420

¹³¹ Report by Russell, WO 309/420

¹³² Witness Le Coq quoted in Lord Russell’s report, WO 309/420

nearly twelve thousand remaining, suggesting ‘executions started as soon as he arrived’. Although most of the legal documents from the Trials refer to the mass killings at Ravensbrück as ‘executions’, this is the incorrect term. They were not executions, as the female victims were not tried and found guilty. The SS perceived these killings to be executions, but it was in fact murder.¹³³

Witness Salvini testified on 8 March 1947 that Schwarzhuber sorted through prisoner records, and regularly transported inmates to Jugendlager (Uckermark) ‘where exterminations took place’ (other than in the main Camp).¹³⁴ Anna Hand from the Labour Office was often present during ‘Jugendlager selections’ and testified that Schwarzhuber was ‘always present’.¹³⁵ She stated that, after selection, women were either ‘sent to the gas chamber via the Jugendlager or direct from the main Camp’.¹³⁶ Prior to the gas chamber’s existence, it was Schwarzhuber’s duty, as second in command, to be present for all ‘executions’, including the extermination of three English women (Lillian Rolfe, Danielle Williams and Violet Szabo). Those murdered were shot in the back of the neck, frequently outside the crematorium where their bodies were disposed of thereafter.¹³⁷

Russell’s report states that ‘these women faced death with such fortitude that even Schwarzhuber confessed to have been ‘deeply moved’ at times. Schwarzhuber stated in his deposition that he received orders from Suhren in February 1945 to kill all women who were sick or incapable of marching. These murders were at first carried out by shooting, until Suhren approached Schwarzhuber, complaining that the killings were not happening fast enough. Consequently, a gas chamber was erected at Ravensbrück in March 1945 to speed up the killing process. This explains why prisoner numbers dropped so dramatically from when Schwarzhuber arrived at the camp to its liberation in April 1945.’¹³⁸

The accused, discussed above, are three examples of the sixteen cases that were presented during the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial. They demonstrate the severe ill-treatment inflicted on female prisoners by their captors (both male and female). Even Salvequart, who was originally a prisoner at Ravensbrück but allocated a supervisory role within the Camp by her captors, took her privileged position of power to extreme. Staying loyal to her SS ‘superiors’, she proved to be worthy of her role, maltreating her fellow prisoners. This was frequently the case with Kapos of Ravensbrück, as they received rewards for their brutality (such as better food and medication) and did not want to lose them.

¹³³ Report by Russell, WO 309/420

¹³⁴ Witness Salvini quoted in Russell’s report, WO 309/420

¹³⁵ Anna Hand quoted in Lord Russell’s report, WO 309/420

¹³⁶ Ibid

¹³⁷ Report by Russell, WO 309/420

¹³⁸ Ibid

The Second Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial

The second Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial began on 5 November 1947. Friedrich Opitz, in charge of the clothing manufacture shops at Ravensbrück (June 1940–April 1945), was the only defendant. Opitz was found guilty of three indictments, which are disclosed along with his sentence in Table 2.¹³⁹ In his testimony Opitz denied maltreating prisoners, and asserted that they were ‘treated the same way as private workers’. He maintained that he only slapped prisoners in the face if they committed offences such as theft. Opitz disguised the truth, as did most of the Ravensbrück defendants, in hope of receiving a more lenient sentence.¹⁴⁰

Table 2

Defendant	Position within Camp	Charges	Sentence
Friedrich Opitz	Director of TexLed (clothing manufacturing, Ravensbrück)	-Ill-treatment of female prisoners -Killing of a Czech female prisoner by kicking her in the stomach -Sending female prisoners to their death at the Uckermark Satellite Camp	Sentenced to death and executed on 26 January 1948

The ‘Uckermark Trial’

The third Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial or the ‘Uckermark Trial’ began on 14 April 1948.¹⁴¹ This Trial consisted of five female defendants who were former personnel of Uckermark. Prior to 1945 Uckermark was a camp for juvenile females who were classed as ‘asocials’. The Camp closed in January 1945 and reopened for women who were unfit for work. A near total of four-thousand women were transferred from Ravensbrück to Uckermark between January and April 1945. Only one thousand survived.¹⁴² Table 3 provides the names, camp positions, indictments and sentences given to each of the accused.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ Commander of Hamburg District, ‘Friedrich Opitz’s Charge Sheet’, 5 November 1947, TNA: WO 309/341

¹⁴⁰ Friedrich Opitz, Deposition, August 6 1947, TNA: WO 309/341

¹⁴¹ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 148

¹⁴² Bessmann and Eschebach, *The Ravensbrück Women’s Concentration Camp*, p. 258

¹⁴³ Major H. Massey, ‘Charge Sheet for Third Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial’, 5 April 1948, NA file: WO 309/1659

Table 3:

Defendants	Camp position	Charges	Sentence
Lotte Toberentz	Camp Leader	-The ill-treatment of female prisoners	Acquitted
Johanna Braach	Camp Leader	-The ill-treatment of female prisoners -Selecting for killing by gassing	Acquitted
Margarete Rabe	Warden	-The ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners	Life imprisonment (reduced to twenty one years in 1950)
Ruth Neudeck	Warden	-The ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners	Sentenced to death and executed on 29 July 1959
Elfriede Mohneke	Assistant Chief Warden	-The ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners	Ten years imprisonment

On 7 May 1948 G. Barratt sent a memorandum to the JAG Office recapitulating that the French press criticised the British justice system towards the end of the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial (as discussed in chapter one). He stated that the third Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial was one of many cases turned down by the French authorities when offered to them by the British. Barratt's letter informs that on 24 April 1948 (during the final stages of the Uckermark Trial) he received a telephone message from Mademoiselle Capiomont at the French Embassy (who worked for the French representative of the UNWCC) claiming that she had received information from Paris about two witnesses 'asking whether they could give evidence at the trial in progress at Hamburg'. Barratt responded that the 'Trial had reached its final stages – in fact all the evidence had been given and the final speeches were about to be concluded'. He acknowledged that the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial was carried out 'in co-operation with the French'. A 'French officer was appointed as a member of the court, and French witnesses were called at trial', but stated that nothing could be done at this stage of the third Trial. He argued that 'since all these cases were originally offered to the French and turned down, I do not feel they really have a substantial cause for complaint'.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴G. Barratt to JAG Office, 'French Witnesses', 7 May 1948, TNA: WO 311/510

Ruth Neudeck was the only defendant to receive the death penalty in this Trial. She was described by camp survivors as a sadistic woman who enjoyed taunting and beating prisoners. Irma Trksakova was a prisoner at Uckermark between 1942 and 1945. She testified that Neudeck did not allow women, even when dying, to remain in their block during parade. Those who tried were dragged outside by Neudeck. Trksakova recalled that ‘one morning we put a dying woman on 2 chairs so that she could pass over in peace. Neudeck passed by and kicked the poor woman off the chairs and so hastened her death’. Erika Buchmann testified that she witnessed Neudeck pulling women, who were selected for the gas chambers, into lorries by their hair.¹⁴⁵ She recalled that Neudeck ‘beat them in their faces and kicked their partly naked bodies with the heels of her boot’. After loading them on the lorry, Neudeck smugly looked back at the women and shouted, “don’t make such a fuss about the places to which you will be brought, it will be warm so you won’t need clothing”. Neudeck was sadistically referring to the heat of the gas chambers. She was a prime example of how the female staff of Ravensbrück were just as brutal as their male associates.¹⁴⁶

The ‘Doctors and Nurses Case’

On 8 June 1948 the British Military Courts held the fourth Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial or the ‘Doctor and Nurses Case’, which exclusively involved medical staff stationed at Ravensbrück.¹⁴⁷ Evidence from witness testimonies revealed that medical experiments were conducted ‘in the most brutal manner’ between 1942 and 1944.¹⁴⁸ Female inmates (Polish prisoners in particular) were used as ‘guinea pigs’ or ‘Kaninchen’ (rabbits) in order to achieve medical development.¹⁴⁹ Five medical personnel were put on trial, these being two camp doctors, two nurses and a kapo nurse. All five defendants were found guilty of various indictments, as shown in Table 4.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ Irma Trksakova, ‘Deposition’, 4 June 1946, TNA: WO 235/316

¹⁴⁶ Erika Buchmann, ‘Deposition’, 8 May 1946, TNA: WO 235/316

¹⁴⁷ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 144

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁹ A. Keith Mant, ‘The Medical Services in the Concentration Camp of Ravensbrück’, *Medio-Legal Journal*, Vol. XVII, Part III, 1949, p. 103, TNA: RW 2/4

¹⁵⁰ Commanding Hamburg Garrison Unit, ‘Charge Sheet for Fourth Ravensbrück-Hamburg’, April 1948, TNA: WO 309/1660

Table 4:

Defendants	Camp position	Charges	Sentence
Walter Sonntag	Senior Medical Doctor	-The ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners by lethal injection -Selecting inmates for extermination camps	Death and executed on 17 September 1948
Benno Orendi	Medical Doctor	-The ill-treatment and selecting of female prisoners for killing	Death and executed on 17 September 1948
Martha Haake	Nurse	-The ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners	10 years imprisonment (released 1 January 1951 because of medical reasons)
Liesbeth Krzok	Nurse	-The ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners	4 years imprisonment (released 3 February 1951)
Gerda Ganzer	Kapo Nurse	-The ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners by lethal injection -Killing a new born	Death and executed on 17 September 1948

Walter Sonntag was Senior Medical Doctor at Ravensbrück between May 1940 and December 1941. He was responsible for the overall administration of the Revier (camp hospital). A number of depositions by survivors described Dr Sonntag as an ‘extremely brutal man’ with an intense hatred towards Jehovah Witnesses and Jewish inmates. Vera Mahnke (prisoner at Ravensbrück from May 1938 to April 1945) testified to the FIS on 1 February 1948 that Sonntag ‘beat a bible student so severely that she had a stroke on the spot and died’. Mahnke added that she herself was beaten by Sonntag for pushing a piece of bread through the wire fence to the Strafblock (punishment block) to feed a starving Jewish prisoner. She stated that Sonntag yelled “You piece of dirt! You give bread to the Jewees? [Sic]” before beating her with his fists until she lost consciousness.¹⁵¹ She was then carried away by her fellow prisoners with blood pouring from her mouth and nose. Sonntag was also

¹⁵¹ Vera Mahnke, Deposition, 1 February 1948, TNA: WO 309/416

witnessed deforming the bodies of prostitutes by injecting them with petrol, and sterilizing gypsy children in a 'drunken state'.¹⁵²

Johanna Sturm (Austrian prisoner interned at Ravensbrück between May 1939 and April 1945) recalled taking 'thirty-two children between the ages of nine and eleven to their block after sterilization, and they staggered across the camp road'.¹⁵³ They were found dead no more than two days later. Doris Maase (political prisoner interned at Ravensbrück from April 1939 to 1941) testified that 'Sonntag made lists of Polish and Czech women who were to be sterilized', but frequently spared German speaking prisoners, suggesting he was biased against non-ethnic Germans.¹⁵⁴ Polish and Czech prisoners pretended to speak German, hoping it would protect them. Instead he called these women 'mad' adding them to the lists. Yet Sonntag himself professed to the court: 'I myself have never beaten or in any way ill-treated, punished or reported for punishment any internee'; again demonstrating that defendants diluted the truth in the hope of receiving a merciful sentence.¹⁵⁵

Accusations levied against Sonntag were summarized within a report completed by the FIS of BOAR on 18 April 1946. The most serious charge was 'the selection of women for the death transports to Buch Sanatorium near Berlin'. Here 'the women in question were exterminated'. Utilizing the depositions of former inmates, the report estimated that eleven transports were 'assembled at Ravensbrück and sent to Buch by Sonntag's order'. Inside the eleven transports, or 'sick-bays' (official SS term), were over two thousand female inmates. Those selected were Jews, half-Jews, German professional criminals, political prisoners, the physically unfit and patients with venereal diseases. Several days after their departure items that belonged to the victims were sent back to Ravensbrück, implying these women had been killed. Prisoners often sewed letters into items of clothing (knowing they would be returned to Ravensbrück) to inform relatives of their fate.¹⁵⁶

Gerda Quernheim-Ganzer (one of the accused) gave a statement to the FIS on 14 August 1947. She claimed that Sonntag 'went from block to block looking for victims' he could send to Buch. Ganzer was a Kapo nurse at Ravensbrück between 1939 and 1944, and worked under Sonntag. She stated that, after Sonntag selected victims, Dr Friedrich Mennecke (Euthanasia Physician) visited the camp from Berlin and the women were forced to parade naked in front of him. Ganzer claimed 'not one of these women selected by Sonntag was struck off the list by Mennecke', suggesting they were all sent to their death. She also recalled that Sonntag sometimes selected valuables such as wedding rings, which were taken from victims before they were transferred.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Johanna Sturm, Deposition, 30 October 1947, TNA: WO 309/416

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ Doris Maase, 'Deposition', 4 Sep. 1947, TNA: WO 309/416

¹⁵⁵ Walter Sonntag, 'Deposition', 8 August 1947, TNA: WO 309/416

¹⁵⁶ FIS of WCG, 'Report on Fourth Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial', 18 April 1946, TNA: WO 309/416

¹⁵⁷ Gerda Quernheim-Ganzer, 'Deposition', 14 August 1947, TNA: WO 309/416

After Sonntag was sentenced to death on 4 June 1948, three former prisoners (Katharina Kunzler, Emilie Neu né Boes and Eleonore Gutmann) came forward and appealed his sentence. They stated within their petition to the WCG (dated 2 August 1948) that ‘we all suffered hard by many years of detention. It is granted that we cannot stand for our former tormentors and we agree absolutely with the punishment deserved by these unscrupulous men. But otherwise we want to be fair and remember us of the few SS members of the camp who contrary to the strict camp-regulations did much in helping us bare our sad fate’. The women stated that Sonntag’s attitude towards them was ‘very human and gentlemanlike’. They felt the humane actions he displayed warranted a reconsideration of his sentence.¹⁵⁸

On 30 July 1948 Dr Braun (The Saar Minister of Justice) sent a letter to the Deputy Judge Advocate General (DJAG) confirming that Gutmann, Kunzler, and Boes had submitted statements in Sonntag’s favour. Braun’s letter stresses that Gutmann was detained at Ravensbrück, without interruption, between 1939 and 1945, and Kunzler was detained ‘from 1938 to 23 February 1942’. Therefore, both were interned when the ‘first extermination transport left the Camp’.¹⁵⁹ Gutmann testified on 20 June 1948 that the first extermination transports to leave Ravensbrück took place during February and March 1942, by which point Dr Sonntag had transferred to the Eastern Front. She stated that a medical commission arrived at the Camp towards the end of December 1941, who examined inmates and determined who was sent to Buch. She claimed Sonntag had no part in this process, as he was ‘not seen with this commission’.¹⁶⁰

Kunzler testified on 1 July 1948 that ‘Dr Sonntag had been a human being and a good medical for me’. She stated he allowed her to stay in the sick bay until her ‘full convalescence’.¹⁶¹ Emilie Boes testified on 1 July 1948 ‘when I was suffering of rheumatism Dr Sonntag allowed me to take sunbathes in front of my hut, a fact which may be considered human attitude contrary to all strict Camp regulations’.¹⁶² Both Kunzler and Boes stated that German inmates were treated the same as non-German, and they never witnessed Sonntag ill-treating internees. The depositions of these three women raise the question, why did Dr Sonntag treat certain prisoners with more kindness than others? As, though two of these women claimed that Sonntag treated all prisoners the same, it is clear from previous depositions that this was untrue.

¹⁵⁸ Emilie Neu né Boes, Katharina Kunzler and Eleonore Gutmann, ‘Petition in Favour of Dr Walter Sonntag’, 2 August 1948, TNA: WO 309/416

¹⁵⁹ Dr Braun to the DJAG, ‘In Sonntag’s favour’, 30 July 1948, TNA: WO 309/1660

¹⁶⁰ Eleonore Gutmann, ‘Deposition’, 20 June 1948, TNA: WO 309/1660

¹⁶¹ Katharina Kunzler quoted in FIS report, WO 309/416

¹⁶² Emilie Neu né Boes, ‘Deposition’, 1 July 1948, TNA: WO 309/1660

Sonntag may have favoured these women as all three were of Saar nationality. The Saarland was a 'historically contested borderland' which France and Germany fought over for centuries.¹⁶³ In 1867 France and Austria made a secret pact which promised them territorial gains on the condition that Austria won the Austro-Prussian War of Unification. Austria lost the war, resulting in Prussia confronting and defeating France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and Prussia's Allies (Germany) gaining French territory. In May 1871 Alsace-Lorraine and the Saarland became part of the newly born German Empire, and remained German until 1920 (forty-nine years). Towards the end of World War One (July 1914-November 1918) France pressed for control of the Saarland and, following Germany's defeat, the Treaty of Versailles gave Alsace-Lorraine back to France in 1920, along with the Saarland.¹⁶⁴ However, in 1935 the Nazis pushed for the Saarland's 'reincorporation into Germany'. The Nazis perceived regaining the Saarland 'as one of the first steps to reassembling all the territory Germany had lost in 1919'. Their goal was to incorporate all 'German speaking lands'. On 13 January 1935 ninety per cent of 'Saarlanders' (Saar nationals) voted 'in favour of re-joining Germany', and thus the League of Nations council 'formally returned' the Saarland to Germany. Therefore, perhaps Sonntag favoured these women because they were considered ethnic Germans.¹⁶⁵

Sonntag may have also empathised with these prisoners because he too was of Saar nationality. This is evidenced by Dr Braun's letter which states 'the Saar national Dr Walter Sonntag, born on May 13th 1907, has been sentenced to death by judgement of June 4th, 1948 of the war crimes court at Hamburg'.¹⁶⁶

The petition that was presented to the British Military Court by Gutmann, Kunzler, and Boes was taken into careful consideration, as demonstrated by a correspondence sent from the Major Deputy Assistant Adjutant General of BAOR (H C Massey) to the War Crimes Trial Centre on 1 July 1948. He stated 'there is no question of a retrial in this case, but if as you state you have new material which might prove the innocence of one of the condemned persons, you should submit it at once'. Nevertheless, Sonntag's death sentence was not commuted because of an abundance of evidence against him.¹⁶⁷

Sonntag is one of a number of cases found within court records from the RHTs, which show that the defence counsel, of those who received the death sentence, 'often submitted witness statements post -

¹⁶³ Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2013), p. 68

¹⁶⁴ F. Rothenbacher, *The European Population, 1850-1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 230

¹⁶⁵ Bronson Long, *No Easy Occupation: French Control of the German Saar, 1944-1957* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2015), p. 3

¹⁶⁶ Dr Braun to DJAG, WO 309/416

¹⁶⁷ Major H C Massey to War Crimes Trial Centre, 'In Sonntag's defence', 1 July 1948, TNA: WO 309/1660

conviction' that were 'seemingly helpful to the defendant'. These were then considered in multiple reviews that were conducted by the DJAG after the defendant had been sentenced.¹⁶⁸

If there was any suspicion that the defendant was not being treated fairly, then the JAG Office 'investigated the matter' thoroughly.¹⁶⁹ A good example of this is Dr Benno Orendi's case (second defendant mentioned in Table 4). Orendi's sister (Rita Wydler-Orendi) sent a letter to the WCG on 26 May 1948, suggesting that her brother's counsel (Dr König) had been trying to take advantage of her and her brother. Wydler-Orendi explained in her letter that her other brother, Roland Orendi, asked Dr König to act as Benno Orendi's counsel, and 'a fee of 10.000 Marks was agreed upon. Part of this sum was to be given out in food and various kinds of goods'. Wydler-Orendi stated that Dr König had already received a total of five thousand Marks, as well as some 'food stuff', which had been given to him as a gift, but began complaining that he was not receiving enough parcels. Eventually Dr König demanded an extra '2000 Swiss Franks' from Wydler-Orendi which she considered as 'pure blackmail'. Wydler-Orendi 'asked for the opportunity for retaining another counsel', as she had lost all confidence in Dr König. As a result Benno Orendi was appointed a new counsel (Dr Maye La Bastille).¹⁷⁰

The Fifth Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial

On 16 June 1948 the fifth Trial began concerning three male camp guards. All were found guilty of killing female prisoners of Ravensbrück, as shown in Table 5.¹⁷¹

Table 5:

Defendants	Position within Camp	Charges	Sentence
Heinrich Schäfer	Warden	-Ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners	Two years imprisonment (released 28 October 1949)
Walter Schenk	Warden	-Ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners	Twenty years imprisonment (released 3 August 1954)
Arthur Conrad	Warden	-Ill-treatment and killing of female prisoners -Killing female	Sentenced to death and executed on 17 September 1948

¹⁶⁸ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 149

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

¹⁷⁰ Rita Wydler-Orendi to War Crimes Group, 'Benno Orendi's counsel', 26 May 1948, TNA: WO 309/1660

¹⁷¹ Commanding Hamburg Garrison Unit, 'Charge Sheet for Fifth Ravensbrück-Hamburg', Trial 4 May 1948, TNA: WO 309/1661

		prisoners during an evacuation march from Ravensbrück to Malchow	
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Arthur Conrad was the only warden to be sentenced to death during the fifth Trial. He was accused of killing female inmates during one of the death marches.¹⁷² Death marches were evacuations that took place during April 1945. Groups of prisoners were forced to march on foot from Ravensbrück to satellite camps, such as Malchow and Wöbbelin.¹⁷³ Witness reports state that many prisoners collapsed along the way due to exhaustion. Those who did not collapse but were struggling to move, were shot by the SS. For this reason witnesses referred to these evacuations as death marches. Maria Apfelkammer (camp survivor) witnessed Conrad shoot two women during a death march to Malchow, as these women were ‘sitting on stones’ and ‘could no longer go on’.¹⁷⁴ In addition, Maria Katharina Wiedmaier (German prisoner at Ravensbrück between October 1940 and April 1945) testified to the FIS on 10 March 1948 that ‘Conrad participated in the continual shootings of members of the Polish underground-movement’ whilst situated at Ravensbrück.¹⁷⁵

The Sixth Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial

During the sixth Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial, which started on 1 July 1948, two male camp wardens were found guilty of the maltreatment of prisoners. No death sentences were issued during this Trial. Table 6 reveals the charges and sentences given to these men.¹⁷⁶

Table 6:

Defendants	Position within Camp	Charges	Sentence
Kurt Laver	Warden	Ill-treatment of female prisoners	Fifteen years imprisonment (released 7 May 1955)
Kurt Rauxloh	Warden	Ill-treatment of female prisoners	Ten years imprisonment (released 26 September 1954 for medical reasons)

¹⁷² Ibid

¹⁷³ Bessmann and Eschebach, *The Ravensbrück Women’s Concentration Camp*, p. 267

¹⁷⁴ Maria Apfelkammer quoted in Sarah Helm, *If This is a Women*, p. 680

¹⁷⁵ Maria Katharina Wiedmaier, Deposition, 10 March 1948, TNA: WO 235/520

¹⁷⁶ Major H C Massey, ‘Charge Sheet from Sixth Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial’, 1948, TNA: WO 309/1663

The Seventh Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial

The final Trial commenced on 2 July 1948 and featured six female personnel, two of which were the only women in the entire concentration camp system to reach the rank of Erste Oberaufseherin (Chief Senior guard). One of these women (Anna Klein) was acquitted due to a lack of evidence. The other (Luise Brunner) was sentenced to three years imprisonment. This short sentence was again due to a lack of evidence regarding her participation in the selection of prisoners for gassing.¹⁷⁷ All six women were accused of participating in the selections and ill-treatment of inmates, but only four were found guilty. Table 7 provides details of the accused.¹⁷⁸

Table 7:

Defendants	Position within Camp	Charges	Sentence
Luise Brunner	Chief Senior Guard	-Ill-treatment of female prisoners -Selection of prisoners for killing in extermination camps	Twelve years imprisonment
Ilse Vettermann	Warden	-Ill-treatment of female prisoners	Twelve years imprisonment
Gertrud Schreiter	Warden in Labour Department	-Ill-treatment of female prisoners -Selection of prisoners for killing in extermination camps	Sentenced to death and executed on 20 September 1948
Emma Zimmer	Assistant Chief Warden	-Ill-treatment of female prisoners -Selection of prisoners for killing in extermination camps	Sentenced to death and executed on 20 September 1948
Christine Holthöwer	Chief Warden	-Ill-treatment of female prisoners	Acquitted
Anna Klein	Chief Senior Guard	-Ill-treatment of female prisoners -Selection of prisoners	Acquitted

¹⁷⁷Ibid, p. 152

¹⁷⁸W. P. Lawris of War Crimes Group, 'Charge Sheet for the Seventh Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial', 3 July 1948, TNA: WO 309/694

		for killing in extermination camps	
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Emma Zimmer and Gertrud Schreiter received the death penalty for the extreme brutality they inflicted on prisoners. Zimmer in particular was in charge of the Bunker (cell building), and therefore dealt with prisoner punishment. Maria Wiedmaier witnessed Zimmer beating ‘several prisoners with everything that was at hand’. According to Wiedmaier, Zimmer grabbed a young Polish woman who was having hysterical fits one morning during roll call, and ‘threw her into the water repeatedly’.¹⁷⁹ The Polish woman was then expected to work outside the camp without changing and died shortly after. Gerda Lichtenstein (German prisoner at Ravensbrück between September 1941 and April 1945) recalled that Schreiter ‘beat prisoners when they could not march past quickly enough and screamed at them’. In one instance she beat a few prisoners because ‘they did not carry their food-bowls in their left hand as according to the regulations’. Lichtenstein stated these women could not understand German and were therefore unaware of this rule. Schreiter ‘pulled the tin bowl out of the hand of a woman and beat her in the face with it’.¹⁸⁰ Weibliche SS-Gefolge (female SS workforce) such as Neudeck, Zimmer, and Schreiter were trained to have a ‘callous, unrelentingly harsh attitude toward their charges, and for many this led them to inflict whatever pain or punishment they felt appropriate on the inmates’.¹⁸¹

Why were the Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trials Forgotten?

The RHTs were the first of their kind, adjudicating crimes committed at the only major wartime women’s concentration camp, featuring thirty-eight accused of which twenty-one were female doctors and camp personnel. Yet these Trials have faded from public memory, becoming forgotten Trials.¹⁸² It raises the question, why was this unique set of Trials forgotten? On the one hand, historians such as Madoka Futamura, Bayzler and Tuerkheimer argue that war crimes trials, such as the RHTs, are forgotten as they have been overshadowed by the Nuremberg and Eichmann Trials. Bayzler and Tuerkheimer argue that the IMT is famed for being the ‘first major Trial’ to take place after the war.¹⁸³ In addition it was the first and only War Crimes Tribunal to take place in front of an international court (including judges from the UK, France, SU and US). This meant that hundreds of thousands of documents were reviewed by different legal systems belonging to the four Allied powers. They were made available in four languages (English, French, Russian and German).

¹⁷⁹ Maria Katharina Wiedmaier, ‘Deposition’, 10 March 1948, TNA: WO 309/694

¹⁸⁰ Gerda Lichtenstein, ‘Deposition’, 6 February 1948, TNA: WO 309/694

¹⁸¹ Brown, *Camp Women*, p. 17

¹⁸² Uzi Rebhun, *The Social Scientific Study of Jewry: Sources, Approaches, Debates: Studies in Contemporary Jewry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 281

¹⁸³ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 6

Futarmura states that soon after the IMT ended, ‘the proceedings of the Trial and all documentation given were published’ (in the four languages), making them easily accessible to historians.¹⁸⁴

Whereas, practically all records from the RHTs were closed to the public until 2007, resulting in a ‘general lack of history’.¹⁸⁵

The Eichmann Trial was famed for re-introducing the history of the Holocaust, sixteen years after the Second World War had ended, and thirteen years after the last war crimes tribunal (1948). Eichmann was perceived by his Israeli captors as ‘one of the main organisers of the Holocaust’. The Eichmann Trial is well-known among historians, such as Kirsten Bönker, for being ‘the first Trial to be televised’. For this reason the Eichmann Trial became a ‘global event in the prosecution of Nazi crimes’. It became a phenomenon within Holocaust history, whilst the RHTs faded from public memory, overshadowed by the two major War Crimes Trials.¹⁸⁶

Another argument as to why the RHTs vanished from public memory is that it was exactly what the Western Allies wanted. Perhaps the fact that the British government kept documents from the Trials hidden until 2007 suggests that they wanted them to fade from public memory. This was to avoid criticism developing over releasing all German war criminals during the 1950s, as a result of the Cold War. After the British and American war crimes programmes ended in 1948, ‘the British decided to grant jailed convicted war criminals one-third remission of sentence for good behaviour’. In September 1949 (the same month that the Federal Republic of Germany was established) a general review was completed on the sentences of war criminals in British custody’, and sixty-eight of three hundred and seventy-two sentences passed were reduced. According to historian Arie J Kochavi, the Wade Committee who carried out the review ‘did not question the judgement but tried to introduce uniformity of sentencing’. This resulted in all German war criminals that were found guilty of first degree murder receiving fifteen years imprisonment, and those guilty of second degree murder receiving ten years.¹⁸⁷

In 1950 British authorities made the decision to ‘commute all life sentences to 21 years imprisonment’. By the end of the year the Cabinet adjusted this commitment so that pre-trial custody counted as part of the sentence. This resulted in only forty-one of eighty-one perpetrators remaining in British custody. By August 1955, when the Multinational Mixed Board for War Criminals came into effect, the British held only twenty-six war criminals at Werl prison in their occupied zone of Germany. Within two years all those remaining were released, including those convicted at the RHTs.

¹⁸⁴ Madoka Futarmura, *War Crimes Tribunals and Transitional Justice: The Tokyo Trial and the Nuremberg Legacy* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 28

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁸⁶ Kirsten Bönker, *Television Beyond and Across the Iron Curtain* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), p. xxii

¹⁸⁷ Arie J Kochavi, *Prelude to Nuremberg: Allied War Crimes Policy and the Question of Punishment* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), p. 243

On 9 May 1958 US authorities released the last four prisoners who remained at Landsberg Prison. In 1950 Landsberg held a total of six hundred and sixty-three German war criminals, all of which were released.¹⁸⁸

The motive behind the Western Allies releasing these war criminals was simple. America (who were close Allies with Britain) were interested in ‘strengthening and rearming Germany as a Cold War ally’. They released war criminals on the condition that Germany cooperated with this vision.¹⁸⁹ Britain followed America’s lead, and released all German war criminals in their custody after 1950, which raises the question, why did Britain do this? After the Second World War Britain ‘attempted to restore its international power position’ whilst recovering from the destruction of war. They realised that America and the SU ‘would be the only two superpowers’.¹⁹⁰ This resulted in Britain adopting another goal, ‘to become the closest ally of the US and maintain this position’. If Britain could no longer ‘shape politics unilaterally’, then ‘it could still attempt to exert power indirectly by influencing US policies’. Hence why Britain became America’s loyal companion throughout the Cold War, and felt the need to release its war criminals to support the US.¹⁹¹

Releasing Nazi war criminals was also motivated by a ‘New Germany’ (the Federal Republic of Germany in West Germany). The Western Allies felt those imprisoned were an uncomfortable and embarrassing reminder of Germany’s past, and the only way to move forward was to release those held culpable for Nazi war crimes. Jon Elster argues that Britain’s decision to release its war criminals, because of ‘political developments such as the Cold War,’ was a miscarriage of justice. He argues that Britain and America displayed ‘hypocrisy and futility’ by investing a vast amount of resources into ‘prosecuting and trying Nazi war criminals, only to grant them clemency and release a few years later’.¹⁹² Elster states that Britain and America feared that releasing German war criminals would trigger a negative political reaction back home. They therefore arranged the discharges ‘as quietly and discreetly as possible’, which led to certain trials (such as the RHTs) vanishing from public memory, and becoming forgotten trials. Only the major war criminals, found guilty at the IMT, remained confined at the Spandau Prison in Berlin, primarily because of ‘Soviet insistence’. This explains why documents from the IMT were not closed to the public, whilst documents from the RHTs were concealed for fifty-nine years.¹⁹³

Overall, through utilizing court records, specifically related to the seven RHTs, this chapter has illustrated the events that took place within the courtroom of the Curiohaus Building between

¹⁸⁸ Ibid

¹⁸⁹ Jon Elster, *Retribution and Reparation in the Transition to Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 87

¹⁹⁰ Glenn Chafetz et al, *Origins of National Interest* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 311

¹⁹¹ Ibid

¹⁹² Elster, *Retribution and Reparation*, p. 87

¹⁹³ Kochavi, *Prelude to Nuremberg*, p. 245

December 1946 and July 1948. It has given an insight into those accused, for example the role that the perpetrators played in Ravensbrück Concentration Camp and the crimes they committed. This chapter has also concluded that legal documents from the RHTs were closed to the public for fifty-nine years by the British government, who intentionally allowed the Trials to fade from public memory and become forgotten Trials. This was to avoid criticism surfacing at home in response to the British government releasing all German war criminals in their custody during the 1950s. The Western Allies released these criminals on the condition that Germany cooperated as a Cold War ally.

Chapter Three

Women's Hell:

A History of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp

The following chapter will firstly utilize the depositions of Ravensbrück survivors, and reports by British investigators, to produce a chronological history of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp. It will secondly broaden our understanding of the lives of women within concentration camp history, by sharing the experiences that female prisoners encountered within Ravensbrück.

Camp Development

On 11 March 1947 a report was sent to the DJAG Headquarters by a representative of BAOR. This report, signed by Lord Russell of Liverpool, discussed the role of Ravensbrück within the wider Nazi war machine.¹⁹⁴ Whilst a considerable number of comparable reports were filed by BAOR during this time, little was documented on the Camp's early years. This is because BAOR gathered information on the Camp via witness testimonies. Due to many of the Camp's initial intake of prisoners perishing prior to 1945, there are limited official British records regarding the Camp's foundation and early operation. Following the Camp's expansion in 1942, and an 'appreciable rise' in Camp population, British investigators were able to obtain survivor testimonies from the Camps later intake.¹⁹⁵ Witnesses who were able to afford the British with evidence were later used in the RHTs.

Russell's report provides us with the most contemporary insight into the early development and running of Ravensbrück compared to other similar reports of the time. He states within his report that Ravensbrück was erected in 1939 as a 'concentration camp for women' and, during the war years 'until it was overrun by the Red Army in its advance westward, some 123,000 persons were interned there'.¹⁹⁶

Most of the legal documents from the RHTs are limited to between the years 1942 and 1945 and, therefore, it is difficult to produce a history or pre-history of Ravensbrück without relying on secondary literature and memoirs. Bearing this in mind, Nikolaus Wachsmann recognises that Ravensbrück was one of three 'modern camps' to be added between 1938 and 1939. These 'modern camps' were designed in a way that made them easily expandable for the anticipated growing number of prisoners. Mauthausen was the first 'modern camp' to be established in August 1938. Ravensbrück and Flossenbürg were founded a year later in May 1939.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ Brigadier Russell to Office of DJAG, 'Report on Ravensbrück', 11 March 1947, TNA: WO 235/315

¹⁹⁵ WCIU of BAOR, 'Interim Report', no specified date: approximately between 1945 and 1946, TNA: RW 2/6

¹⁹⁶ Russell to DJAG, WO 235/315

¹⁹⁷ Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 99

Wachsmann states that Ravensbrück replaced a previous women's concentration camp at Lichtenburg in Saxony. Lichtenburg was established as a women's camp by the Concentration Camps Inspectorate (established in May 1934 as the central SS Managerial Authority of Concentration Camps) in December 1937. It was the first women's Camp controlled by the SS.¹⁹⁸ A small number of women were imprisoned before the war and, prior to Lichtenburg, the majority of female prisoners were incarcerated within Moringen Workhouse under the authority of Civilian Governor, Hugo Krack. Pre-war camps were 'overwhelmingly male spaces' and it was not until Lichtenburg was re-designated into a women's Camp, after being a men's Camp from 1933 to 1937, that female inmates were 'fully integrated into the SS camp system'. The number of female prisoners rose continuously and Lichtenburg became overcrowded. The Camp was closed in spring 1939, and the remaining eight hundred and sixty-seven prisoners were transferred to Ravensbrück.¹⁹⁹

Russell reported that the main Camp at Ravensbrück (as opposed to a neighbouring men's Camp that was added in April 1941) consisted of female prisoners only. A few of them were Russian Red Cross Nurses who had been 'captured on the field of battle', but the majority were 'members of resistance movements, or slave workers whose productive output had proved insufficient'. All of these women were interned without trial. After 1942 approximately ninety per cent of prisoners were 'Allied nationals' (from over thirty different nations, including Poles, Germans, Russians, French, Czechs and Yugoslavs).²⁰⁰ An interim report completed by Major B. Sillen (Commander of the War Crimes Investigation Unit within BAOR) reveals that Polish and Soviet prisoners made up the majority of the Camp. The approximate figure of Polish and Soviet inmates (being ten to eleven thousand) was merged in Sillen's report, as after the Second World War, and at the time of this report, Warsaw fell under the influence of the SU.²⁰¹

The Camp was originally designed to hold around six thousand inmates. However, after 1943 there were 'never less than 12,000 interned there' at any one time. Russell reported that 'at least 50,000 persons were perished there', which elicited prisoners to refer to Ravensbrück as 'the infamous Enfer des Femmes' (meaning women's hell in French). The fact that a French phrase was universally spoken within the Camp, and circulated around more than thirty nationalities, demonstrates the large scale of French prisoners that were held at Ravensbrück (over eight thousand) and suggests these

¹⁹⁸ Christian Goeschel and Nikolaus Wachsmann, *The Nazi Concentration Camps, 1933-1939: A Documentary History* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2012)

¹⁹⁹ Nikolaus Wachsmann and Jane Caplan, *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 23

²⁰⁰ Russell to DJAG, WO 235/315

²⁰¹ Major B. Sillen, 'Interim Report', no specified date: approximately between 1945 and 1946, TNA: WO 235/316

prisoners were impactful. Perhaps this explains why French survivors were against a British Military Court conducting the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial.²⁰²

The main causes of death, notwithstanding those who were exterminated during the later war years (1942-1945), were ‘undernourishment, overwork, exposure, overcrowding, complete lack of sanitation and the systematic brutal ill-treatment by staff of the Camp’. Russell’s report inferred that the ill-treatment exacted upon prisoners was sadistically aimed to deteriorate them ‘both physically and mentally’. Russell utilizes a quote taken from a survivor testimony in order to substantiate his conclusion. This testimony (by Dziedziecka) stated that, ‘the whole system in this Camp had one purpose and that was to destroy our humanity and our human conscience; weaker individuals fell into the very bottom of moral and physical existence; all lower instincts that are in human beings developed very much while the better instincts were throttled and did not have a chance to show themselves. Stronger individuals who were still alive have come out of that Camp with unnatural characteristics which can never be removed; they have lost faith whatsoever in goodness and justice’.²⁰³

Arriving at Ravensbrück

Shortly after the Second World War, memoirs released by Ravensbrück survivors affirmed that in the beginning basic living conditions within the Camp were considerably better compared to other early wartime camps. Margarete Buber-Neumann originally released her memoir titled ‘Under Two Dictators’ in 1949. She states that she and her partner, Heinz Neumann (leading member of the Communist Party in Germany), fled to the SU in 1933 after the Nazis came to power.²⁰⁴ In 1937 Heinz Neumann was arrested and executed during Josef Stalin’s great purge. Buber-Neumann was never informed of her partner’s death, but was arrested one year later and sent to the Karaganda Camp in Kazakhstan (one of the largest Soviet camps).²⁰⁵ During the latter part of 1939 Buber-Neumann was integrated into a group of German Communists, who were taken from numerous Soviet camps and handed to the Gestapo owing to the terms of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In 1940 she was transferred to Ravensbrück where she remained until 1944.²⁰⁶ Buber-Neumann muses over her first impression of Ravensbrück within her memoir, stating that ‘everything looked beautiful’ from the outside, ‘resembling a neat holiday camp’ rather than a concentration camp.²⁰⁷ When entering the Camp Buber-Neumann recalled freshly painted huts, ‘before which was a neat garden plot’. This

²⁰² Russell to DJAG, WO 235/315

²⁰³ Dziedziecka quoted in Russell to DJAG, WO 235/315

²⁰⁴ Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Under Two Dictators: Prisoner of Stalin and Hitler* (London: Random House, 2013), pp. 185-187

²⁰⁵ Leona Toker, *Return from the Archipelago: Narratives of Gulag Survivors* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 39

²⁰⁶ Ibid

²⁰⁷ Buber-Neumann, *Under Two Dictators*, p. 185-187

compared to her previous encounter at Karaganda where prisoners faced ‘harsh labour under appalling conditions’, was very pleasant.²⁰⁸ Even the food was fairly sizeable. Buber-Neumann recalled that her first meal at Ravensbrück consisted of ‘fruit porridge, bread, sausage, margarine and lard’, much more than expected.

Nanda Herbermann (internee at Ravensbrück between March 1941 and 1943) dedicated a memoir to her camp experience titled ‘The Blessed Abyss’. She stated that prisoners received a blue towel and were ‘clothed as a proper prisoner’ on arrival at the women’s Camp in 1941.²⁰⁹ However, from 1942 onwards the arrival procedure was traumatic for female prisoners. On 30 April 1945 Glen Whisler (special representative of the American Red Cross) sent an account of Ravensbrück to Mr Herschel V Johnson (member of the Legation of the US) which revealed that the traumas of processing began with women being ‘completely disrobed on arrival’, and ‘told to bathe in cold water in the presence of lounging and jeering soldiers’.²¹⁰ Jack Morrison states ‘many grandmothers had never been seen naked by their own granddaughters, let alone strangers’. He argues that ‘modern-day readers need to be reminded of the sense of modesty that prevailed at the time’ to understand how humiliated these women would have felt.²¹¹

Whisler’s report states that, subsequent to their initial shock, the women were given ‘superficial medical examinations’, including tests for venereal diseases which involved vaginal examinations. Those who were infected were not treated, and the instruments used were not sterilized between prisoners. Whisler concludes that these examinations were completed solely to ‘humiliate prisoners’. It was not until the end of 1943 that Mary Lindell (Kapo nurse) was given the responsibility of sterilizing the instruments.²¹²

Whisler’s report reveals that following their medical examinations ‘the women were marched, nude, into an open courtyard in all kinds of weather’ (again whilst soldiers observed). Here they awaited further examinations. They sometimes waited up to five hours before having their teeth inspected and hands carefully examined to see whether they could handle hard labour. The prisoners were then issued clothing which frequently consisted of ‘anything from a one-piece dress (nothing else) to a fairly complete outfit’ with shoes. Women were never issued under garments or overcoats for the harsher weather. Those who were denied shoes tried stealing from others or purchased them using bread rations.²¹³

²⁰⁸ Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 226

²⁰⁹ Nanda Herbermann, *The Blessed Abyss: Inmate #6582 in Ravensbrück Concentration Camp for Women* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), p. 110

²¹⁰ American Red Cross to Legation of the US, ‘Report on Ravensbrück’, 30 April 1945, TNA: FO 371/51193

²¹¹ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 33

²¹² Report by American Red Cross, FO 371/51193

²¹³ *Ibid*

Morrison points out that after receiving their uniforms, ‘newcomers’ were placed into ‘several distinctive categories’ and given a coloured triangle (introduced by the Concentration Camp Inspectorate in 1938) to wear as a form of identification. Table 8 reveals the colours that were issued to each prisoner category.²¹⁴

Table 8:

Coloured Triangle	Prisoner Category
Red	Political Prisoners
Yellow	Jewish Prisoners
Lavender	Jehovah Witnesses (Bible Students)
Green	Criminals
Black	‘Asocials’ (including Prostitutes, beggars and alcoholics)

Political prisoners became the ‘largest inmate category’ making up nearly eighty per cent of the total prisoner population.²¹⁵ In 1945 a pink triangle was introduced for inmates who were transferred to Uckermark. In other camps the pink triangle was used to label homosexuals, but this was not the case in the women’s Camp as lesbianism was not taken seriously by the SS.²¹⁶

Once inmates were placed into a category they were quarantined for two to three weeks, and eventually assigned a living barrack (block).²¹⁷ Sillen’s report states that there were ‘11 large blocks’ in total, which were known to house up to nine hundred inmates, and ‘20 small blocks’ which held around five hundred. Towards the end of the war a large marquee was erected which held over one thousand two hundred prisoners, especially between September 1944 and February 1945 when prisoners were brought in from Auschwitz and other camps. Within the prisoner barracks were ‘3-tier bunks stretched down either side of the block’. From 1942 two to three women were forced to share a straw bed due to overcrowding, and practically all of these beds were ‘full of lice and stiff with human excrements of the sick’. No heat was provided. Body heat was the only thing keeping these women alive.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 38

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 76

²¹⁶ Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Germany* (London: Pearson Educated Limited, 2001), p. 44

²¹⁷ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 35

²¹⁸ Report by Sillen, WO 235/316

Work

All female prisoners were allocated a 'regular job' after quarantine, regardless of their age or health. However, their role did not always remain the same.²¹⁹ Whisler's report states that 'prisoners tried hard to get assigned the desirable jobs in the kitchens and as nurses', but there were many more undesirable options. Most female prisoners worked outside the Camp in nearby villages, digging ditches, cleaning the streets and doing constructive work. Others worked inside the Siemens plant (electrics company), which was set up inside Ravensbrück due to the bombing of its previous locations (Metz and Paris). Some female prisoners were unfortunate enough to undergo hard labour, such as road building, without the appropriate machinery. Whilst laying roads within the Camp around ten women were 'hitched to a heavy iron roller', many of whom were injured or killed.²²⁰

The chief role played by Ravensbrück in concentration camp history was the manufacture of uniforms for prisoners and German soldiers. Ravensbrück manufactured uniforms for camps throughout occupied Germany. In 1940 the SS created, and opened, their own enterprise at Ravensbrück called the Association for Textile and Leather Utilization (TexLed). Prisoners referred to this as 'The Dachau Enterprise' as the company's headquarters was based there.²²¹ Hauptsturmfuehrer (Commander) Friedrich Opitz was placed in charge of the 'SS-tailor-shop' on 1 June 1940. He remained there until the end of the war. Opitz 'voluntarily' produced a statement before Investigating Officer Captain H. Brunner on 6 August 1947. He testified 'in the beginning it was my duty in Ravensbrück to make the prisoners' clothing for all concentration camps. For this purpose 150-200 prisoners' were employed. Opitz added 'at this time no settled amount of work had to be done, 150 prisoners made about 200 pairs of trousers and jackets daily'. During the later war years the 'clothing store' was enlarged, and Opitz stated he was 'in charge of up to 4500 women working two shifts in the tailor shop, furriery and weaving mill' (a day and night shift). Those given the day shift were expected to work '7am until 7pm' with only an hour's break at midday. Women on the night shift worked '7pm to 6am with a break of half hour'. Opitz attested that in later years prisoners were expected to finish a coat every three and a half minutes. To achieve this women acted as a 'conveyer belt' with forty-eight working on the sewing machines, and nine preparing and perfecting the coats.²²²

Opitz claimed that prisoners were 'never urged to work with beating or kicking' in the tailor shop, but depositions of former prisoners say otherwise.²²³ Ilse Gohrig arrived at the camp on 19 August 1942 and was expected to report for work on her day of arrival. She worked in the 'Schneiderei'

²¹⁹ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 36

²²⁰ Report by American Red Cross, FO 371/51193

²²¹ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 181

²²² Friedrich Opitz, 'Deposition', 6 August 1947, TNA: WO 309/341

²²³ Ibid

(tailoring) for six months where she ‘sewed uniforms as part of the moving chain’. On 5 July 1947 Gohrig testified that ‘I was present daily and have seen daily with my own eyes how prisoners were beaten so terribly by Opitz and Graf that they fell unconscious over their machines and were covered in blood’. Josef Graf was in charge of the Schneiderei, ‘Kurschnere’ (furrier) and ‘Weberei’ (weaving). Gohrig recalled two main punishments allotted to prisoners who failed to complete the requested amount of work, these being ‘Essenzug’ (withdrawal of rations) and ‘Straffenstehen’ (standing at attention). She testified that regardless of the punishment, women were expected to return to work immediately after and ‘produce the same standard’. If a woman stood at attention for a whole day, she was expected to produce the same quality of work throughout her night shift.²²⁴

Punishments

Morrison states that by the time Ravensbrück was opened in 1939, ‘the system used to punish inmates was well established’. This system was known by the SS as ‘the Dachau Model’ as it had been created by Theodor Eicke for Dachau (the first Concentration Camp set up in Germany by the Nazis). It was later ‘extended to all of the other camps’.²²⁵ A report by the War Crimes Investigation Unit (WCIU) of BAOR (date unknown) sub-divided the punishments that took place at Ravensbrück into four categories, as follows:²²⁶

- i) Punishments for which sanction of Himmler had to be obtained.
- ii) Punishments for which the sanction of Suhren had to be obtained.
- iii) Unofficial punishments awarded by other persons in authority in the camp but on lines approved by Suhren.
- iv) Unofficial beatings carried out on the spur of the moment to enforce order or merely as an expression of sadistic temperament.

The report states that ‘official punishments’, such as flogging and ‘arrest exceeding 42 days’, were sanctioned by Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. Fritz Suhren (Commandant of Ravensbrück between 1942 and 1945) gave Himmler recommendations of who he thought should receive punishment based on reports obtained from his officers. Floggings usually took place in the Strafblock (the punishment block) or the Bunker (cell building). Prisoners were ‘frequently forced to count their strokes out loud’ (inmates were awarded five to twenty-five lashes). They were also awarded standing at attention for six to twelve hours or arrest, during which women were ‘allowed a blanket and bed board but no hot meal’. For ‘severe cases’ there was ‘special arrest’ which involved

²²⁴ Ilse Gohrig, ‘Deposition’, 5 July 1947, TNA: WO 309/341

²²⁵ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 224

²²⁶ WCIU, ‘Report on Ravensbrück’, no specified date: approximately between 1945 and 1946, TNA: RW 2/6

detaining prisoners in a cell block for up to forty-two days with no blanket, bed board, food or drink for twelve days.²²⁷

‘Unofficial beatings’ were carried out by ‘members of the SS staff on their own authority and initiative, or in fits of pure sadism’. This included Kapos ordered to beat fellow prisoners on behalf of SS personnel. The *Politsche Abteilung* (Political Department) carried out ‘unofficial punishments’ which the Commandant was aware of. The report by the WCIU states that the Political Department was responsible for ‘carrying out interrogations on behalf of the Gestapo’. The Department ‘did not concern itself with other interrogations’. Ludwig Ramdohr was posted to the Political Department at Ravensbrück in July 1942. He was notorious for utilizing a ‘water douche’ for intimidation and punishment. To retrieve the ‘necessary information’ from prisoners, Ramdohr strapped women to a table before submerging their face into ‘a bucket of water’. He repeated this action until his victims were ‘partially conscious’ and had given him information.²²⁸

On 7 August 1947 Barbara Hirsch (internee at Ravensbrück between April 1940 and 1945) gave a statement before the WCIU. She recalled witnessing *Aufseherin* (Camp guard) Margarete Rabe pulling inmates by the hair and feet to the parade ground, which was twenty metres away from the living blocks. She stated that one woman collapsed on parade due to the beating and ill-treatment inflicted upon her by camp personnel. She therefore had to ‘creep to the Revier’ and seek help.²²⁹

The Revier

The Revier (camp hospital) treated female prisoners who were ill, or were brutally beaten by their ‘superiors’. The WCIU’s report reveals that the Revier consisted of three blocks. The first contained offices, an operating theatre, examination room, outpatients and x-ray room. The second block was used for post-operational purposes in surgical cases, and the third was a medical block for ‘internal diseases’. An additional seven sick blocks were opened later, and ‘run entirely by internee doctors’ who were ‘merely supervised by SS doctors and sisters’. Post 1942 the sick barely received treatment, and diseases spread through the Camp at an alarming rate. There were plenty of medicines and bandages available, but head doctors refused to release them to prisoners, resulting in a high death rate.²³⁰

The report states that Dr Sonntag was the first Senior Doctor of the Revier until he married his assistant, Dr Gerda Weyand, in the summer of 1941. He was then moved from the hospital in December 1941 and replaced by Dr Gerhard Schidlausky. Dr Herta Oberheuser was placed in charge of the surgical department by Professor Karl Gebhardt (Head of the Hohenlychen Sanatorium). Her

²²⁷ *Ibid*

²²⁸ *Ibid*

²²⁹ Barbara Hirsch, ‘Deposition’, 7 August 1947, TNA: WO 311/510

²³⁰ Report by WCIU, RW 2/6

duties involved caring for female and male inmates who were experimented on. The doctor in charge of the medical department was Rolf Rosenthal. Dr Richard Trommer and Dr Schidlausky assumed responsibility of the Revier in 1943. Dr Percival Treite replaced Oberheuser and Rosenthal in September 1943, due to Oberheuser being transferred to Hohenlychen Sanatorium 'on the orders of Gebhardt', and Rosenthal having 'improper conduct' with a female inmate. Rosenthal was given an eight year prison sentence for misconduct.²³¹

'Medical Atrocities'

Medical experiments were not conducted in Ravensbrück until 1942 (according to multiple BAOR reports). On 26 May 1949 Arthur Mant, a British forensic pathologist who directed the medical section of BAOR's WCG, produced a report based on 'Medical Services in the Concentration Camp of Ravensbrück'. Within this report Mant stated that 'human experiments carried out in Ravensbrück fall into two categories', these being 'those carried out on orders from the highest authorities' by doctors not stationed at the Camp, and 'those done on the initiative of the camp doctors themselves'. The largest group of experiments conducted fell within the first category, and were 'directed by Professor Gebhardt'. Mant divided the experiments headed by Gebhardt into three groups, as follows:²³²

- 1) Those to test efficiency of various commercial brands of the Sulphonamide preparations available in Germany on artificially infected patients (from August 1942 to November 1942).
- 2) Experiments carried out to study Tissue Regeneration (from September 1942 to August 1943).
- 3) Attempts made at the same period as the above experiments at grafting whole bones.

These experiments do not include earlier operations that were conducted on male prisoners in the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. Men were taken to Ravensbrück for this purpose. These operations are included in one of Mant's earlier reports, in which he discusses four groups of five male prisoners that were experimented on. During these experiments an incision was made into the prisoner's lower leg and 'bacterial cultures were put in dextrose'. This mixture was then spread onto the wound. The wound was closed and 'the limb encased in a padded cast'. Mant reported that 'the surgical technique was identical in all of the first series of these artificial infection experiments' carried out on male prisoners.²³³

²³¹ Ibid

²³² Mant, 'Medical Services in Ravensbrück', p. 104, RW 2/4

²³³ Arthur K. Mant, 'Medical Services, Human Experimentation and other Medical Atrocities Committed in Ravensbrück', 1 February 1947, TNA: RW 2/5

Fritz Fischer was the medical doctor responsible for surgical operations conducted on male and female prisoners. Mant's report reveals that 'after the completion of the first series of four groups of male prisoners, operations were performed on Polish female internees' (all of which were alleged members of the Polish underground who had received an automatic death sentence). According to his report, this was a result of the first series of operations proving unsatisfactory. Three groups of ten Polish women, referred to as 'Kaninchen' (rabbits) by SS doctors, endured similar operations to previous male prisoners. However, Fischer did not only insert bacterial culture into the women's incisions, but also fragments of wood and glass. Many women reacted severely to this operation developing infections. Others died before the operation was completed.²³⁴

Conditions in which experiments were carried out were abysmal. 'Improvements' were made to Ravensbrück's hospital facilities (such as 'the building of an operating theatre') for experimental operations to take place. However, a German inmate sterilized the necessary instruments and, as a result, the dressing and instruments used on victims were never sterile. Post-operative care was delegated to Dr Oberhauser by the Senior Doctor at the time (Dr Schidlausky). Dr Oberhauser's care is described in Mant's report as 'little better than sadistic'. She 'withheld morphia', took no steps to see whether women were properly nursed, and provided patients with less food than regular prisoners were receiving.²³⁵

Mant stated that tissue regeneration experiments 'were by far the most ghastly and revolting of the whole series'. They involved removing a portion of bone or muscle from the prisoner's leg (sometimes whole bones) to study the regeneration process. Polish women selected for the final tissue regeneration experiment refused to report to the Revier, and barricaded themselves inside the living blocks out of fear. Eventually they were retrieved by male guards, who 'forcibly carried the women' to the Bunker, where they were held down (in a filthy condition) and experimented on regardless.²³⁶

Mant's earlier report gives an example of a surgical operation that fits into the second category of experiments, this being Dr Treite's 'Suprarenal Transplantations'. This consisted of 'removing a portion of the scapula gland from one person and transferring it to the rectus abdominis muscle of an asthmatic patient'. The asthmatic was supposed to benefit from this; however, Mant concludes that Treite was not interested in his patients, but rather in improving his surgical technique.²³⁷

According to Mant's report on 'Medical Services', Professor Gebhardt took full responsibility for human experiments that were conducted in Ravensbrück, and claimed that male and female prisoners were operated on under 'the condition that they would be released if they survived'. Unsurprisingly,

²³⁴ Mant, 'Medical Services in Ravensbrück', p. 104, RW 2/4

²³⁵ Ibid

²³⁶ Ibid

²³⁷ Mant, 'Medical Atrocities Committed at Ravensbrück', RW 2/5

no steps were made to ensure this condition was fulfilled. Six girls were ‘definitely executed after they had been operated on’, and one girl was ‘possibly released’. Some of these women were operated on more than four times, all for the implausible purpose of advancing medical and scientific development.²³⁸

Aside from human experiments, female prisoners at Ravensbrück suffered the consequences of sterilization, forced abortion, poison and lethal injection. Mant’s report of 1949 stated that prior to 1943 individuals who were ‘required to be sterilized under the German racial laws’ were transported to a hospital in Templin, near Uckermark. Sterilization involved camp doctors removing ‘whole fallopian tubes’ from inmates, or alternatively ‘merely ligating them’. This procedure was conducted on children as young as ten.²³⁹

Childbirth was forbidden in the Camp until the end of 1942. Abortions were carried out on women who were up to eight months pregnant, and often instigated by ‘abortifacients such as quinine by mouth or posterior pituitary extract by injection’. Mant revealed that pregnant women (mainly Germans who fell pregnant from Polish workers) desperately tried saving their unborn children by concealing the pregnancy, as those who passed eight months were permitted to give birth. Once prisoners had given birth their babies were still unprotected. Mant discussed how new-borns were often forced away from their mothers and frequently ‘strangled or burnt using the camp hospitals central heating system’. Dr Rosenthal and Gerda Quernheim (Kapo nurse) were responsible for killing infants. In November 1944 a block was opened for mothers and children headed by Dr Treite, conditions within this block were unsatisfactory. The life expectancy of new-borns was two weeks due to starvation. Mothers did not receive enough food and, therefore, were unable to produce breast milk for their babies because of malnutrition.²⁴⁰

Witness testimonies from the RHTs suggest that camp doctors and sisters were instructed to kill sick prisoners with lethal injections throughout the history of the Camp. Mentally ill patients were targeted for this procedure. In some cases patients were killed by lethal injection, making room for other sick prisoners when the Revier became overcrowded. Doris Maase (political prisoner at Ravensbrück between May 1939 and July 1941) recalled ‘Dr Sonntag administered lethal injections in the sick bay. These injections were called ‘Abspritzungen’. In this way Dr Sonntag killed severely ill prisoners and medically complicated cases’. The administered injections were always ‘petrol, phenol or morphia’.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Dona Schneider and David Lilienfeld, *Public Health: The Development of a Discipline: Twentieth-Century Challenges*, Volume II (London: Rutgers University Press, 2011), p. 648

²³⁹ Mant, ‘Medical Services in Ravensbrück’, pp. 113-115, RW 2/4

²⁴⁰ Ibid

²⁴¹ Doris Maase, ‘Deposition’, 4 September 1947, TNA: WO 309/416

An additional method was poisoning. Austrian resister Lotte Sonntag testified ‘I was told by Vera Salvequart herself that women were partly killed by poisoning with white powder and partly murdered by injections’.²⁴² White powder was given to Uckermark prisoners on several occasions, and on one occasion to tuberculosis patients in the main Camp hospital. Mant reported that women were administered a spoonful of white powder (pure luminal) under the pretence that it would improve their illness.²⁴³

Mass Murder

Matters further worsened for female Ravensbrück prisoners from 1942 when the SS began implementing methods of mass murder. According to a FIS report in April 1946, the first exterminations to take place were in January and February 1942. Female prisoners were selected by Dr Sonntag and sent to Buch Sanatorium where they were killed. The report discusses that over two thousand women were chosen from multiple categories, including all Jewish prisoners (nine hundred at the time), ‘Asocial’ elements suffering from sexually transmitted diseases, abnormal political prisoners, the hopelessly sick and habitual criminals. The report reveals that women were ‘said to be killed by electric current’.²⁴⁴

The WCIU report provides us with subsequent mass-killings that occurred between 1942 and 1945. The first took place between spring 1942 and autumn 1943, and involved the killing of ‘76-83 Polish women’ who were transported to Ravensbrück from Warsaw and Lublin. These women were shot in ‘batches of 5-11’. In May 1942 an additional one hundred Polish women were transported to the Camp, ‘all in extremely poor condition’. On arrival several were executed at gun-point. The report also states that during autumn 1942 an ‘order was given to clear the Camp of Jews’. This resulted in around eight hundred Jewish prisoners being sent to Auschwitz for extermination.²⁴⁵ Helm states that Adolf Hitler ‘ordered that Germany was to be ‘judenfrei’ (free of Jews) in early autumn.²⁴⁶ Therefore, by the end of 1942 ‘Himmler likewise ordered that each of his camps on German soil must be judenfrei. One by one German camps sent their Jewish inmates East (frequently to Auschwitz)²⁴⁷.

According to the report, Soviet women were executed for ‘suspected sabotage’ from 1943 onwards, and were commonly ‘executed in batches of 2-6’. In January 1945 three British and four French parachutists were killed. The report states this was ‘probably’ undertaken by shooting, but does not clarify.²⁴⁸ This is evidenced by the deposition of Johann Schwarzhuber, who testified before BAOR

²⁴² Lotte Sonntag, ‘Deposition’, 17 August 1947, TNA: WO 311/510

²⁴³ Mant, ‘Medical Services in Ravensbrück’, pp. 114-115, RW 2/4

²⁴⁴ FIS, ‘Ravensbrück Medical Personnel’, 18 April 1946, TNA: WO 309/416

²⁴⁵ Report by WCIU, RW 2/6

²⁴⁶ Helm, *If This is a Woman*, pp. 140-145

²⁴⁷ Ibid

²⁴⁸ Report by WCIU, RW 2/6

Officer Waclaw Wierzbowski on 16 August 1946 that ‘during my term of office in Ravensbrück 21 women were executed. Three of them English’. He further stated that ‘the other 18 women were Russian’.²⁴⁹ All of the killings cited above (aside from the transports to Buch and killing of Jewish victims) were ‘official’ killings, meaning the victims were sentenced to death (without trial) prior to their arrival at Ravensbrück. During exterminations it was compulsory for certain camp personnel to be present, including the Commandant or his Adjutant (Assistant Commandant), the Head Doctor or a doctor, Martin Hellinger (the camp dentist who removed gold teeth from corpses) and members of the firing squad.²⁵⁰

The shooting procedure was conducted as follows; ‘at 7pm’ female prisoners were paraded by Dorothea Binz (Aufseherin) prior to being taken to the cell block. Between ‘10-11pm’ the women were forced into a closed car, ‘guarded by SS men’, and driven to the crematorium (which was erected in 1943). They were ultimately shot and cremated. Binz was aware of the shootings, as she was responsible for putting an ‘X’ opposite the names of strong inmates who could continue labour. These prisoners were spared and returned to the Camp the following day.²⁵¹

Uckermark ‘Juvenile Custody Camp’

In January 1945 Uckermark ‘juvenile protective custody camp’ (initially set up fifty miles away from the main Camp as a satellite camp for young ‘Asocial’ girls) was converted into an emergency extermination camp.²⁵² The WCIU’s report reveals that over five thousand women were transported to Uckermark and liquidated by shooting (later gassing). SS-Hauptscharführer (Commandant) Otto Moll was transferred to Uckermark from Auschwitz shortly after it re-opened as an extermination camp, to oversee the killing of victims. The Camp had its own crematorium which was attached to a small shed. Female prisoners were ‘led singly into the shed where Moll personally shot them’. This is evidenced by a later statement completed by Schwarzhuber on 30 August 1946 which exposed that ‘between 150 and 200 were shot by Moll’ at Uckermark.²⁵³

Post March 1945, Uckermark was used as a pit-stop for women selected for gassing. The WCIU’s report reveals that Dr Adolf Winkelmann ‘had almost sole responsibility for selections to the gas chamber by way of Jugenlager’ (Uckermark). He was frequently in the company of Schwarzhuber during these selections, and other various doctors such as Trommer, Fischer, Treite, Hellinger and Orendi. Female prisoners were forced to parade in front of Winkelmann during their evening roll call (usually between 4-5pm) ‘with bare feet, bare heads and often bare shoulders’. They paraded for up to three hours whilst he ‘carefully scrutinized’ their appearance. The report states that Winkelmann

²⁴⁹ Johann Schwarzhuber, ‘Deposition’, 16 August 1946, TNA: RW 2/7/6

²⁵⁰ Report by WCIU, RW 2/6

²⁵¹ Ibid

²⁵² Bessmann and Eschebach, *The Ravensbrück Women’s Concentration Camp*, p. 258

²⁵³ Johann Schwarzhuber, ‘Deposition’, 30 August 1946, TNA: RW 2/7/6

‘never touched’ the prisoners, and the speed at which they passed made it impossible for him to make a ‘real diagnosis’. Therefore ‘his first choice was usually women with white hair or swollen ankles, artificial limbs, deformities and other obvious signs of broken health’. Female inmates often darkened their hair and used what lipstick they had ‘in an attempt to rejuvenate their premature appearance of old age’.²⁵⁴

Prisoner roll calls were considered an ‘easy’ method of extermination by Suhren who ordered prisoners to be paraded in ‘all weathers and seasons’, without over garments, for up to seven hours a day. Inmates would collapse under their brutal treatment, which was an ‘easy way of getting rid of internees’ without gassing or shooting. Despite this Suhren depended on Uckermark, as he detested the idea of mass-killings occurring within the main Camp, and Uckermark was ‘ideal for this purpose’. Suhren appointed Schwarzhuber as Oberseherin of Uckermark, and Ruth Neudeck as his Deputy. Prisoners were issued a pink card before being transferred to Uckermark, which certified they were too unfit or old to ‘work outside the Camp’. It was essentially a ‘ticket to the gas chamber via Jugenlager’. Inmates were told they were being transferred to a camp with better conditions, but it did not take long for the women to realise this was a lie.²⁵⁵

The ‘Satellite Camps’ and Men’s Camp

Uckermark was one of thirty-four ‘satellite camps’ introduced after 1942 to take pressure off the overpopulated main Camp.²⁵⁶ Other satellites included Klützow, Rechlin and Hennigsdorf. They acted as an extension to the original Camp and helped maintain the growing prisoner population. A men’s Camp was also constructed in April 1941, adjacent to the main Camp. Morrison discusses that the men’s Camp consisted of ‘male prisoners from the nearby Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp’, who were brought to Ravensbrück to perform construction work.²⁵⁷ Altogether there were approximately twenty thousand prisoners registered at the men’s Camp between 1941 and 1945, of which more than two thousand five hundred lost their lives. Little is known about the men’s Camp as it was disbanded in March 1945. However, Heinrich Peters (Commandant of the men’s Camp) testified on 14 August 1946 that the Camp consisted of ‘five living barracks, one of which was used as a sickbay’. Each male prisoner was given a bed, and ‘during the winter season also two blankets’. This was because the men’s Camp was never overpopulated, and held no more than one thousand prisoners at a time. Peters stated that a ‘gallows was erected on the open square in front of the

²⁵⁴ Report by WCIU, RW 2/6

²⁵⁵ Ibid

²⁵⁶ Bayzler and Tuerkheimer, *Forgotten Trials*, p. 135

²⁵⁷ Morrison, Ravensbrück, pp. 253-254

workshops' where male prisoners were hung. Fellow male prisoners were forced to watch hangings, and sometimes carried out 'executions' themselves 'on orders of Suhren'.²⁵⁸

Schwarzhuber produced another statement on 15 August 1946 revealing that male prisoners were involved in gassings that took place in Ravensbrück after March 1945. He attested that 'I attended one gassing. 150 women at a time were forced into the gas chamber. Hauptscharfuehrer Moll ordered the women to undress as they were to be de-loused. They were then forced into the gas chamber and the door was locked. A male internee with a gas-mask climbed on top of the roof and threw a gas container into the room through a window, which he again closed immediately. I heard groaning and whimpering in the room. After two or three minutes it grew quiet'.²⁵⁹

The Gas Chamber

According to Morrison 'the existence and operation of a gas chamber at Ravensbrück are not in doubt'. Nevertheless, there are 'some uncertainties' surrounding the topic due to the SS deconstructing the gas chamber towards the end of the war, and thoroughly destroying evidence. The Soviet Army kept researchers away from the Camp after liberation in April 1945, and made 'sweeping changes, turning it into a military post'.²⁶⁰ However, Major Sillen's interim report provides a basic explanation of the motivation behind the gas chamber's construction and its whereabouts. His report states in early March 1945 Suhren summoned Trommer and Schwarzhuber into his office to inform them that he had received a 'written order from Himmler to liquidate 5,000 inmates'. Suhren demanded the killings be done by shooting, but on 29 March 1945 he declared to Schwarzhuber that executions were 'going too slowly'. He therefore ordered Sturmbannfuehrer (Major) Karl Saur to find an alternative method. Sillen's report explains that 'Saur promptly altered a proportion of the garage and turned it into a gas chamber'.²⁶¹ His report confirms that the gas chamber was assembled 'close to the crematorium' so that bodies could be disposed of quickly, and prisoners would be none the wiser.²⁶² Morrison states the procedure of gassing continued at Ravensbrück until the 'gas chamber was closed down in early April 1945'.²⁶³ During mid-March onwards Sillen's report concludes around '60-70 prisoners were dying per day'.²⁶⁴

Being a Female Prisoner at Ravensbrück

It is interesting to observe that, although much can be learned about Ravensbrück's history through analysing legal documents from the RHTs, they reveal little of what it meant to be a female prisoner

²⁵⁸ Heinrich Peters, 'Deposition', 14 August 1945, TNA: WO 235/315

²⁵⁹ Johann Schwarzhuber, 'Deposition', 15 August 1946, TNA: FO 371/51193

²⁶⁰ Morrison, Ravensbrück, p. 289

²⁶¹ Report by Sillen, WO 235/316

²⁶² Ibid

²⁶³ Morrison, Ravensbrück, p. 291

²⁶⁴ Report by Sillen, WO 235/316

within the Camp. Arguably, this is because legal experts running the trials (who were mostly men) strongly implemented denazification, focusing on war crimes that were committed, in order to open the German public's eyes to the atrocities that took place. Therefore the depositions of female survivors recount crimes committed by camp personnel, such as the ill-treatment and killing of prisoners, rather than sharing their own experiences.

As we cannot depend on primary documentation to unveil the experiences of female prisoners at Ravensbrück, we have no choice but to rely on the studies of historians such as Saidel and Morrison, who have conducted first-hand interviews with survivors and shared their experiences. Saidel in particular, reveals that women formed surrogate families and close friendships at Ravensbrück, which for many was their salvation. For example, if a child's biological mother left the Camp to work on the outside, a surrogate mother cared for that child until his or her mother returned. Surrogate mothers also stepped in when biological mothers were murdered or died. Survivor Basia Rubinstein told Saidel that she 'helped sneak her friend's son into Ravensbrück' by hiding him under her skirt. Fela Kolat expressed to Saidel how her closeness to a woman called Regina Weisfelner gave her the strength to survive. Female prisoners used 'gendered activities' such as gift giving and writing recipe books as a coping mechanism. Gendered activities were 'practices related to general nurturing and homemaking skills, part of the gendered roles that women were taught as they grew up'. Saidel states that women 'knew how to make the scarce rations last longer' to improve their food situation, and 'were accustomed to washing and sewing clothes' because of the roles they played living at home before imprisonment. They also adapted survival skills such as 'picking each other's lice and helping those who were ill'. They did everything they could to make life in the Camp more bearable.²⁶⁵

Both Morrison and Saidel address the issue of menstruation, an experience unique to women. Morrison states that many women were already amenorrhoeic on arrival at Ravensbrück due to 'the trauma of arrest and separation from family'. Those who did suffer from menstruation had no choice but to let the 'blood run down their legs' as there was no provision of feminine hygiene within the Camp.²⁶⁶ Saidel states that many of the women who she interviewed stressed that 'their ability to bear children after the physical tortures their bodies endured was one of their greatest achievements'. Survivor Hannah Horon told Saidel that she was 'sure she would not be able to get pregnant after the absence of her menstrual period', but was 'happily surprised when she conceived after recuperating in Sweden'. Sadly, it is likely that many female inmates lost the ability to conceive after the physical and emotional exhaustion they faced.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ Saidel, *Jewish Women of Ravensbrück*, pp. 208-209

²⁶⁶ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 174

²⁶⁷ Saidel, *Jewish Women of Ravensbrück*, p. 209

Historians such as Chris Schikorra, Ronald Anderson and Catherine Baker reveal that a number of Ravensbrück prisoners experienced prostitution. After 1942 brothels were established in ten of the men's camps, including Dachau, Mauthausen, Flossenburg and Buchenwald. Most female prisoners selected to work in these brothels, or 'special constructions' (Sonderbauten), were from Ravensbrück.²⁶⁸ Himmler used brothels as 'part of an incentive system' for 'privileged' German and Austrian male prisoners. He believed that opening brothels would solve their efficiency problem. SS officers approached women who performed strenuous labour, such as surface level construction. These female inmates were given the 'opportunity' to 'voluntarily enlist' in brothels, on the false promise of release after six months of service.²⁶⁹ Magdalena Walter was selected to work in a brothel at Buchenwald in 1943, she recalled:

Every night we had to let the men get on top of us for two hours. That meant they could come into the brothel barrack, had to go to the medical room to get an injection, could go to the number – to the prisoner, could do their thing, into the room, on top, down, out, back to the medical room where they got another injection. The prisoner had to leave the brothel. We had a certain number of water closets. It didn't lack cleanliness there. And then right away came the next one. Non-stop and they didn't have more than a quarter of an hour.²⁷⁰

The aforementioned reveals only a fraction of what female prisoners experienced in Ravensbrück. Julia Epstein and Lori Lefkovita argue that, until recently, 'specificity of women's experiences in concentration camps has been [ignored] in favour of a more universalist and non-differentiated discussion of pain and suffering'. Gender differences are often disregarded in Holocaust scholarships and representations. Yet gender is a 'prime instrument of Nazi dehumanization and extermination', and should be explored further. In doing so we can separate 'the particular vulnerability and victimization of women' (such as forced abortion, pregnancy and sexual humiliation) from the experiences of male prisoners, and therefore further develop our understanding of concentration camp history.

Liberation

Details surrounding the Camp's liberation, and how certain camp personnel ultimately came to trial in Hamburg between 1946 and 1948, are somewhat unclear. This is due to a distinct lack of primary documentation detailing the Soviet Army's arrival at the Camp, and how defendants came to be in the custody of the British military. The Soviets prevented researchers from entering the Camp after 1945,

²⁶⁸ Chris Schikorra, 'Forced Prostitution in the Nazi Concentration Camps' in *Lessons and Legacies VII: The Holocaust in International Perspective* (USA: Northwestern University Press, 2006), p. 169

²⁶⁹ Ronald E. Anderson, *Alleviating World Suffering: The Challenge of Negative Quality of Life* (USA: Springer International Publishing, 2017), p. 323; Catherine Baker, *Gender in Twentieth-Century: Eastern Europe and the USSR* (London: Palgrave, 2016), p. 99; Saidel, *Jewish Women of Ravensbrück*, p. 213

²⁷⁰ Magdalena Walter quoted in Rochelle G. Saidel and Sonja Maria Hedgepeth, *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, (London: Brandeis University Press, 2010), p. 50

and refused to share their findings with the Western Allies. What is known is that Ravensbrück was 'over-run by the Red Army in its advance Westward' in April 1945 (as discussed in Russell's report).²⁷¹ It is impossible to discuss liberation without utilizing the minimal secondary literature available on the women's Camp, especially by historians such as Alyn Bessmann, Insa Eschebach, Helm, and Morrison who employ first-hand interviews with survivors. They disclose the multiple ways in which women were liberated from Ravensbrück in April 1945 (the Red Army being the final stage of liberation).²⁷²

Bessmann and Eschebach discuss that the first inmates to leave Ravensbrück were rescued by Canadian and American Red Cross buses. The International Committee of the Red Cross began negotiations with leaders of the SS in early March for the release of French prisoners. By late March the SS agreed to evacuate three hundred women on the condition that the French government released four hundred and sixty-four 'female members of the Wehrmacht auxiliary'.²⁷³ On 5 April 1945 Canadian and American Red Cross lorries reached the women's Camp and two hundred and ninety-nine female prisoners, along with one Polish Countess, were authorised to leave. The Red Cross lorries arrived at the Swiss border four days later. By July 1945 twenty-eight of these women had died as a 'consequence of imprisonment'.²⁷⁴

Bessmann and Eschebach state that in February 1945 an additional one hundred Danes and Norwegians were released from the Camp as part of the 'White Buses Rescue Campaign'. The Vice President of the Swedish Red Cross, Count Folke Bernadotte, came to an agreement with SS authorities to evacuate Scandinavian inmates. This rescue took place on 8 April 1945 when Swedish Red Cross buses reached Ravensbrück. The buses were painted white to make them identifiable to Allied forces. This protected them from air strikes. After rescuing inmates, the buses transported them to a 'quarantine camp in Padberg', before taking them to Sweden or Denmark. Overall the International Committee of the Red Cross saved more than seven thousand and ninety-six prisoners, female and male.²⁷⁵

Bessmann and Eschebach further state that towards the end of April 1945 the SS destroyed as much physical evidence as possible. The gas chamber was disassembled and prisoner lists were burned. The SS, being aware that the Red Army were approaching the Camp rapidly, wanted to avoid leaving prisoners or witnesses who could testify against them. Therefore, forced marches began between the 24 and 26 of April with the departure of male prisoners. Men were forced to travel on foot to the

²⁷¹ Russell to DJAG, WO 235/315

²⁷² Helm, *If This is a Woman: Morrison, Ravensbrück: Sidel, Jewish Women of Ravensbrück*

²⁷³ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, pp. 289-290; Bessmann and Eschebach, *The Ravensbrück Women's Concentration Camp*, p. 263

²⁷⁴ Bessmann and Eschebach, *The Ravensbrück Women's Concentration Camp*, p. 263

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*

satellite camps in Malchöw (forty-five miles north-west of Ravensbrück) and Wöbbelin. On the 27 and 28 April several groups of female prisoners, who were 'physically capable' of walking, were assembled and moved out of the Camp.²⁷⁶ These women were marched to Malchöw, and Schwerin, near Retzow-Rechlin. When leaving Ravensbrück those summoned for marches were separated into columns. Each column consisted of a few hundred inmates. They were accompanied by SS trucks which travelled beside them. When marching began many prisoners escaped into the woodlands, or filtered back into the Camp to care for the sick. Weak inmates who collapsed from exhaustion, or those caught trying to escape, were shot by SS guards. For this reason the forced marches are commonly referred to as 'death marches'.²⁷⁷

Finally, on 30 April 1945 Morrison states that the Red Army entered Ravensbrück (by which point the camp personnel had fled). There was 'no electricity, no water, and thirty-five to forty women were dying' daily.²⁷⁸ The Soviet troops pledged to help the 'malnourished and sickly' women they discovered. There were almost three thousand.²⁷⁹ Antonina Nikiforova (Soviet doctor sent to Ravensbrück in 1944) recalled that as soon as the Soviet Army entered the gates everyone capable of doing so 'ran up and kissed them and showered them with cigarettes until they told us to stop. "Are you mad?" They shouted. "It's enough to kiss us". And we surrounded them and stared at them and cried'.²⁸⁰ Maria Gorobatsova (Ravensbrück prisoner from Tbilisi in Georgia) remembered the soldiers looking at the women terrified because of the condition they were in.²⁸¹ Nikiforova stated that eventually the Soviet Advance guard moved west, promising the women 'supplies and medics to help them'. The women waited for two to three days and celebrated their freedom by hanging a banner over the entrance of the Camp 'to announce to the world that they were free'. Nikiforova recalled that everyone pulled together and helped the sick by scavenging for 'food and mattresses'.²⁸² However, Helm discovered when interviewing other survivors that Nikiforova failed to mention that Soviet soldiers began systematically raping 'both prisoners and German civilians'.²⁸³

Ilse Heinrich (a German 'Asocial' prisoner who was too fragile to leave her bed) witnessed drunken Soviet soldiers 'bent on raping even the women who were sick and dying'. Heinrich recalled 'I had only one thought at the time – to die, because I was little more than a corpse. Later, when the senior officers arrived and they set up their quarters in the Camp, we had some peace and order. But first we

²⁷⁶ Ibid

²⁷⁷ Bessmann and Eschebach, *The Ravensbrück Women's Concentration Camp*, p. 267; Sidel, *Jewish Women of Ravensbrück*, p. 166; Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 300

²⁷⁸ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 305

²⁷⁹ Sidel, *Jewish Women of Ravensbrück*, p. 166

²⁸⁰ Antonina Nikiforova quoted in Helm, *If This is a Woman*, p. 686

²⁸¹ Maria Gorobatsova quoted in Helm, *If This is a Woman*, p. 686

²⁸² Nikiforova quoted in Helm, *If This is a Woman*, p. 688

²⁸³ Helm, *If This is a Woman*, p. 688

had to undergo that'.²⁸⁴ Ilena Barsukova (Russian prisoner) was angered by the actions of the men who fought for her country. She acknowledged that 'they were demanding payment for liberation. Stalin had said that no soldiers should be taken prisoner so they felt they could treat us like dirt'.²⁸⁵ She added 'we were disgusted that they behaved like this',²⁸⁶ demonstrating that freedom for these women 'was not yet liberation'.²⁸⁷ It is questionable as to why the issue of rape was not addressed during the RHTs. Perhaps the subject was neglected as Britain was still close Allies with the SU during the time of the first Trial, or maybe, as Helm states, it was because the women were too ashamed to share what had happened.

A week after the Red Army reached Ravensbrück the raping stopped as the 'Russian military leadership brought the situation under control'.²⁸⁸ Morrison discusses that Soviet Officials operated quickly to slow the death rate of inmates, preventing 'the further spread of disease'. Local townspeople were pressured into cleaning the barracks, and burying the bodies piled up in the Camp. Soviets brought in decent food and medicines, and turned the whole Camp into an infirmary. The electricity and water supply was restored and by June 1945 the remaining sick inmates were transferred elsewhere.²⁸⁹

Overall, through utilizing evidence from the RHTs, this chapter has produced a history of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp, and demonstrated that from the outset female prisoners found themselves battling obstacles, such as ill-treatment, undeserved punishments, malnutrition, deteriorating conditions and, after 1942, extermination. It also demonstrated that Ravensbrück's main purpose (as a women's concentration camp) was the manufacturing of uniforms, especially prisoner uniforms, which were transported to all Nazi camps. This chapter has found that we cannot rely on documents from the Trials to expose the unique experiences of female prisoners as, although the documents reveal evidence of sterilization and pregnancy, they strongly focus on the pain and suffering that took place. This is because the British Military Court was more concerned with war crimes and implementing denazification, than the experiences of female prisoners. Instead we must rely on the studies of historians who have conducted first-hand interviews with Ravensbrück survivors, sharing invaluable accounts of their time therein.

²⁸⁴ Ilse Heinrich quoted in Helm, *If This is a Woman*, p. 689

²⁸⁵ Ilena Barsukova quoted in Helm, *If This is a Woman*, p. 691

²⁸⁶ Ibid

²⁸⁷ Helm, *If This is a Woman*, p. 681

²⁸⁸ Barsukova quoted in Helm, *If This is a Woman*, p. 691

²⁸⁹ Morrison, *Ravensbrück*, p. 306

Conclusion

To conclude, this study had two aims, the first to produce a history of the RHTs. Chapter One discussed the motives behind the Trials, and foregrounded the political decisions made by Britain and the Allied powers in the period before, and during, the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial. It demonstrated that BAOR were reluctant to hand Ravensbrück defendants over to Poland in 1946, and found that Britain viewed the Soviet backed Polish government with suspicion. This was due to growing Cold War tensions and deteriorating Anglo-Soviet relations. Britain wanted to protect what little power she had left within Europe and her colonies after the war, and felt that the SU was trying to weaken her. Britain disagreed with the wrongful inroads Warsaw was making under the watchful eye of the SU. Consequently, BAOR decided to try those they already held for crimes at Ravensbrück in their own court, resulting in the British Military Court conducting the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial for war criminals who had no direct national interest.

Furthermore, Chapter One showed that towards the end of the first Ravensbrück-Hamburg Trial criticisms began to emerge in the French press, attacking the British justice system. BAOR tried to diffuse these criticisms swiftly by offering France twenty Ravensbrück war criminals. Britain knew that the way in which they were perceived abroad was of great importance in maintaining power in Europe. France rejected BAOR's offer, as they did not want to jeopardize their relationship with Britain and America, who were providing France with economic aid after the war. The SU had displayed an unsympathetic attitude towards French concerns, and France had no choice but to rely on Anglo-American aid. The chapter found that Britain and America were happy to help, on the condition that France remained a staunch Cold War Ally. Since France rejected BAOR's offer, BAOR felt obliged to try the additional defendants in their own court, hence a further six Trials took place.

Chapter Two produced a history of the RHTs by discussing legal proceedings and outcomes that took place. The chapter gave an insight into the thirty-eight Ravensbrück defendants that were tried, utilizing court records specifically related to the seven RHTs. It discussed who and why they were tried, and the sentences awarded to each defendant. It also considered why the RHTs faded from public memory, and found that the British government allowed the Trials to become 'forgotten Trials' by closing their documents to the public for fifty-nine years. The British government were concerned that the public would react badly due to the release of all German war criminals in their custody by May 1958. Therefore this action was dealt with discreetly. Again, the chapter concluded that the government's decision to release German war criminals was motivated by the Cold War. Criminals were released on the condition that Germany cooperated as a Cold War Ally.

The second aim of this study was to employ evidence from the RHTs to evaluate the role of Ravensbrück within the wider history of Nazi concentration camps. Chapter Three utilized this evidence to produce a history of Ravensbrück. In doing so, it firstly demonstrated that women found

themselves battling dreadful circumstances (such as ill-treatment and murder) which became apparent during the seven Trials. The chapter secondly demonstrated that Ravensbrück's chief role within the overall camp system was to manufacture uniforms, for both camp prisoners and the German military. It found that legal documents from the Trials mainly cover the period between 1942 and 1945. This is because most of the initial prisoner intake died before liberation, and were unable to tell their stories. The chapter also found we cannot solely rely upon these documents to provide us with a full understanding of the female experience at Ravensbrück. Legal experts were concerned with war crimes committed, and implementing denazification, rather than the personal experiences of female prisoners. Therefore, the latter part of this study relied upon the works of historians who have conducted first-hand interviews with Ravensbrück survivors, and gained indispensable information about their experiences.

It is imperative that the voices of female camp survivors are heard, and that they are given the opportunity to share their unique experiences. Without them we can never fully understand how the camp system worked, as gender differences played a crucial role within concentration camp history. Gender was a major tool of Nazi dehumanization and extermination. Women in particular were victims of prostitution and rape. Pregnant women faced forced abortions and were first to the gas chambers at camps such as Auschwitz. These are experiences that should not be overlooked.

When I visited the Camp's Memorial Site in August 2016 I was at the early stages of my research, and therefore still had much to learn. Thinking back to how I felt whilst walking through the Camp grounds, I would not have thought it possible to feel more empathy with the women who were interned there. I was wrong. Now I have completed my research, and have seen the depositions of those who survived, I must state that one could never understand the frightful experiences these women faced, without personally experiencing such traumas. By conducting a study such as this, which involves researching the horrors that took place in depth, I cannot help but feel the utmost sorrow for those who have lived with constant fear of death and mistreatment. For this reason this study has left an imprint on my heart that I shall carry with me for the rest of my life.

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