

# ***The Reichsuniversität Straßbourg*** **(1941-1944):** Results of the research by the Historical Commission into the history of the Medical Faculty



Inaugural lecture at the Medical Faculty of the RUS by Dean Johannes Stein (at the lectern)  
in the *Clinique Médical B (Medizinische Abteilung 1)* lecture theatre, 24 November 1941 © Süddeutsche Zeitung

Following the proposal of the former president of the University of Strasbourg, Alain Beretz, and the current president, Michel Deneken, the University of Strasbourg launched an international and independent Historical Commission whose objective was to shed light on the history of the *Reichsuniversität Straßbourg* between 1941 and 1944.

The entire report (only in French) can be found online by following this link:

[https://www.unistra.fr/fileadmin/upload/unistra/universite/historique/Rapport\\_final\\_Reichsuniversitat\\_Strassburg\\_corr.pdf](https://www.unistra.fr/fileadmin/upload/unistra/universite/historique/Rapport_final_Reichsuniversitat_Strassburg_corr.pdf)

To download the visuals: <https://seafire.unistra.fr/d/145258bbc3214a0782bb/>

Press contact

University of Strasbourg

Alexandre Tatay – Attaché de presse

+33.6 80 52 01 82 / [tatay@unistra.fr](mailto:tatay@unistra.fr)

[www.unistra.fr](http://www.unistra.fr)



# CONTENTS

<b>Context.....</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>The Historical Commission.....</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>The Commission's creation and its missions.....</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>The members of the Commission.....</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Working method.....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>An editorialised wiki on the history     of the <i>Reichsuniversität Straßburg's</i> Medical Faculty.....</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Summary of the results.....</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>An integrated institutional operation.....</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>The victims and human remains.....</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>Institutional relationships.....</b>	<b>Page 10</b>
<b>The recommendations of the Commission.....</b>	<b>Page 12</b>
<b>The University of Strasbourg's response to the Historical Commission's recommendations.....</b>	<b>Page 14</b>
<b>Testimonies.....</b>	<b>Page 15</b>
<b>The exhibition at the <i>Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté</i>.....</b>	<b>Page 17</b>
<b>Selected bibliography.....</b>	<b>Page 18</b>

# Context

## **The long journey out of oblivion to restore the memory of all**

The creation, in 2016, of the Historical Commission on the *Reichsuniversität* follows on from research and memorial work aiming to shed light on the crimes committed by the Nazis between 1941 and 1944, on their victims, and on the operation of the Strasbourg University institution under the Third *Reich*.

An initial medical thesis by Patrick Wechsler in 1991 led in 1997 to the creation of the *Cercle Menachem Taffel* by Dr Georges Federmann, a psychiatrist from Strasbourg, and Dr Roland Knebusch from Kehl (Germany) to promote memorial work and develop historical research.

In 1997, Professor Jacques Héran's book, *Histoire de la médecine à Strasbourg*, tackled the subject with a chapter on the *Reichsuniversität*, which also discussed the activity of the University of Strasbourg, which at the time had relocated to Clermont-Ferrand.

The publication in 2004 of Hans-Joachim Lang's book (the French version of which, *Des noms derrière des numéros*, was published in 2018 by the *Presses universitaires de Strasbourg* with the support of the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah) marked a turning point in the historical approach by naming the victims who, until then, had just been numbers and by telling their stories. It thus made a significant contribution to work on the memory of the Jews persecuted and exterminated in Europe.

In 2010, Raphaël Toledano defended a medical thesis on the life, work and victims of the criminal experiments of Eugen Haagen.

In 2014, Dr Raphaël Toledano and Emmanuel Heyd's film *Le nom des 86* continued this work, bringing the victims out of oblivion and restoring their memory to the community of the living.

Those 86 people were the victims, Jewish women and men from all over Europe, who were selected and deported to the Struthof camp in Natzweiler, Alsace. They were executed in the gas chamber of the *KL-Natzweiler*, and their bodies preserved for the anthropological collection of the Institute of Anatomy of the Strasbourg *Reichsuniversität*, headed by Professor Hirt.

At the end of the war, Eugen Haagen and Otto Bickenbach, professors at the *Reichsuniversität* in Strasbourg who had participated in August Hirt's project, were tried for the experiments they had carried out on prisoners at the Struthof camp, first in Metz in 1952, then in Lyon in 1954. Eugen Haagen and Otto Bickenbach were initially given life sentences of hard labour, commuted to 20 years' hard labour, before being pardoned and returning to Germany in July 1955.

In 2005, a headstone commemorating the names of the 86 victims was erected in the Jewish cemetery of Strasbourg (Cronenbourg). A plaque was also placed at the same time on the outside wall of the Institute of Anatomy. Dr Raphaël Toledano's thesis work in Strasbourg on the biography of Eugen Haagen, Dr Florian Schmaltz's research in Berlin on

poison gases during the Second World War (*Kampfstoff-Forschung im Nationalsozialismus*, 2017) and Professor Steegman's book on the Struthof concentration camp (*Struthof. Le KL-Natzweiler et ses kommandos*, 2005), form, along with Hans-Joachim Lang's work, a knowledge base to seriously re-examine the activities of the University of Strasbourg and the Medical Faculty under the Nazi occupation.

In 2015, Dr Raphaël Toledano's discovery at the *Institut de Médecine légale* of three preparations bearing the name of Menachem Taffel, (one of August Hirt's 86 victims) raised the question of the presence of human remains from the National-Socialist era in the collections of the Medical Faculty. This appalling discovery put the University of Strasbourg at the centre of a controversy during which it was also accused by Michel Cymes' book *Hippocrate aux enfers* (2015).

**In 2016 Alain Beretz, then President of the university, decided to set up an international Historical Commission composed of 12 international researchers to begin the most thorough research possible into the activity of the *Reichsuniversität* between 1941 and 1944 and its links to medical war crimes. The aim of the work was to complement the existing work and establish a new milestone in the development of knowledge of this dark period of history for science, the university and the city.**

# The Historical Commission

## The Commission's creation and its missions

Following the proposal of the former president of the University of Strasbourg, Alain Beretz, and the current president, Michel Deneken, the University of Strasbourg decided to set up and instruct a Historical Commission on 27 September 2016. This international and independent commission was given the task of shedding light on the history of the *Reichsuniversität Straßburg* (RUS) between 1941 and 1944 and during the periods immediately before and after.

The task of the Historical Commission was to conduct the most comprehensive research possible, without restrictions or partiality, on the Medical Faculty within the *Reichsuniversität* under the Third Reich.

This research focused specifically on:

- The scientific and political activities of the members and representatives of the *Reichsuniversität* between 1941 and 1944;
- The consequences of the activity of the *Reichsuniversität* after 1945 and the relationship between the *Reichsuniversität* and the University of Strasbourg;
- The identification of the victims of the research, practices and persecution that took place in association with the *Reichsuniversität*;
- The identification of scientific or pedagogical material produced by the *Reichsuniversität* and formulation of proposals for their handling;
- The creation of a document database on the subject;

# The Members of the Commission

The presidents of the Historical Commission are Paul Weindling and Florian Schmaltz, who were elected by the members of the Commission at its first meeting, on 27 September 2016. The independent and international Commission is composed of 8 expert members from international universities and 4 members from the University of Strasbourg, as well as a qualified external member.

The eight experts from outside the University of Strasbourg:

- Isabelle von Bültzingsloewen, University of Lyon II, vice-president of research and expert in the history of National-Socialist psychiatry in France and Germany and the increased mortality of psychiatric hospital patients during the period
- Corine Defrance, CNRS, UMR 8138 SIRICE, Paris, expert in Franco-German contemporary and present-day history and ethnic cleansing in particular
- Sabine Hildebrandt, Global Health and Social Medicine, Harvard Medical School & Boston Children's Hospital (United States)
- Hans-Joachim Lang, cultural anthropology, University of Tübingen (Germany)
- Volker Roelcke, history of medicine, head of the Institute of Medical History, University of Giessen (Germany)
- Carola Sachse, contemporary history, University of Vienna (Austria)
- Florian Schmaltz, contemporary history and science, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin (Germany)
- Paul Weindling, history of medicine, Oxford Brookes University (United Kingdom)

The four members from the University of Strasbourg:

- Christian Bonah, history of life and health sciences, University of Strasbourg
- Catherine Maurer, contemporary history, University of Strasbourg
- Jean-Sébastien Raul, head of the *Institut de médecine légale*, University of Strasbourg
- Norbert Schappacher, history of mathematics, University of Strasbourg

One qualified external member:

- Frédérique Neau-Dufour, head of the *Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté* (CERD) until 2019.

Contributors:

- Gabriele Moser, researcher, project leader
- Aisling Shalvey, doctoral student
- Lea Münch, doctoral student

# Working method

The Commission collected, cross-referenced and connected over 150 000 pages of archives in a systematic analysis. Those archives came originally from the *Reichsuniversität* and were dispersed at the end of the war to the zones occupied in Germany by the four allied powers, who had collected original information and sources. The documents can therefore be found today in French, British, American and Russian archives. Other sources were collected during the post-war trials. This systematic methodology of archival research was complemented by the study of local collections. The Commission thus identified three distinct collections to analyse in depth: a series of macroscopic and microscopic pathology items, a collection of histological slides in the field of dermatology and August Hirt's histological collection. The analysis of these items can be found in the final report.

The sources examined by each member of the Commission were digitised and then shared with the other researchers on the Commission. The members of the Historical Commission thus shared the tasks to be carried out, as well as the results obtained digitally in both a local and delocalised manner. Three digital workspaces illustrate this process: a shared bibliography (Zotero group), a collective archive repository (Seafire) and a shared archive database (FileMaker).

The aim of the Commission's collective and collaborative working method was to reconstruct an overview of the *Reichsuniversität*, of its members' research and teaching and of the human experiments carried out within it.

The work of the Commission was aided by the opportunity to conduct research in the vast database called "Victims of Biomedical Research under National Socialism: <https://ns-medical-victims.org>", which was created in recent years under the direction of Paul Weindling. It contains over 29 000 personal data on the victims and perpetrators of medical experiments, including the human experiments in Natzweiler and Schirmeck. The database will in future be accessible as a web resource of the *Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher Leopoldina - Nationale Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Halle). Currently, enquiries concerning its use should be addressed to [pjweindling@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:pjweindling@brookes.ac.uk).

## An editorialised wiki on the history of the *Reichsuniversität Straßburg's* Medical Faculty

The wiki project entitled "*Biographies autour de la Medizinische Fakultät der Reichsuniversität Straßburg 1941-1944* (Rus-Med: <https://rus-med.unistra.fr/>)" is both a database and a digital publication for collaborative, interactive and evolving information, teaching and research. The Rus-Med wiki is run by the University of Strasbourg and is an initiative of the Independent Historical Commission on the History of the RUS Medical Faculty (CHRUS). Published in open access, it is non-commercial, of public interest and designed according to scientific and historical academic standards. It is an editorialised wiki, in that only the members of the editorial committee are authorised to amend its content and all data entered are scientifically validated and reviewed by experts before being published online and made public.

The Rus-Med wiki is also a collaborative venture. Individuals who wish to submit documents from the period or proposals for contributions to the editorial committee can do so at: [rus-med@unistra.fr](mailto:rus-med@unistra.fr)

# Summary of the results

This in-depth work led to significant progress in identifying the political and scientific activity of the members of the *Reichsuniversität*, both staff and students, and in identifying experiments conducted under coercion, as well as providing contextualisation of preparations containing human remains from that period.

As a result of this research into the archives and previously unexploited documents, the Historical Commission identified and analysed 292 medical theses defended at the *Reichsuniversität Straßburg's* Medical Faculty between 1941 and 1944. 171 of those theses were previously unknown.

The Commission also found and studied the files of 10 000 unknown patients (from psychiatry, internal medicine, paediatrics etc.), which were systematically inventoried and digitised. It also studied the entirety of the unreleased archives of the administration at the *Reichsuniversität Straßburg's* Medical Faculty.

In order to identify the anonymous victims of the criminal experiments carried out at the Struthof concentration camp in Natzweiler by the doctors at the Medical Faculty of the *Reichsuniversität Straßburg*, personal files of prisoners were searched for in the unused "*Listenunterlagen*" in the Arolsen archives (International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen/International Center on Nazi Persecution) and in the "*Entschädigungsverfahren im Bestand des Bundesfinanzministeriums*" (compensation procedures of the German Ministry of Finance ).

## An integrated institutional operation

- **The transformation of the public hospital (*hôpital civil*) into the *Klinische Anstalten* of the *Reichsuniversität***

The public hospital operated "autonomously" from September 1940. On 1 April 1941, before the opening (on 23 November 1941) of the *Reichsuniversität*, the clinics of the public hospital were absorbed into the *Reichsuniversität* as *Klinische Anstalten* (clinical institutes). The actual implementation of the administrative management of the clinics by the civil administration (*Zivilverwaltung*) began on 1 September 1941. The administrative transfer was co-managed by the two Alsatian administrators of the public hospital, Oster and Barthelme.

- **Alsatian and *Mosellan* involvement in medical activities (intermediaries and doctoral students)**

96 doctors from Alsace and Moselle were employed on a temporary or permanent basis by the *Reichsuniversität/public hospital/Klinische Anstalten* (i.e. around 40% of the medical personnel).

28 Alsatians and *Mosellans* defended a medical thesis in German at the *Reichsuniversität*, i.e. 9.6% of defended medical theses. 21 of them defended their thesis a second time, in French, after 1945.



- **The students of the Medical Faculty of the *Reichsuniversität***

In the winter semester of 1941/42, the Reichuniversität's Medical Faculty had 845 medical students (of whom 7.8 % were women) and in the summer semester of 1944, 1 683 students (of whom 23.8 % were women). Over the whole period, the Medical Faculty accounted for around 50% of the Reichuniversität's students.

A collection of 772 examination records from the first preclinical undergraduate stage (*ärztliche Vorprüfung* or *Physikum*) showed that:

- 199 of the candidates were women (25.7 %)
- 96 were from Alsace-Moselle (12.5 %)
- 487 of the male candidates in pre-clinical exams were student soldiers from military institutions (85 % of male students)

## The victims and human remains

The Historical Commission's research made the following possible:

- **The identification of a collection of 1 019 histological slides belonging to August Hirt**

The historical, histological and forensic analysis of the slides revealed that they all dated from before 1940, and that they all belonged to August Hirt's personal research collection, often linked to his publications. The research showed that this histological collection did not contain any preparation related to criminal human experiments. The slides have no connection with the Natzweiler concentration camp.

The Commission identified histological slides of two people who had been sentenced to death, common law criminals executed in 1936. The names of the two people were identified. The Commission was able to identify the two people, whose remains can be found in August Hirt's collection of histological slides:

- Matthias Spengler, who was sentenced to death for murder by the *Landgericht Stettin*. Born on 21 October 1914, Matthias Spengler was executed on 19 April 1936 in Stettin. Immediately after his execution, organs were removed from his body. One of Matthias Spengler's kidneys was used by Otto Krüger for his medical thesis, which was supervised by August Hirt at the University of Greifswald and published in 1937;
- The second death row inmate whose organs were extracted and were later found on slides in August Hirt's histological collection, was Richard Krafft. Born on 29 March 1919, Krafft was executed on 11 December 1936 in Köslin after being sentenced to death for murder. August Hirt provided the ophthalmologist Heinrich Krümmel with histological slides prepared using Richard Krafft's eyes for his medical thesis published in 1938.

- **The identification of a macroscopic and microscopic pathological collection**

A hitherto unknown pathological collection from the *Reichsuniversität's* Medical Faculty was identified. The collection consists of 134 human macroscopic preparations from the 1941–1944 period. It also includes approximately 4000 microscopic slides from the same period, representing the histopathological activity at the Institute of Pathology of the *Reichsuniversität's* Medical Faculty, which was headed at the time by Friedrich Klinge. No link with criminal experiments could be established. The archives of the Institute of Pathology indicate that some human preparations were used in the work of August Hirt's doctoral students and the autopsy registers include a few autopsies conducted on prisoners of war and of labour camps.

- **The identification of a collection of histological slides for analysis and teaching purposes at the dermatological clinic, corresponding to the activity of the histopathological laboratory**

This collection, as well as the activity of the dermatological histopathology laboratory, were the subject of a medical thesis by Irène Goulard, supervised by Professor Bernard Cribier. The defence took place in 2021. Two registers and the corresponding slides covering the period from 18 September 1940 to 17 April 1943 were analysed. The slides were arranged in boxes corresponding to the clinical diagnoses of 812 cases. The thesis concluded that there was no criminal experimentation and the slides, according to this work, came from diagnostic biopsies. Five microscopic preparations were produced for scientific purposes. The Commission completed this analysis with a third register dating from April 1943 to November 1944, which yielded the same result. However, in addition to the material collections, a broader analysis of thesis work in dermatology between 1941 and 1944 produced in the clinic discovered non-consensual experimentation on 130 human subjects in dermatology.

- **The identification of victims in the psychiatry clinic**

The *Reichsuniversität's* psychiatry clinic played a central role in the care of Alsatian mental patients residing there. The Commission identified 3293 admitted patients and found the records of around 3000 patients from the 1941–1944 period. The clinic was soon equipped, in May 1942, with an electroshock machine and this new form of therapy was integrated centrally into the practice of care. Evidence of criminal experimental therapy trials was not established. Around 15% of the patients admitted to the *Reichsuniversität's* psychiatry clinic were transferred to the Stephansfeld asylum in Brumath. Among those transfers, three identified Alsatian patients were then transported, in 1944, to Hadamar, where they were put to death in accordance with “decentralised euthanasia” procedures. A total of 12 life histories of patients from the *Reichsuniversität's* psychiatry clinic are being reconstructed in detail by Lea Münch, a doctor of medicine and doctoral student in contemporary history at the University of Strasbourg (defence in 2023).

- **The identification of victims of biomedical research**

The “rehabilitation through labour camp” (*Arbeitserziehungslager*) in Vorbruck-Schirmeck and the Natzweiler concentration camp (*Konzentrationslager*), which were administered by the security service and the SS respectively,

served as “suppliers” of human beings for at least three professors of the *Reichsuniversität*, who used them in human experiments.

The discovery of new documents has shed light on the history of experiments with phosgene (a poison gas used in combat since the First World War) carried out by Dr Otto Bickenbach and his assistants, Helmut Rühl and Fritz Letz, which investigated the prophylactic and therapeutic effects of urotropine (hexamethylenetetramine), an anticoagulant produced by the pharmaceutical company, Schering. The experiments on animals that Otto Bickenbach began in Heidelberg in 1939 foreshadowed the experiments conducted on concentration camp inmates.

Regarding the gas chamber experiments performed on the inmates of the Natzweiler concentration camp, the Historical Commission was able to identify the victims of the series of experiments carried out between 1943 and 1944. In addition to the four people already known, i.e. Zirko Rebstock and Andreas Hodoosey (who died on 16 December 1944), Adalbert Eckstein (who died on 18 December 1944) and Josef Reinhardt (who died on 9 August 1944), a further 36 inmates were identified. The four previously identified victims of experiments on phosgene were Sinti, which suggests that inmates were selected based on racial criteria for the most dangerous experiments of the last series. The last of these involved the use of such a high dose of phosgene that the death of a certain number of inmates was expected by the experimental protocol, the aim of which was to study the prophylactic effect of urotropine on the dying.

The Commission succeeded in reconstructing a far more detailed biography than before of some of the victims of the experiments with phosgene.

Research into those who suffered terribly from the experiments with mustard gas, conducted by August Hirt and Wimmer, identified 7 victims with certainty and 13 others who may have been forced to participate. Three identified victims died during the series of experiments.

The Commission was also able to identify 196 victims of research into typhus, conducted by Eugen Haagen, and in some cases discovered what happened to them afterwards. These identifications were mainly based on original research on compensation cases in France and Germany.

The Commission was able to identify victims of criminal bio-medical research in the dermatological clinic, as well as victims among the Russian and French prisoners of war.

- **Clarification about research on forced sterilisation**

The Historical Commission did not find any archives about research on forced sterilisation. Nevertheless, it is mentioned in a French doctoral thesis submitted after the war (written by Kieffer in 1946 under the supervision of Professor Simonin). In occupied Alsace, a total of three institutions practiced forced sterilisation: the civil hospices in Colmar (director: Dr Pychlau), the surgical clinic in Strasbourg (director: Zukschwerdt) and the gynaecological clinic (director: Jacobi) of the public hospital. The 1946 thesis, based on medical files from the *Reichsuniversität*'s Medical Faculty in Strasbourg, indicates that between 1942 and 1944, six women underwent this operation (five Alsatians and one woman from Baden).

# Institutional relationships

- **A DFG fund for former members of the *Reichsuniversität***

The Historical Commission identified a research support fund from the assets of the *Reichsuniversität*, which was managed by the German Agency for Research (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) until around 1980. Beneficiaries needed “to have been a teacher-researcher member of the *Reichsuniversität*”. It served as a research fund for former members of the *Reichsuniversität*.

- **The relationship of the *Reichsuniversität* with the *Wehrmacht***

The professors and doctoral students of the *Reichsuniversität* had access to the (British) prisoners of war held in the camps operated by the *Wehrmacht*.

The *Wehrmacht* and the *Wehrkreisverwaltung V* converted part of the medical services of the city of Strasbourg into military hospitals (950 beds requisitioned). At the public hospital, a total of 90 beds requisitioned for the military were declared. 60 beds were for surgery, 20 beds for psychiatry and 10 beds for the eye clinic.

The *Kriegsgefangenen-Lazarett Mutzig*, the military hospital in Mutzig reserved for prisoners of war, which delivered the bodies of dead Soviet POWs to the *Reichsuniversität*'s Institute of Anatomy, was called the *Reservelazarett Strassburg II* (Reserve Military Hospital Strasbourg II). The dead who were not sent to Strasbourg were buried in the *Feste von Witzleben* POW cemetery, the exact location of which was found.

- **Evacuations and “restitution” of research material and scientific collections**

The Historical Commission identified the transfer of research material and scientific collections in 1939/40, during the evacuation of the University of Strasbourg to Clermont-Ferrand and Clairvivre, before returning to Strasbourg. In 1944/1945, research material and scientific collections were transferred to Tübingen, then finally sent back to Strasbourg. Auguste Gunsett brought 10g of radium (worth around 10 million *Reichsmarks*) to the *Reichsuniversität* in exchange for a post at the *Reichsuniversität*'s Medical Faculty.

- **Relationship with the camps**

The *Reichsuniversität* and its various health care institutions used forced labourers (e.g. to repair damage to buildings caused by bombing). Local civilian organisations (*Arbeitsämter*) were in charge of distributing the labour force. The hospital administration required forced labourers.

The *Reichsuniversität*'s clinics treated more than 300 sick or injured forced labourers from over 80 labour camps in the city and its surroundings. From the middle of 1943, a *Krankenbaracke für Ostarbeiter* (“Barracks for sick Eastern workers”) was set up on the hospital grounds to ensure the “racial separation” of patients required by National-Socialist ideology.

The Historical Commission retraced the biographies of sick forced labourers who were treated in the public hospital's clinics. In addition, twenty-two inmates of the Natzweiler concentration camp who were seriously ill or injured in accidents were treated in the clinics of Strasbourg's public hospital. The closed ward of the psychiatry clinic was used to monitor the injured inmates who were liable to escape.

The connections between the *Reichsuniversität's* Medical Faculty and the Natzweiler concentration camp (1941-1944) that the Historical Commission discovered (medical analyses, regular phone calls, transfers of sick inmates, bio-medical research at the camp, the medical request for the construction of a gas chamber etc.) were so numerous that one can truly speak of a shared history. Contrary to the image that prevailed until then, of a hermetically sealed concentration camp, secluded and isolated in the Vosges, these results reveal that it was in fact fully involved in the organisation of forced labour on the one hand, and in the system of health care and racial hygiene on the other.

- **The Medical Faculty and the public hospital**

The Historical Commission does not know the number of Alsatians among the 1542 employees of the hospital and of the *Reichsuniversität's* Medical Faculty (medical staff, maintenance staff, laboratory staff, manual workers etc.) in 1942.

The discovery of documents from the 292 theses completed at the Medical Faculty of the *Reichsuniversität* proves that the latter was a German university that offered a "normal" university curriculum in a context of annexation/occupation. The *Reichsuniversität's* Medical Faculty also had contacts with other universities in the Reich, as evidenced by the presence of 12 external thesis jury members from the Reich.

The 96 Alsatian and *Mosellan* temporary or permanent employees of the *Reichsuniversität/public hospital/Klinische Anstalten* included:

- Frédéric Trenz, from Alsace, who worked full-time as the director of the *Staatliches Medizinaluntersuchungsamt (MedUA, State Medical Analysis Office)* in Strasbourg. As Frédéric Trenz was in charge of combatting infectious diseases, the *MedUA* regularly analysed the stools of inmates from the Natzweiler concentration camp, for example, to test for dysentery. From 1940, he was the Director of the Office of Racial Hygiene (*Leiter des Amtes Rassenhygiene*) and he prepared his qualification under the direction of Johannes Stein, which he obtained on 16 January 1942. After his rapid entry into the *Opferring*, he joined the *NSDAP* on 1 February 1942 under the registration number 8 733 311 and on 17 February 1943, on his request, he obtained German nationality. His integration became complete with his nomination as a professor on secondment (*außerplanmäßiger Professor*) in June 1944, which was finally confirmed on 23 November 1944, the day of the liberation of Strasbourg. In 1948, Frédéric Trenz opened a biology and medical analysis laboratory at the *Clinique Sainte-Barbe*, in the *rue du Faubourg national* in Strasbourg, which employed around 125 doctors, laboratory assistants and other employees in 1966 and is one of the biggest in the East of France.
- Franz-Josef Ernst, a doctor of pharmacology in 1938, then a doctor of medicine in 1942 (it was Eugen Haagen who supervised his thesis), and an employee of the *MedUA*, who was responsible for testing the quality of drinking water in the whole of Alsace in his capacity as a hygienist and bacteriologist. He had been recruited by the head of the civil administration in 1940. In the same year, he organised (with moderate success) the repatriation of the university equipment taken away during the evacuation of the university to Clermont-Ferrand and Clairvivre.

Inmates from the Natzweiler concentration camp with suspected tuberculosis were examined at the Saal/Schirmeck sanatorium, where “X-ray pictures” were taken and sent to the camp’s SS doctor.

The Historical Commission highlighted the links between the *Reichsuniversität*’s children’s clinic and the Lebensborn “Schwarzwald” home, which was opened in 1942 in Nordrach and housed in the former Rothschild sanatorium from which the Jewish patients were deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto. The home’s consultant physician was Dr Kiehl (Strasbourg Children’s Clinic) and the sick children were transferred to the Strasbourg Children’s Clinic.

# The recommendations of the Commission

## Commemorations and places of remembrance

Creation of a central memorial site open to the public for the group of 86 (with individual recognition of the victims), if possible, in the internal courtyard of the *Institut d’anatomie*.

Possibly, the creation of a similar memorial site for the victims of Eugen Haagen and Otto Bickenbach.

The victims should be identified with their full names, dates of birth and death and cause of death. Where numbers of victims are given, they should ideally be linked to identified names. It should also be recognised that victims who survived often had their claims for compensation denied.

Identification of the main sites where criminal acts took place (Institutes of Anatomy and of Pathology, Institute of Dermatology, former Institute of Hygiene, the site of the Barracks for sick Eastern workers, Psychiatry Clinic, etc.).

Museographic presentation of the collections of anatomical, dermatological and pathological tissue sections and samples, as well as macroscopic pathological preparations in their historical location, the attic of the Institute of Pathology.

Signposting of a number of sites where criminal acts took place with explanatory notices, outdoor display cases and digital information terminals.

Creation of a “remembrance pathway” passing through all these sites.

Installation of large maps at all entrances to the medical campus and to the public hospital, indicating the sites where criminal acts took place.

Installation of a regional map or some other type of relief model highlighting the connections between the *Reichsuniversität*’s Medical Faculty and the National-Socialist institutions where people were persecuted or put to

death (Natzweiler, Auschwitz, Stephansfeld, Hoerdt, the death camps in Germany, the forced labour camps, the places where forced labourers were employed, based on information available in medical files etc.).

Identification of the most historically significant rooms (morgue of the Institute of Anatomy, former offices of the main perpetrators of crimes, laboratories etc.).

Installation of floor plans at the entrance to all chosen sites showing what the various rooms were used for at the time of the *Reichsuniversität*.

(Partial) transformation into museums of certain rooms (including, when appropriate, a presentation of the preserved collections, original instruments, textbooks, course outlines, registration lists, theses and other documents, original photos, biographies of victims, of perpetrators, of students etc.).

Development of a system enabling permanent/regular/temporary access of visitors to the rooms converted into museums.

## **Documentation**

The maintenance and preservation, as well as the accessibility for the general public and the establishment of interactivity, of the *Rus-Med* wiki database by the Commission.

The creation and maintenance of a website about National-Socialist medicine at the RUS.

Conservation of all the collections processed by the Commission.

Presentation of parts of the collection to the general public.

Lessons from the past for today.

Development of teaching modules for various parts of the curricula in medicine, nursing, other health professions and life sciences.

Further education for the teachers involved.

Development of school trip programmes for primary schools and other target groups.

Development of proposals for workshops for various groups of healthcare professionals.

## **Research**

Short-term grants for studying the archives in the databases set up by the Commission, in the collections and/or in local archive centres (similar to the grants for the Rockefeller Archive Center).

One-year grants for the preparation of university dissertations or theses, scientific publications, media materials and artistic productions within the broader thematic framework of medicine at the *Reichsuniversität*.

Creation of a visiting professorship within the broader framework of medicine under National-Socialism and at the *Reichsuniversität*.

# The University of Strasbourg's response to the recommendations of the Historical Commission

The University of Strasbourg has taken note of the results and recommendations of the Commission. It is aware that this work is a further step forward in the understanding of the history of the *Reichsuniversität* and would like the considerable volume of material collected and exploited by the Commission to be used for future research and for the information of all, students, researchers and citizens. To this end, it has already contacted the State and local authorities, so that the duty of remembrance and collective responsibility that we have regarding history and future generations be borne together.

The University of Strasbourg proposes to respond to all of the recommendations in three broad categories (commemorations and places of remembrance, documentation and research) by the **creation of an information and research centre**, which could be located on the medical campus (possibly in the anatomy building) and which would have the following missions:

1. To ensure the appropriate preservation of the collections of the Medical Faculty, in particular those mentioned in the Commission's report;
2. To make the documentation gathered by the Commission available, both physically and digitally, for future research;
3. To create spaces dedicated to information on the history of the *Reichsuniversität* and the networks of which it was a part, and to the commemoration of all the victims (possibly in the form of a remembrance pathway on the medical campus);
4. To plan activities periodically in these spaces (at a frequency to be determined) and to involve medical students in these activities. These activities should be aimed at all audiences, with a particular focus on school groups;



5. To include modules in the medical curriculum on the history of Nazi medicine, of the *Reichsuniversität* and on the ethical problems it poses. These modules should be offered in the further education of health professionals;
6. To invite researchers to short or long programmes on the history of the *Reichsuniversität*.

The objective is the gradual implementation of this project, with its various ramifications, by the end of 2024. A working group composed of the stakeholders of the University and its Medical Faculty, and representatives of the local authorities and of civil society, will be set up before summer 2022. It will be led by Mathieu Schneider, vice-president of culture, science-society and solidarity actions.

## Testimonies

*"The Reichsuniversität Straßburg had the mission to support germanisation policies under Nazi occupation in annexed Alsace, to secure support for the Wehrmacht and SS, and to promote German racial superiority in research and teaching. The Commission documented how the medical faculty generated a murderous medicine serving Nazi occupation policy. Victims of lethal experiments conducted in concentration camps of Natzweiler and the Arbeitserziehungslager Schirmeck have been identified. Newly found patient files and archival records show the treatment of concentration camp inmates from Natzweiler and forced labourers from camps in the region at the public hospital of Strasbourg. The Commission recommends the establishment of memorial sites open to the public for the victims of lethal human experiments by members of the Medical Faculty August Hirt, Eugen Haagen and Otto Bickenbach. The victims should be named with biographical information. Locations of the main places on the university campus, where criminal acts took place, notably the Institute of Anatomy and Pathology, Dermatology Clinic, Medical Research Institute, the former Institute of Hygiene, and barracks of forced labourers (Ostarbeiterbaracke) should be identified with memorial signs."*

**Florian Schmaltz and Paul Weindling**, co-presidents of the Historical Commission

*"What happened within the walls of our university is also, and above all, a piece of European history. At a time when we are witnessing the resurgence of the fear of war and in which an authoritarian and imperialist regime is threatening the stability of our continent and the values of our societies, it is more than ever essential that we do not forget the aberrations of barbaric regimes in other times and other places. We will therefore fulfil our duty to inform and to educate, with the humility of those who believe they know and who always learn and ask questions."*

**Michel Deneken**, President of the University of Strasbourg

*"Despite the passage of time, the history of our country, of our Alsace and of our city of Strasbourg still bears the scars of the times of horror and suffering that devastated so many families. In order to avoid being trapped in a state of guilt without redemption, it seemed crucial to "take stock" of this period using a rigorous methodological*

*approach. This historical work is indispensable in bringing out the ghosts of history, so that we can build a collective resilience together. It is the responsibility of a university that we wished to assume, so that our Strasbourg community may continue to build a bright future. Describing, understanding, sharing and taking responsibility with humanity, in order to move forward together...without forgetting! This non-judgmental taking of stock should calmly address this painful relationship with a past that will now be better known and understood"*

**Jean Sibilia**, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Maieutics and Health Sciences at the University of Strasbourg, Vice President of the University Hospital and Territorial Health Policy at the University of Strasbourg

*"The University hospitals of Strasbourg thank the Historical Commission for the quality of its work and join the University of Strasbourg in its responsibility to commemorate a dark period in our history",*

**Michaël Galy**, Director General of the University Hospitals of Strasbourg.

In memory of Alphonse Glanzmann:

*"An email from Dr MUNCH, forwarded by the Town Hall of Lutterbach, where we were born, upended what we had always unquestionably believed to be our mundane family tree. As a young girl, I remembered that, every Christmas, our father, then the Secretary General of the Lutterbach Town Hall, would visit his uncle, who was then at the Rouffach Psychiatric Hospital. I knew the name of that man, Alphonse Glanzmann, the "Fousssy", as he was known in Alsatian, an uncle of my father and brother of my grandfather. When, thanks to Dr Munch's work, my sister and I discovered the remarkable story of this man, who is part of our lineage, with whom we share some of our personal history and DNA, we were stunned! This duty of truth that Dr Munch is fulfilling, restores all his dignity and is rewriting in noble form the lives of those men who, like our great uncle, were the playthings of Nazism and the guinea pigs of dubious pseudo-medicine."*

**Geneviève and Brigitte Glanzmann**, members of the victim's family

# The exhibition at the *Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté*



## ***“Exploitations multiples***

### ***La faculté de médecine de la Reichsuniversität Straßburg et le KL-Natzweiler (1941-1944)”***

Exhibition from 6 May 2022 to 19 March 2023

At the *Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté*, on the site of the former Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp

## **A concentration camp and a university: how were they connected?**

The connections between the *Reichsuniversität Straßburg*'s Medical Faculty and the Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp were already known about, in particular, the experiments carried out by Eugen Haagen, Otto Bickenbach and August Hirt, as well as the murders of 86 Jews in the gas chamber built for that purpose.

The recent work of the Historical Commission has brought to light more numerous, more mundane and less extreme connections.

As presented in the exhibition, all these interactions, interconnections and collaborations contribute to replacing the image of a hermetically sealed concentration camp, secluded and isolated in the Vosges, with that of a camp that was fully integrated in the Nazi system of health care and racial hygiene.

The title of the exhibition *“Exploitations Multiples”* underlines the different forms of exploitation of the Natzweiler inmates – through forced labour and medical experiments – as well as the variety of connections that existed between the two institutions (experimental facilities, biological analyses, healthcare).

As well as the criminal connections between them, the Natzweiler concentration camp and the *Reichsuniversität*'s Medical Faculty maintained a close relationship. At the request of the camp's SS doctor and with the authorisation of its commandant, inmates were treated in Strasbourg's university clinics.

## **A programme of events linked to the exhibition**

In conjunction with the exhibition, the *Centre Européen du Résistant Déporté* will host a programme of events in partner locations in Alsace and throughout France.

This programme can be consulted in the *“Agenda – Les prochains rendez-vous”* section on the [www.struthof.fr](http://www.struthof.fr) website.

*This exhibition was conceived in partnership with the University of Strasbourg and with the support of the Région Grand Est.*

**Press contact:** Cécile Gremillet: [cecile.gremillet@onacvlg.fr](mailto:cecile.gremillet@onacvlg.fr) / 03 88 47 44 60 / 06 89 38 39 32 / [relations-publiques@struthof.fr](mailto:relations-publiques@struthof.fr) / 03 88 47 44 59

## Selected Bibliography

(Chronological order)

University of Strasbourg (dir.): *Témoignages Strasbourgeois. De l'Université aux Camps de Concentration*. Strasbourg 1946.

Patrick Wechsler: *La Faculté de médecine de la Reichsuniversität Straßburg (1941-1945) à l'heure nationale-socialiste*. Medical Faculty, University of Strasbourg 1991.

Jacques Héran (ed.): *Histoire de la médecine à Strasbourg*. Strasbourg: La Nuee Bleue 1997.

Klaus Dörner, Angelika Ebbinghaus, Karsten Linne, Karl Heinz Roth, Paul Weindling (dir.): *Der Nürnberger Ärzteprozeß 1946/1947. Wortprotokolle, Anklage- und Verteidigungsmaterial, Quellen zum Umfeld*. München: K. G. Saur 2000.

Hans-Joachim Lang: *Die Namen der Nummern. Wie es gelang, die 86 Opfer eines NS-Verbrechens zu identifizieren*. Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe 2004.

Paul Weindling: *Nazi Medicine and the Nuremberg Trials: From Medical War Crimes to Informed Consent*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2004.

Elisabeth Crawford, Josianne Olf-Nathan (dir.): *La Science sous influence: l'université de Strasbourg enjeu des conflits franco-allemands 1872-1945*. Strasbourg: La Nuee Bleue 2005.

Christian Baechler et al.: *Les Reichsuniversitäten de Strasbourg et de Poznan et les résistances universitaires 1941-1944*. Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg 2005.

Robert Steegmann: *Struthof. Le KL-Natzweiler et ses kommandos: une nébuleuse concentrationnaire des deux côtés du Rhin (1941-1945)*. Strasbourg: La Nuee Bleue 2005.

Florian Schmaltz: *Kampfstoff-Forschung im Nationalsozialismus. Zur Kooperation von Kaiser-Wilhelm-Instituten, Militär und Industrie*. Göttingen: Wallstein 2005.

Christian Bonah, Anne Danion-Grilliat, Josiane Olf-Nathan et Norbert Schappacher (dir.): *Nazisme, science et médecine.*, Paris: Editions Glyphe 2006.

Florian Schmaltz: Otto Bickenbach et la recherche biomédicale sur le gaz de combat à la Reichsuniversität Straßburg et au camp de concentration du Struthof-Natzweiler. In: Christian Bonah, Anne Danion-Grilliat, Josiane Olf-Nathan et Norbert Schappacher (dir.): *Nazisme, science et médecine.*, Paris: Editions Glyphe 2006, p. 141-165, 303-313.

Jens Thorsten Marx: *Die vertagten medizinischen Fakultäten zu Straßburg in ihren historischen, politischen, universitätsinstitutionellen und wissenschaftlichen Kontexten 1538-1944.* Diss. med. Heidelberg 2008.

Paul Weindling: Virologist and National Socialist. The Extraordinary Career of Eugen Haagen. In: Marion Hulverscheidt, Anja Laukötter (dir.): *Infektion und Institution. Zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte des Robert Koch-Instituts im Nationalsozialismus.* Göttingen: Wallstein 2009, p. 232-249.

Raphaël Toledano: *Les Expériences médicales du professeur Eugen Haagen de la Reichsuniversität Straßburg. Faits, contexte et proces d'un médecin national-socialiste.* Thèse de médecine, Strasbourg, université de Strasbourg, 2010.

Catherine Maurer (dir.): *Une université nazie sur le sol français. Nouvelles recherches sur la Reichsuniversität de Strasbourg (1941-1944).* *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* 43 (2011), no 3. p.

Alexander Pinwinkler: Der Arzt als „Führer der Volksgesundheit“? Wolfgang Lehmann (1905-1980) und das Institut für Rassenbiologie an der Reichsuniversität Straßburg. *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* 43 (2011), n° 3, p. 401-418.

Florian Schmaltz: Die Gaskammer im Konzentrationslager Natzweiler. Experimentalanlage der Chemiewaffenforschung und Instrument des Massenmords für den Aufbau einer anatomischen Skelettsammlung. In: Günter Morsch, Bertram Perz (dir.): *Neue Studien zu nationalsozialistischen Massentötungen durch Giftgas. Historische Bedeutung, technische Entwicklung, revisionistische Leugnung.* Berlin: Metropol 2011, p. 304-315.

Marie-Pierre Aubert: Les universitaires et étudiants strasbourgeois repliés à Clermont-Ferrand entre 1939 et 1945. Un chantier de recherches ouvert. *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* 43 (2011), n° 3, p. 439-454.

Paul Weindling: *Victims and Survivors of Nazi Human Experiments: Science and Suffering in the Holocaust.* London: Bloomsbury 2014.

Paul Weindling: Rassenkundliche Forschung zwischen dem Getto Litzmannstadt und Auschwitz: Hans Fleischhackers Tübinger Habilitation, Juni 1943. In: Jens Kolata, Richard Kühl, Henning Tümmers, Urban Wiesing (dir.): *In Fleischhackers Händen. Wissenschaft, Politik und das 20. Jahrhundert. [Anlässlich der Ausstellung "In Fleischhackers Händen, Tübinger Rassenforscher in Łódź 1940-1942" im Schloss Hohentübingen (24. April bis 28 Juni 2015)].* Tübingen: Museum der Universität 2015, p. 141-164.

Florian Schmaltz: *Kampfstoff-Forschung im Nationalsozialismus. Zur Kooperation von Kaiser-Wilhelm-Instituten, Militär und Industrie.* 2. Aufl. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag 2017.

Christian Bonah, Florian Schmaltz: From Witness to Indictee. Eugen Haagen and His Court Hearings from the Nuremberg Medical Trial (1946/1947) to the Struthof Medical Trials (1952-1954). In: Paul Weindling: *From Clinic to Concentration Camp. Reassessing Nazi Medical and Racial Research, 1933-1945*. London: Routledge 2017, p. 293-315.

Paul Weindling: *From Clinic to Concentration Camp. Reassessing Nazi Medical and Racial Research, 1933-1945*. London: Routledge 2017.

Christian Bonah, Florian Schmaltz: The Reception of the Nuremberg, Code and Its Impact on Medical Ethics in France: 1947-1954. *Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift. The Central European Journal of Medicine* 130 (2018), 3, p. 199-202.

Hans-Joachim Lang: *Des noms derriere des numéros. L'identification des 86 victimes d'un crime nazi. Une enquête*. Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg 2018.

Christophe Woehrlé: *La Cité silencieuse: Strasbourg-Clairvivire (1939-1945)*. Beaumontois-en-Perigord: Editions Secrets de Pays 2019.

Rainer Mohler: *Die Reichsuniversität Straßburg 1940-1944. Eine nationalsozialistische Musteruniversität zwischen Wissenschaft, Volkstumspolitik und Verbrechen*. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer 2020.

Christian Bonah, Florian Schmaltz: The Struthof Medical Trials 1952-1954. Prosecution and Judgement of Nazi Physicians Otto Bickenbach and Eugen Haagen at Military Tribunals in France. In: Ulf Schmidt, Andreas Frewer, Dominique Sprumont (dir.): *Human Research and the Declaration of Helsinki*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2020, p. 69-100.