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EXPERIENCES OF POLISH FORCED LABORERS FROM ŁÓDŹ EMPLOYED FOR TELEFUNKEN IN ULM IN YEARS 1944–1945 WITH CONSIDERATION OF MEDICAL CARE

Abstract
In years 1944–1945, more than 1.400 girls and young women from the Polish city of Łódź were displaced to Ulm in Germany and forced to work there. During their stay, the girls had to endure severe living conditions, and were exposed to diseases. Through deprivation and exploitation, forced laborers for Telefunken were condemned to daily suffering. Such a system of exploitation was symptomatic for the late phase of the war, during which efforts towards increasing war production came at the cost of sacrificing the health of foreign workers. The goal of this paper is a historical reappraisal of their experiences, with special attention paid to the medical care that they received. We present the extent of the medical treatment provided for the laborers, the aim of which was only the restoration of their further ability to work.

Keywords:
Forced labor, medical care, Second World War, Telefunken

INTRODUCTION

Forced labor in the Third Reich was omnipresent. From its financial benefits for the state and war economy, through contributions to local businesses, to assistance in private households – forced laborers were a part of everyday life in Germany during the time of World War II. The racist core of National Socialism was especially evident in broad social participation in this phenomenon. No other National Socialistic crime during the war involved so many people – as victims, perpetrators or just witnesses.[1] Nevertheless, the fate of the forced laborers was

[1] Jens-Christian Wagner, "Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus. Forschung und Ausstellung," *Mitteilungen der Dokumentationszentrum Oberer Kuhberg* 53 (2010), 4–5.

long left out of historical research in Germany, especially in West Germany. This situation changed in the 1970s, mostly through civic engagement and initiatives of local historians. It was soon discovered that forced labor from all parts of Europe was part of everyday life during the war and that almost all companies, many of which still exist today, had benefited from the exploitation of forced laborers. Against this background, the number of works in this area has increased significantly over the past 30 years – from research that provides a general picture of forced labor in the Third Reich to regional studies.[2]

In Poland, in contrast, the use of Polish workers in Germany during World War II has sparked great interest among representatives of various scientific disciplines already in the first post-war years. Scientific monographs took account of various aspects of forced labor, for example the quantitative extent of forced labor or various aspects of the social situation and work conditions of Polish laborers employed in Germany.[3] Other research questions focused on the normative documents – decrees, laws, orders – of the German authorities that determined the legal status of Polish forced laborers.[4] Some Polish historians researched extensively on a number of individual questions – such as the aspects of the compulsory nature of work or the German extermination policy, and the methods of recruiting Polish workers.[5]

In comparison, the medical aspects of the deployment for work in the Third Reich have been taken up since the mid-1980s in the course of intensified examination of medicine during the period of National Socialism.[6] The focus of

[2] Andreas Heulser, Mark Spoerer and Helmuth Trischler (eds), *Rüstung, Kriegswirtschaft und Zwangsarbeit im "Dritten Reich"* (München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2010); Dittmar Dahlmann, Albert S. Kotowski, Norbert Schloßmacher and Joachim Scholtyseck (eds), *Zwangsarbeiterforschung in Deutschland* (Essen: Klartext, 2010); Gabriele Lofti, *KZ der Gestapo. Arbietserziehungslager im Dritten Reich* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2000); Annette Schäfer, *Zwangsarbeiter und NS-Rassenpolitik. Russische und polnische Arbeitskräfte in Württemberg 1939–1945* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000).

[3] Władysław Rusiński, *Położenie robotników polskich w czasie wojny 1939–1945 na terenie Rzeszy i „obszarów wcielonych"* (Poznań: Instytut Zachodni, 1950); Czesław Łuczak, *Polscy robotnicy przymusowi w Trzeciej Rzeszy podczas II wojny światowej* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1974).

[4] See for example: Franciszek Połomski, *Aspekty rasowe w postępowaniu z robotnikami przymusowymi i jeńcami wojennymi III Rzeszy 1939–1945* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1976).

[5] Czesław Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1979).

[6] Volker Zimmermann (ed.), *Leiden verwehrt Vergessen. Zwangsarbeiter in Göttingen und ihre medizinische Versorgung in den Universitätskliniken* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2007); Gracjan Bojar-Fijałkowski, "Z zagadnień eksterminacji robotników przymusowych w Trzeciej Rzeszy," *Przegląd Lekarski* 1 (1973); Anette Schäfer, "Zur Funktion von Durchgangslagern und Krankensammellagern beim Zwangsarbeitereinsatz im Zweiten Weltkrieg am Beispiel Württembergs," in *Medizin und Verbrechen*, ed. Christoph Kopcke (Ulm: Klemm & Oelschlager, 2001), 143–162.

these works lies in various aspects of medical care for pregnant women and dealing with pregnancies and children of forced laborers[7] or the living and working conditions of forced laborers.[8] Another research point is the use of forced labor in hospitals and in the German healthcare system during the war.[9]

Despite a relatively large number of publications on Polish workers in the Third Reich during World War II, there are still a number of research gaps in the scientific literature devoted to this problem. One of the reasons for this is that authors can only process part of the very extensive source material and, in many cases, these studies do not encompass transnational dimensions. They also leave out important aspects of everyday life of the forced laborers, such as the question of medical treatment and the ethical responsibility of medical personnel. Therefore, the goal of this paper is the historical review of the fate and experiences of the forced laborers from Łódź for the company Telefunken, with attention to medical care that was provided for them during their work in Ulm. So far, these occurrences have not been presented in English – with our paper we aim to reach wide international and Polish audiences with information about forced laborers in Ulm.

The paper consists of 7 sections. Following the preliminary remarks (section 1), we present a description of the method used in investigation (section 2). The historical context of forced labor in the Third Reich in general, and in the city of Ulm in particular is presented in section 3. In the ensuing parts, we concentrate on the portrayal of Łódź during World War II and the company Telefunken in this city (section 4). In the subsequent section, we focus on the living and working conditions of forced laborers for Telefunken in Ulm. Medical care for workers constitutes the content of section 6. Closing remarks conclude this paper.

METHOD

In order to reconstruct the fate and experiences of forced laborers for Telefunken in Ulm, we have searched and analyzed the official sources from the State Archive in Łódź (Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi). The archive contains a collection of documentary materials concerning forced laborers coerced for deployment to work in Germany during the Second World War. Primarily searched and

[7] Gisela Schwarze, *Kinder, die nicht zählten. Ostarbeiterinnen und ihre Kinder im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Essen: Klartext, 1997); Gunther Link, "Schwangerschaftsabbrüche bei Zwangsarbeiterinnen im Dritten Reich," *Deutsche Medizinische Wochenschrift* 126 (2001).

[8] Andreas Heusler, *Ausländereinsatz. Zwangsarbeit für die Münchener Kriegswirtschaft 1939–1945* (München: Hugendubel, 1996).

[9] Andreas Frewer and Günther Siedbürger (eds), *Medizin und Zwangsarbeit im Nationalsozialismus: Einsatz und Behandlung von Ausländern im Gesundheitswesen* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2004); Andreas Frewer et al., "Zwangsarbeit und Medizin im Dritten Reich," *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* 98 (2001).

analyzed were documents of the Union of Forced Workers for the Telefunken Company in Łódź and the Wilhelmsburg-Ulm Labor Camp on the Danube (Związek Przymusowych Robotników Firmy Telefunken w Łodzi i Obozu Pracy Wilhelmsburg Ulm nad Dunajem). These documents enclose lists of forced laborers with the dates of their deployment, letters of persons forced to work for Telefunken and ego-documents with description of the life and working conditions during the period of stay in Ulm. Additionally, with the help of the Foundation Polish-German Reconciliation (Fundacja Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie) approached were 239 former forced laborers, whose names are in the database of the Foundation. These persons were contacted via letters with a request for an interview or for provision of their recollections in writing. During four research visits in Łódź, conducted were interviews with still living contemporary witnesses or members of their families. The interviews were rendered anonymous before transcribing them. Critical analysis of the written sources made the necessary contextualization of the experiences described in the interviews possible. Simultaneously, testimonies from interviews constituted a corrective to the written sources. Synthesis of the two qualitative methods allowed for reconstruction of events prior and during the compulsory deployment for work to Ulm. In addition, already published literature on the topic was searched and extensively evaluated.

FORCED LABOR FOR THE GERMAN THIRD REICH WITH SPECIAL CONSIDERATION OF THE CITY OF ULM

During the Second World War, more than 13 million people were forced to work in the National Socialist regime of the Third Reich, including around 8.4 million foreign civil workers and around 4.6 million prisoners of war.[10] The employment of the largest possible number of foreigners from the occupied territories in the economy was the focus of employment policy in National Socialist Germany throughout the war. Germany could only continue to wage the war by seizing the resources of the conquered or dependent countries in Europe – this was especially the case for the workforce. The civil workers and prisoners of war came from a total of 26 countries, including around 1.7 million forced laborers from Poland.[11] The employment of foreign workers extended to the entire economy – from private households and small farms to large arms factories. The average age of the forced laborers was between 20 and 24 but

[10] Ulrich Seemüller, "Zwangsarbeiter in der Region Ulm," *Mitteilungen der Dokumentationszentrum Oberer Kuhberg* 60 (2014).

[11] Ulrich Herbert, "Einleitung des Herausgebers," in *Europa und der "Reichseinsatz." Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und KZ-Häftlinge in Deutschland 1938–1945*, ed. Ulrich Herbert (Essen: Klartext, 1991).

numerous children under 16 were also employed. A third of all foreign civilian workers were women; in the case of forced laborers from Poland it was almost 50% of the workforce, and most of them under 20 years of age.

In order to counter the "security" and "biological" dangers that hundreds of thousands of workers classified as "racially inferior" allegedly provided, they were subjected to a comprehensive system of surveillance, repression, and discrimination. This system was laid down in the so-called "Polish Decrees" of March 8, 1940.[12] Under this law, the labeling of any Polish civil worker became mandatory. Freedom of movement was to be restricted and workers were to be housed in closed barracks. In the case of layoffs, the incitement of workers, the unauthorized leaving of the workplace and sabotage, Polish workers were to be delivered to the Gestapo, which arranged for them to be sent to a concentration camp. In some cases, the death penalty was also ordered.

The working and living conditions of the forced laborers differed greatly according to the requirements of the war, but always followed the logic of Nazi racial hierarchy. People from the Soviet Union and Poland suffered under horrendous conditions. The specific conditions ranged from the occasionally acceptable accommodation and work, particularly in farmhouses and private households, to a total exposure to arbitrariness, discrimination, and violence. Abuse occurred again and again, especially in the case of larger companies, particularly if the production target was not met or the work was not carried out precisely enough.[13] Many of the people, often weakened by additional mistreatment, were unhealthy and malnourished to such an extent that they eventually became unable to work.

One of the places, in which forced laborers were especially visible, was the city of Ulm. Alone in Ulm and the neighboring region, more than 16,000 people from occupied countries were forced to provide work for the war economy during the war. The first forced laborers arrived shortly after the invasion of Poland in September 1939. Initially they were employed in the agricultural sector. From early 1940, Polish forced laborers were systematically engaged in local industries. In order to provide quarters for the workforce from occupied territories, the city administration provided special areas for the construction of work-camps. These were located in various places in the city and its environs, among others at the "Roter Berg" in the western part of the city, in the area of Friedrichsau and in the fortress of Wilhelmsburg.[14] Due to the lack of materials and personnel, the camps were built rapidly, with only provisory facilities. They were completely unsuitable as living quarters for a high number of people or for

[12] Annette Schäfer, "Der Einsatz polnischer und russischer Zwangsarbeiter in Ulm 1939–1945," *Zeitschrift für Württembergische Landesgeschichte* 59 (2000).
[13] Ulrich Seemüller, "Zwangsarbeiter in der Region Ulm."
[14] Ulrich Seemüller, "Industrie, Gewerbe und Handel in Zeichen der Kriegswirtschaft," in *Ulm im Zweiten Weltkrieg,* ed. Hans Eugen Specker (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1995).

a long duration of time. In addition, because of ideological reasons, the camps were meant to isolate laborers from the native population, especially keeping them from intimate contact with Ulm citizens. Informal relations between these two groups was to be prevented and the "honor of German women" as well as the "purity of German blood" was to be protected. Therefore, the accommodations of the forced laborers were enclosed by a perimeter fence and constantly guarded. Through this, they resembled concentration camps and thus, in the recollections of forced workers they are also often referred to as "concentration camp Roter Berg" or "concentration camp Friedrichsau."[15] Throughout the war, forced laborers in Ulm were used for work in practically all branches of industry; from agriculture, through handcraft, services, and trade. In some cases, they were also employed in private households, hospitals, or local administration. Yet, the largest employers were industrial manufacturers, such as Magirus, Wieland, Eberhardt and Kässbohrer.[16] An especially large number of forced laborers were employed by Telefunken, which established its factories in Ulm in the late phase of the war by transferring machines and personnel from Łódź in occupied Poland.

FORCED LABOR FOR TELEFUNKEN IN ŁÓDŹ

Łódź during the Second World War

At the beginning of the Second World War, Łódź with its 668.000 inhabitants was the second biggest city in Poland.[17] Due to the booming textile industry, which had dominated in the city since the 19th century, Łódź was one of the most important industry centers in pre-war Poland. This industrial character also contributed to ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious diversity of Łódź. Early war statistics provide the following numbers: almost 400.000 ethnic Polish people lived together with more than 230.000 Polish Jews, and more than 60.000 German Poles in relative cohabitation and equality of cultures and languages.[18]

Polish capitulation in September 1939 brought for people in Łódź significant changes. On 9 November 1939, the city was annexed into the new Greater German Reich. Although some voices, among them Joseph Goebbels, who

[15] Ulrich Seemüller, "Zwangsarbeiter in der Region Ulm."
[16] Ulrich Seemüller, "Industrie, Gewerbe und Handel."
[17] Ewa Czerwiakowski and Gisela Wenzel, "Das Schiksal der polnischen Sklaven- und Zwangsarbeiter aus Łódź," in *Hitlers Sklaven. Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich,* ed. Alexander von Plato, Almuth Leh, Christoph Thonfeld (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2008), 80.
[18] Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg and Marlene Klatt (eds), *Lodz im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Deutsch Selbstzeugnisse über Alltag, Lebenswelten und NS-Germanisierungspolitik in einer multiethnischen Stadt* (Osnabrück: fibre Verlag, 2015), 15.

spoke about Łódź as a "hideous place", argued against the incorporation; the industrial potential of the city contributed to this decision. With the annexation, the city lost its status and became a target of intensive Germanisation and colonization. Radical racist ethnic and cultural politics of the Third Reich became visible at every place with the aim of creating a "model" German city dominated by a German population. As the future Gauleiter (district chief) Arthur Greiser (1897–1946) put it: "The principle that in this district only one nation should live, is an unwritten law. This nation are Germans and where Germans live, there should be no place for other nations."[19] The city's name was changed to Litzmannstadt, after a German general and NSDAP member Karl Litzmann (1850–1936). From December 1939, the Polish language was banned from city offices; in the same month Polish schools were permanently closed, Polish journals, theaters and concerts became illegal. All streets received German names, among them the famous Piotrkowska Street, which was renamed to Adolf-Hitler-Straße.[20] During the winter 1939/1940, military and administrative terror in the city became omnipresent – several thousand Poles and Jews were arrested, many of them executed. These actions peaked in the creation of the Jewish ghetto, which became a permanent living place for a population of almost 200.000 in an area of four-square kilometers. Businesses and buildings of Polish and Jewish owners were expropriated with the aim of providing them to companies under German management.[21] The city was meant to become an industrial base for the war economy. One of the first administrative decisions of the German occupation administration was the introduction of labor conscription for all Polish nationals, initially from ages 16 to 60, then from age 14 and lastly from age 10. Several important German companies – among these Krupp, BMW, Askania, and Telefunken – took advantage of this opportunity and located their production plants in Łódź.[22]

Forced labor for Telefunken in Łódź

The company Telefunken had been established in 1903 for the purpose of developing wireless telegraphy.[23] The rearmament of the German Army and preparation for war resulted in a transition of the company profile. From 1936,

[19] Krystyna Radziszewska and Jörg Riecke (eds), *Die Germanisierung von Łódź im Spiegel der nationalsozialistischen Presse 1939–1943* (Łódź: Literatura, 2004), 68.
[20] Adam Sitarek and Michał Trębacz, "Drei Städte. Besatzungsalltag in Lodz," in *Gewalt und Alltag im besetzten Polen 1939–1945*, ed. Jürgen Böhlen, Stephan Lehnstaed (Osnabrück: fibre Verlag, 2012).
[21] Krystyna Radziszewska (ed.), *Tonąca Łódź/Das sinkende Boot. Łódź w latach 1939–1945* (Łódź: Literatura, 2002).
[22] Ewa Czerwiakowski and Gisela Wenzel, "Das Schiksal der polnischen Sklaven- und Zwangsarbeiter aus Łódź," 82.
[23] Gerhard Bogner, "Die Röhre in Ulm," *Funkgeschichte* 107 (1996).

Telefunken specialized in production for military purposes. In 1941 Telefunken relocated part of its production lines to Łódź. The city was chosen for several reasons: the distance from areas exposed to aerial bombardment and short lines of product delivery to military units at the eastern front. However, one of the most important reasons was the availability of an appropriate workforce.[24] In Łódź, the company intended to produce vacuum tubes used in military communication. For this kind of production, precision and sleight of hand were of great importance; therefore, mostly young workers, especially girls were preferred. Already in 1942, Telefunken employed more than 2.000 workers in its two production plants in Łódź. Whereas the management and engineer positions in the plants were occupied by Germans, the foremen and office positions were staffed by ethnic Germans ("Volksdeutsche") from Łódź. However, the majority of the production workers were girls of ages 12 to 16. They were recruited for work partly under coercion, but partly, due to the labor conscription, to "volunteer" to work for Telefunken. This allowed them to remain at home and be exempted from forced relocation for work in Germany.

CONDITIONS OF LIVING AND WORK FOR TELEFUNKEN IN ULM

Relocation of production to Ulm

With the approaching eastern front, it was decided that this war-effort essential production should be continued in Germany. In May 1944, within the framework of the Secret Action "Chestnut" ("Geheime Reichsache Kastanie"), there began preparations for moving both plants with their equipment and workers to Germany. Among other German cities, Ulm was chosen as the new site for production – being an industrial center in south-western Germany.[25] Polish girls from Łódź were relocated to Germany without any previous announcement; from one day to another they found themselves on the way to a foreign country. "I went to work as usual that day, but never returned home. We were stopped and informed that we were meant to be transported to Germany."[26] Some other workers knew in advance that they would be relocated to Germany but were not given any opportunity to stay at home. As one of them recollects: "Of course, we were told that if anyone did not come to the meeting on the day of departure, the immediate family would be arrested and all would

[24] Silvester Lechner (ed.), *Schönes, schreckliches Ulm. 130 Berichte ehemaliger polnischer Zwangsarbeiterinnen und Zwangsarbeiter, die in den Jahren 1940 bis 1945 in die Region Ulm/Neu Ulm verschlept worden waren* (Ulm: Dokumentationszentrum Oberer Kuhberg, 1997), 52.
[25] Annette Schäfer, *Zwangsarbeiter und NS-Rassenpolitik. Russische und polnische Arbeitskräfte in Württemberg 1939–1945* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000).
[26] Silvester Lechner (ed.), *Schönes, schreckliches Ulm,* 124.

be taken to Auschwitz. As a 14-year-old girl, I was not able to take such a risk that my sister or my parents would die because I am afraid to go to Germany."[27]

In Ulm, Telefunken Łódź was newly established under the code name "Mechanische Werkstätten G.m.b.H Ulm/Donau". The importance of the relocation action is illustrated by the fact that the transport of the girls was fast and relatively comfortable. Trains provided for the transportation were not overloaded with workers; the girls travelled in passenger cars, not in transport carriages. "We went to Ulm by passenger train. Women and men together. The compartments were large and comfortable."[28] In the war-ravaged Germany of 1944 this was rather an exception than a rule.

The first transports of the workers from Łódź arrived in late summer 1944. It was planned that the new Telefunken plant will be located in the fortress Wilhelmsburg, which was supposed to provide protection from aerial attacks. Because at the moment of arrival of first transports with girls from Łódź the industrial park of the factory had not yet been completed, the girls were delegated for work for the local farmers. One of the female workers recalls the moments, when the farmers chose "suitable" personnel: "Because the factory was not finished yet, we had to work for the local farmers. (…) At one day, all Polish girls were forced to the city square. Interested farmers taxed them very carefully. Some even assessed their teeth! Every [farmer] tried to choose the strongest women. Nobody asked about agreement. They took us like a livestock to their farms."[29] With the completion of production facilities in November 1944, the girls re-commenced work for Telefunken.

Living and work conditions

The living conditions in Ulm were characterized by unsuitable accommodation in the camps, scarcity of food, harassment, and punishment. From the point of view of the company management, the full productivity of the plant was in the foreground. "Human material," as the management reports and documents repeatedly state, could be "used for consumption".[30] As the heads of Telefunken were under the greatest production pressure, they ensured only a minimum of living conditions that guaranteed survival.

Telefunken-laborers in Ulm were accommodated in two main locations.[31] First was the fortress of Wilhelmsburg, directly at the production site. In the southern part of the fortress were sleeping quarters for 600 to 800 workers as well administration offices, kitchen, canteen, and storage facilities. Production

[27] Interview with a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm (I-004).
[28] Interview with a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm (I-002).
[29] Memoir of a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm. Unpublished source.
[30] Jens Schley, "Wie kann man glücklich sein, wenn man das Leiden der Anderen sieht?" *Mitteilungen der Dokumentationszentrum Oberer Kuhberg* 53 (2010).
[31] Silvester Lechner (ed.), *Schönes, schreckliches Ulm*, 53.

areas were underground in the basement. The northern part of the fortress still housed barracks for the German army, which posed an additional risk for the forced laborers of becoming an object of unintentional bombardment. Another 600 girls from Łódź were located in the "Kepler-Mittelschule", a school building located in the northern part of the city.

Both quarters were unsuitable for accommodation of a larger number of persons. From the beginning of the war, the city administration in Ulm grappled with the problem of providing living places for the increasing number of forced laborers. The sudden transfer of more than a thousand additional persons in the final phase of the war only aggravated these difficulties. Therefore, both the Wilhelmsburg and the Kepler-School had only a provisional character and lacked basic sanitary facilities. They were dark, cold, and leaky. Lack of water was especially severe. This situation is vivid in the recollection of former forced laborers: "Rooms were cold. There was no electricity. It was dark, even during the day, because the windows had no glass, just paper. There was no water. Toilets were closed. The lack of water was very difficult. For the first time we understood what real thirst means. (…) We couldn't even wash our hands. The administration didn't care that there were no toilets. We had to go to the attic."[32]

Due to the lack of living spaces, the girls had to live in cramped small rooms. For sleeping, only military bunk beds were provided. The rooms were scarcely equipped – a few double beds, a table, several stools, and closets. There were no stoves or other heating. Beds were equipped with sacks filled with sawdust. To cover themselves during sleep, each girl received two blankets. The living conditions considerably deteriorated in the winter. On 17 December 1944, Ulm was the target of the severest aerial attack during the war. A number of city buildings were destroyed, among others the Kepler-School. Although no girls from Łódź lost their lives in the resulting fire, they had to be relocated to the Wilhelmsburg. It meant that the quarters had to be even more densely populated and girls had to share beds: "The beds were the same as the beds in the concentration camps. Bunk beds. We had to sleep in a bed in pairs. Beddings and blankets were always dirty."[33] It also led to the further deterioration of sanitation in the camp: "The worst were hygiene conditions. We couldn't wash properly. It just wasn't possible in a room where there were a lot of people and only a small bowl of water. And so many women."[34]

In order to discipline the girls and motivate them for work, a system of daily terror was introduced. The camp's superintendent, Captain Thalhofer, was particularly brutal in his treatment. He punished the girls indiscriminately, often abused them, and beat them or let his subordinates hit the victims.[35] Other

[32] Memoir of a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm. Unpublished material.
[33] Interview with a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm (I-002).
[34] Interview with a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm (I-002).
[35] Silvester Lechner (ed.), *Schönes, schreckliches Ulm,* 55.

guards followed this example. Especially contacts between male and female workers provided opportunities for physical abuse: "Three girls visited us in our [male] barracks. They did not even sit down, when suddenly German female supervisor came in and started shouting. She was accompanied by two armed guards. She had a pistol in her hand. She started to curse in German. She used the worse words to describe the girls. (…) And with the hand with the pistol, she started to beat the girls in the head and face. She was spiting on them, she pulled their hair, she was kicking the girls. After few minutes, she sent the girls with guards back to their barracks. And she told us that next time, we will be also beaten by the guards."[36]

Severe living conditions were aggravated by a lack of appropriate food. The laborers were provided only minimal rations for survival and effective work. The daily diet consisted of products with insufficient nutritional value for physical work and retaining health. Memories of the surviving girls still retain the always accompanying hunger: "And this disgusting food. (…) In the morning 2 slices of bread, at noon cabbage soup. Cabbage turnip and potatoes – we mostly ate that. (...) In the evening we got black cereal coffee and boiled potatoes with some margarine. That's all." [37] Recollections of other forced laborers support this testimony: "The diet: beets, jam from red beets, soup from snails, porridge with worms. So just hunger and no hope of improvement."[38] The workers received no milk or other dairy products, also no fresh fruits or vegetables. Meat was a seldom addition to the meals. Mostly, girls supplemented their diet with products that they stole from the storages and surrounding fields or received from the guards or Ulm citizens. These were prepared in secret and shared among co-workers living in the same room.

MEDICAL CARE FOR FORCED LABORERS OF TELEFUNKEN IN ULM

First contact with medical personnel in Ulm was provided shortly after the relocation of the factory to Ulm. Transported girls had to undergo a humiliating procedure of a medical examination. The girls had to gather in a room, in which a commission consisting of doctors and dentists was assembled. Naked and scared, the girls were only superficially checked for symptoms of infectious diseases. The dentists inspected their teeth. "When we arrived, we had to undress in a large room. There were also three doctors. The investigations were rather superficial. I don't know why I remember it, but the guards were from

[36] Written testimony of a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm. State Archive in Łódź (39/1975/0/-/15/122).
[37] Interview with a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm (I-005).
[38] Silvester Lechner (ed.), *Schönes, schreckliches Ulm*, 111.

Ukraine. They definitely made some comments when we were completely naked there. Fortunately, I didn't understand too much."[39]

The devastating working conditions, the restricted living space, the hunger, the daily abuse, and the poor hygiene led to the outbreak of several diseases and overwhelming health problems among the immunocompromised laborers. Most workers were affected by typhus, tuberculosis, or scabies. In the records of the city of Ulm from the end of 1944 it can be found that "(…) during a transport of 1,400 workers from the East for Telefunken carried out a few weeks ago, the usual precautionary measures were apparently not taken, so that almost half of these workers got typhus."[40] However, they only received rudimentary medical care and, in rare cases, medication. One former worker recollects how the living conditions affected her health: "In these bad conditions, the wounds healed very poorly. Up to this time, my wounds had healed quickly, but [in Ulm] it took weeks. When I got herpes, it took a long time for it to remedy."[41]

There is contradictory information about the provision of medical care on the site of production and living in the Wilhelmsburg and the Kepler-School. Some former laborers do not recollect having any contact with medical personnel during their stay in Ulm; others remember that there were nurses, responsible for first aid, and a doctor, who in some cases examined them or gave medication. These contradictory testimonies are probably based on the fact that medical service was not consistent but available only from time to time: "Two nurses were responsible for sanitary help. The doctor showed up every two weeks or so and only if there was suspected contagious illness in the camp."[42] The municipal medical officer, Dr. Eduard Schefold (1880–1958), who was responsible for the provision of medical care in the camp, lacked empathy for the fate of the girls and did not try to improve the conditions in which they lived.[43] Among his greatest concerns were unwelcomed pregnancies among the girls. He denied Polish girls the right to reproduction and complained that, due to lack of space, abortions among Polish workers could not be conducted, which led to a situation women unrestrainedly having babies.[44] If it was no longer possible to prevent childbirth, pregnant women were sent to so-called "maternity hospitals." In Ulm, such an institution was also used as an abortion facility. In the "maternity hospital," Polish toddlers were deliberately exposed to such catastrophic living conditions that the majority of them died within the first few months of their lives.[45]

[39] Interview with a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm (I-004).
[40] Protocol regarding typhus disease among foreign laborers. Municipal Archive Ulm, B 060/70/1.
[41] Interview with a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm (I-002).
[42] Silvester Lechner (ed.), *Schönes, schreckliches Ulm*, 160.
[43] Walter Wuttke, "Unter Antastung von Ehre und Ansehen: Amtsarzt Dr. Eduard Schefold," in *Täter, Helfer, Trittbrettfahrer. Band 2: NS-Belastete aus der Region Ulm/Neu Ulm,* ed. Wolfgang Proske (München and Ulm: Klemm + Oelschläger, 2013).
[44] Ulrich Seemüller, "Industrie, Gewerbe und Handel."
[45] Annette Schäfer, *Der Einsatz polnischer und russischer Zwangsarbeiter*, 296.

Sick girls were rarely admitted to hospitals. In most cases, they had to stay in the barracks for the duration of their illness. There were no isolated barracks for the sick, and even the simplest medication or wound dressing was difficult to find. This led in some cases to fatal consequences: "My roommate, who had a cold, later developed tuberculosis. She was with us from December to April (...) but no doctor was there. When the Americans arrived, we took her to the hospital. Afterwards we wanted to visit her, but she has already died."[46]

CONCLUSIONS

The research on medical care for forced laborers during World War II still leaves open numerous questions. It needs to be put in the context of National Socialistic ideology towards other races, enforced political conformity of the medical personnel, and the increasing exploitation of the workforce, especially in the late phase of the war. Further examinations are necessary, especially on the local level, that investigate the conditions under which forced laborers lived and worked. The research also needs to take into consideration the role of large manufacturing companies in this period.

The investigation of the fate of Polish female forced laborers from Łódź working for Telefunken in Ulm shows a system that aimed at the total exploitation of the workers towards ever increasing efficiency and lowering costs of production. Such exploitation was symptomatic for the last years of the war, during which the life and health of the foreign workforce was systematically ignored. Atrocious living and working conditions contributed to deteriorating health, outbreak of epidemics, and deaths. The medical care provided for them was rudimentary and concerned only with immediate health problems. It was meant to serve the restoration of health only to the level that enabled further work. Through provisory accommodation, poor hygienic conditions, insufficient food supply, and severe working conditions forced laborers were condemned to an inhuman situation, which, in many cases, affected their further health and life.

[46] Interview with a former forced laborer for Telefunken in Ulm (I-003).

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ERFAHRUNGEN POLNISCHER ZWANGSARBEITER*INNEN AUS ŁÓDŹ BEI TELEFUNKEN IN ULM 1944–1945 UNTER BERÜCKSICHTIGUNG DER MEDIZINISCHEN VERSORGUNG

In den Jahren 1944–1945 wurden mehr als 1.400 Mädchen und junge Frauen aus der polnischen Stadt Łódź nach Ulm in Deutschland gebracht und zur Arbeit gezwungen. Während ihres Aufenthalts in Ulm waren diese Mädchen schweren Lebensbedingungen ausgesetzt. Dies führte auch zu Krankheiten. Tägliche Entbehrung und Ausbeutung kennzeichneten den Leidensweg dieser Zwangsarbeiterinnen. Ein solches Ausbeutungssystem ist symptomatisch für die späte Kriegsphase, in der die Bemühungen zur Steigerung der Rüstungsproduktion Vorrang vor der Gesundheit ausländischer Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter hatten. Wir verfolgen in diesem Aufsatz das Ziel, die Erfahrungen der Betroffenen historisch aufzuarbeiten, wobei der medizinischen Versorgung besondere Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt wird. Wir stellen das Ausmaß der medizinischen Behandlung der Arbeiterinnen vor, deren Ziel primär die Wiederherstellung ihrer weiteren Arbeitsfähigkeit war.

Schlüsselwörter:
Zwangsarbeit, medizinische Versorgung, Zweiter Weltkrieg, Telefunken