

# Auschwitz: The Role of IG Farben-Bayer

International Holocaust Remembrance Day. In Commemoration of the Liberation of Auschwitz, January 27, 2020

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## GR Editor's Note

*January 27, 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by Soviet troops. Rarely mentioned by the media, the I. G Auschwitz concentration camp was a private undertaking owned by I. G. Farben – Bayer.*

*It is of particular relevance in relation to the merger between Monsanto and Bayer. Both companies are complicit in crimes against humanity,*

*Monsanto's agent orange used by the US military in Vietnam, IG-Farben Bayer's historical links to Nazi war crimes.*

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First published 10 years ago

*Today marks the 60th anniversary of the Soviet liberation of the Nazi death camp, Auschwitz.*

*Elderly Holocaust survivors, former soldiers and world leaders have gathered in Poland to mark the 60th anniversary: "I would like to say to all the people on the Earth: This should never be repeated, ever," said Maj. Anatoly Shapiro, 92, who led the first Soviet troops to enter Auschwitz.*

*Lest we forget an important corporate participant in the Holocaust was IG Farben- Bayer.*

IG Farben was the most powerful German corporate cartel in the first half of the 20th century and the single largest profiteer from the Second World War. IG (Interessengemeinschaft) stands for "Association of Common Interests": IG Farben included BASF, Bayer, Hoechst, and other German chemical and pharmaceutical companies.

As documents show, IG Farben was intimately involved with the human experimental atrocities committed by Mengele at Auschwitz.

A German watchdog organization, the GBG Network, maintains copious documents and

tracks Bayer Pharmaceutical activities.

Below is an excerpt from a BBC documentary about an Auschwitz survivor who for years tried to get compensation from the pharmaceutical giant that carried out medical experiments on her.

Now living in Dundee, Scotland, she tells her story in a BBC documentary.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02qh7v5> (click here)

Listen now

### Lost Children of the Holocaust

Following the end of the World War Two, the BBC began a series of special radio appeals on behalf of a group of children who had survived the Holocaust but were now stranded as orphans in post-war Europe. A recording of one of these moving broadcasts still exists in the BBC archives. Seventy years on, Alex Last set out to find out what had happened to the 12 children named in this recording. They had been in many camps, including Auschwitz, Muhldorf, Kaufering, Theresienstadt, Belsen, and Dachau, and the modern-day search took him to Germany, Israel and the United States.

Five of the Holocaust survivors are still alive today, and four of them were well enough to speak to Alex, who was able to piece together their stories of courage and humanity.

(Photo: A group of unidentified children photographed just after liberation by the Soviet Red Army from Oswiecim or Auschwitz Nazi concentration camp, 27 January, 1945. Credit: AP/CAF pap)

Another excerpt is from the website of the Dr. Rath Health Foundation. Dr. Matthias Rath heads a research development institute in nutritional and Cellular Medicine conducting basic research and clinical studies to scientifically document the health benefits of micronutrients in fighting a multitude of diseases. Dr. Rath was born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1955.

In the Auschwitz files, correspondence between the camp commander and Bayer Leverkusen was discovered. It dealt with the sale of 150 female prisoners for experimental purposes:

“With a view to the planned experiments with a new sleep-inducing drug we would appreciate it if you could place a number of prisoners at our disposal (...)” -

“We confirm your response, but consider the price of 200 RM per woman to be too high. We propose to pay no more than 170 RM per woman. If this is acceptable to you, the women will be placed in our possession. We need some 150 women (...)” -

“We confirm your approval of the agreement. Please prepare for us 150 women in the best health possible (...)” -

“Received the order for 150 women. Despite their macerated condition they were

considered satisfactory. We will keep you informed of the developments regarding the experiments (...)” – “The experiments were performed. All test persons died. We will contact you shortly about a new shipment (...)”

See: [http://www4.dr-rath-foundation.org/PHARMACEUTICAL\\_BUSINESS/history\\_of\\_the\\_pharmaceutical\\_industry.htm](http://www4.dr-rath-foundation.org/PHARMACEUTICAL_BUSINESS/history_of_the_pharmaceutical_industry.htm)

Medical Experiments in Auschwitz Conducted by I.G. Farben (from the book “I.G. Farben – from Anilin to forced labor” by Jörg Hunger and Paul Sander)

#### About Bayer’s Nazi-past

IG Farben was the only German company in the Third Reich that ran its own concentration camp.

At least 30.000 slave workers died in this camp; a lot more were deported to the gas chambers. It was no coincidence that IG Farben built their giant new plant in Auschwitz, since the workforce they used (altogether about 300.000 people) was practically for free. The Zyklon B gas, which killed millions of Jews, Rom and other people was produced by IG Farben’s subsidiary company Degesch.

**There was no retirement plan for the prisoners of IG Auschwitz. Those who were too weak or too sick to work were selected at the main gate of the IG Auschwitz factory and sent to the gas chambers. Even the chemical gas Zyklon-B used for the annihilation of millions of people was derived from the drawing boards and factories of IG Farben.**



In Germany a growing number of people do not understand that IG Farben’s successors Bayer, BASF and Hoechst still refuse to apologize for their misdeeds.

It is hard to accept that after the war the companies were allowed to keep IG Farben’s entire property, whereas the surviving slave workers received nothing. Until today Bayer, BASF and Hoechst did not pay any wages to their former workers.

In 1995 the coalition “Never again!” was created by the German Auschwitz Committee, Critical Shareholders and several organizations of former slave workers. In a joint appeal the coalition demands that there has to be an appropriate compensation by the companies for

slave-workers and their descendants. Also the maintenance of the memorial at Auschwitz, which reminds the public of IG Farben's victims, should be paid by the corporations. "Never again!" states that without verification of the past we always have to be present so that these crimes might never happen again. More than 1,500 individuals and about 100 German groups have signed this platform. The activities were organized by the Coalition against Bayer-dangers, a group that has monitored Bayer for 25 years.

Life as a human guinea pig

For years an Auschwitz survivor has tried to win compensation from the pharmaceutical giant that carried out medical experiments on her. Now living in Dundee, she tells her story in a BBC documentary.

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## Life as a human guinea pig

By **Mark Handscomb**

BBC Radio 4 reporter for It's My Story

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**For years an Auschwitz survivor has tried to win compensation from the pharmaceutical giant that carried out medical experiments on her. Now living in Dundee, she tells her story in a BBC documentary.**

Zoe Polanska Palmer never imagined she would survive Dr Mengele's experiments in Auschwitz.

Nor did her German doctors. Like thousands of other children, she was destined to be gassed once her usefulness to Nazi science had ceased.

During her two years at the camp, 13-year-old Zoe was forced to take tablets and pills as part of a series of pharmacological experiments, believed to be part of early birth control tests.



**“ I remember one of the SS doctors holding my jaw open and forcing pills down my throat ”**

Zoe Polanska Palmer  
to reporter Mark Handscomb



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But Zoe refused to die. Saved by a Russian doctor who evacuated her to Dachau, she recovered and eventually settled in Scotland.

Now in her early 70s, she has been fighting for compensation and an apology from the German drug manufacturer, Bayer.

"I still find it difficult to take aspirin," she says. "I remember one of the SS doctors holding my jaw open and forcing pills down my throat. I'm still very wary of men wearing white coats."

Eyewitness testimonies held in the Auschwitz camp archive claim the doctor who forced her pills worked for the pharmaceutical company Bayer when it was part of the IG Farben conglomerate.

His name was Dr Victor Capesius. It's a name that Zoe can never forget.

He helped Dr Mengele to conduct genetic experiments, usually on children, and also selected thousands of prisoners at the huge death camp, choosing those who might be useful and sending the rest to an immediate death with a flick of his finger.

Dr Capesius was tried in Frankfurt for war crimes in 1963 and served time in prison.

Another longtime Bayer employee, Helmut Vetter, also worked as a SS doctor at Auschwitz. He was involved in the testing of experimental vaccines and medicines on inmates and after the war he was executed for administering fatal injections.

## Denial of culpability

"The concentration camps were used as a huge laboratory for human experimentation," says Wolfgang Eckhart, the Professor of Historical Medicine at Heidelberg University.

"We have to look upon the camps as outposts of pharmacological research. The Nazis wanted to sterilise the population of the east, especially Russian people, but enable them to continue to be useful as workers."

## The pain has yet to heal

Bayer says the company which exists today has nothing to do with its wartime counterpart. A spokesperson told the BBC: "Between 1925 and 1952, no company named Bayer existed, neither as a subsidiary of IG Farben nor as any other legal entity.

"Bayer has worked in good faith with the German government to establish a fund to help those who have suffered. The company's contribution to this fund amounted to

more than £40m.”

## Damaged beyond repair

Although it is nearly 60 years since the end of World War II, for survivors like Zoe the consequences of the war are as alive today as they were in January 1945 when the Russian Army liberated Auschwitz.

After the war, Zoe married and settled in Scotland. There she underwent several painful operations to repair the damage done to her body. But she has never been able to have children. Now suffering from cancer, she is a remarkably cheerful woman whose home in a quiet suburb is punctuated with laughter from her jokes and tears from her memories.

When I first travelled to meet her in July 2002, she was angry that she had been ignored for so long by the authorities managing the compensation fund set up by German industry and the German government.

She had campaigned for 28 years but received nothing.

“They want us all to die so they won’t have to pay out so much money,” Zoe says.

Within weeks of the authorities being contacted by the BBC, Zoe received a cheque for a little over £2,000 from the German compensation fund.

“I want to make sure people remember what happened to people like me when I was a child at Auschwitz,” she says. “I was just one of thousands of children treated in this way. But I was one of the very few lucky ones who managed to survive.” (By Mark Handscomb, BBC Radio 4 reporter for It’s My Story )

## BAYER “Aryanized” Jewish Cemetery

Documents show that in 1942 IG Farben’s branch office in Uerdingen, Germany got hold of the town’s Jewish cemetery.

The forced sale price was way below the actual market value: 100,000 square meter property for 3,000 Reichsmark. After the war the property was passed on to IG Farben’s successor BAYER AG.

The Nazis dissolved the Jewish Community of Uerdingen in 1942. Today all traces of the Jewish cemetery in Uerdingen have been completely obliterated. The city archive indicates that the cemetery was located approximately where the main gate to the BAYER factory currently stands.

The COALITION AGAINST BAYER-DANGERS demands that the company publicly apologize for the defilement of the Uerdingen cemetery and affix a memorial plaque to the main gate of the company’s Uerdingen works.

Hans Frankenthal, former slave worker in IG Farben’s plant in Auschwitz and board member of the Jewish Community:

“I was terrified when I learned from this offence against Jewish belief.

According to our faith, taking possession of the cemetery without exhuming the bodies is tantamount to defiling the graves.”

BAYER today is living off the fruits of Nazi legalism. On paper everything was legally correct: Julius Israel Kohn from the “Association of Jews in the German Reich” and Bernhard Hoffmann, the representative of IG Farben, signed the sales agreement in a notary’s office, and the copy of this seemingly standard real estate transaction has a stamp from the Krefeld tax office.

At the same time the former culprits are publicly honored in Uerdingen. Fritz ter Meer served on the IG Farben board of directors from 1926 to 1945 and was the head officer directing the operations of the IG Farben factory at Auschwitz. The Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal sentenced him to seven years in prison.

He was released after serving only four years. Not long after, in 1956, Ter Meer was elevated to the chairman of the supervisory board at BAYER, a position he held for seven years. His grave in Krefeld has a meter-high wreath on it – donated by BAYER in recognition of his services.

Coalition against BAYER-dangers (Germany) [www.CBGnetwork.org](http://www.CBGnetwork.org)

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