

The Auschwitz Waffen-SS Hygiene Institute was founded in late 1942 or early 1943 as a branch of the Waffen-SS Central Hygiene Institute, which was subordinated to the Central SS-Sanitary Office in Berlin. The main objectives of the Berlin Institute, directed by the SS Chief Hygienist SS-Oberführer Joachim Mrugowsky, included research aimed at preventing the spread of contagious diseases among SS armed formation. The genesis of the branch of the Central Hygiene Institute at Auschwitz is not known precisely. The creation of this post was probably connected with the development of the camp, the microclimate that prevailed in the Oswiecim Valley, and the fact that large SS units were stationed in Oswiecim itself, not far from the border of the General Government.

In the early phases of its existence, in 1943, the institute occupied Block 10 in the main camp, which had been put at the disposal of the SS medical service. The institute was subsequently moved to Rajsko, where it remained until the evacuation of Auschwitz concentration camp. The directorship of the institute and its staff were indeed subordinate to the Auschwitz main camp commandant as commander of the SS garrison, but their actual superiors were in Berlin. Nevertheless, the institute was connected with the camp medical service: its officials acted from time to time in functions normally reserved for SS physicians and orderlies, substituting for them when they were absent.

The institute consisted of eight laboratories: bacteriological, chemical, biological and histological, three serological laboratories, a Wassermann test laboratory, and a laboratory in Block 20 of the main camp, as well as a bacteria – production section and a climatological section. This structure resulted from the types of research carried out on typhoid fever, malaria (with accounts for the climatological section) and syphilis.

Each section and laboratory kept its own documentation, which was entered in the "main book". The basic material used in the institute for research and analysis consisted of blood and bloody fluids taken from prisoners and SS men from the Auschwitz concentration camp garrison and from other SS and Wehrmacht units stationed in the vicinity.

I hope the above clarifies all points raised by you.

Sincerely yours,


Dr Piotr Setkiewicz

Figure 18.2