

Prof. Gabriel Florence

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Gabriel Florence was born on 21 June 1886 in Alsace. He was a professor of biochemistry and medicinal chemistry at the University of Lyon and a Nobel Prize nominator. Under the German occupation he campaigned on behalf of his Jewish colleagues, and in late 1943 he joined the Comité Médical de la Résistance, an organisation of doctors in the resistance.

On 4 March 1944, Florence was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in the Montluc prison near Lyon, from where he was transferred to the Neuengamme concentration camp on 7 June 1944. Because he spoke German fluently, he worked as an interpreter at the camp. In late July 1944, the SS assigned him to the sickbay. After the arrival of the 20 children, his task was to keep their patient records and analyse samples in the lab. Gabriel Florence tried to kill off the TB bacteria by boiling the suspension before the children were injected with it.

Former prisoner Paul Weißmann, who also worked at the sickbay, later remembered his last meeting with Gabriel Florence on the night before he was murdered: “[Florence] packed his few possessions. Before he left the sickbay, he shook each of us by the hand and said, ‘Au revoir’. But to me he whispered, ‘I don’t believe we’ll see each other again.’”

Simone Florence, Gabriel’s wife, learned of her husband’s fate early on from former prisoners and campaigned for Dr Heißmeyer’s prosecution in 1949. In 1953, Professor Gabriel Florence posthumously received the Prix Henri Labbé for biochemistry from the Académie des Sciences at the Institut de France.

Prof. Gabriel Florence

Gabriel Florence in 1942.

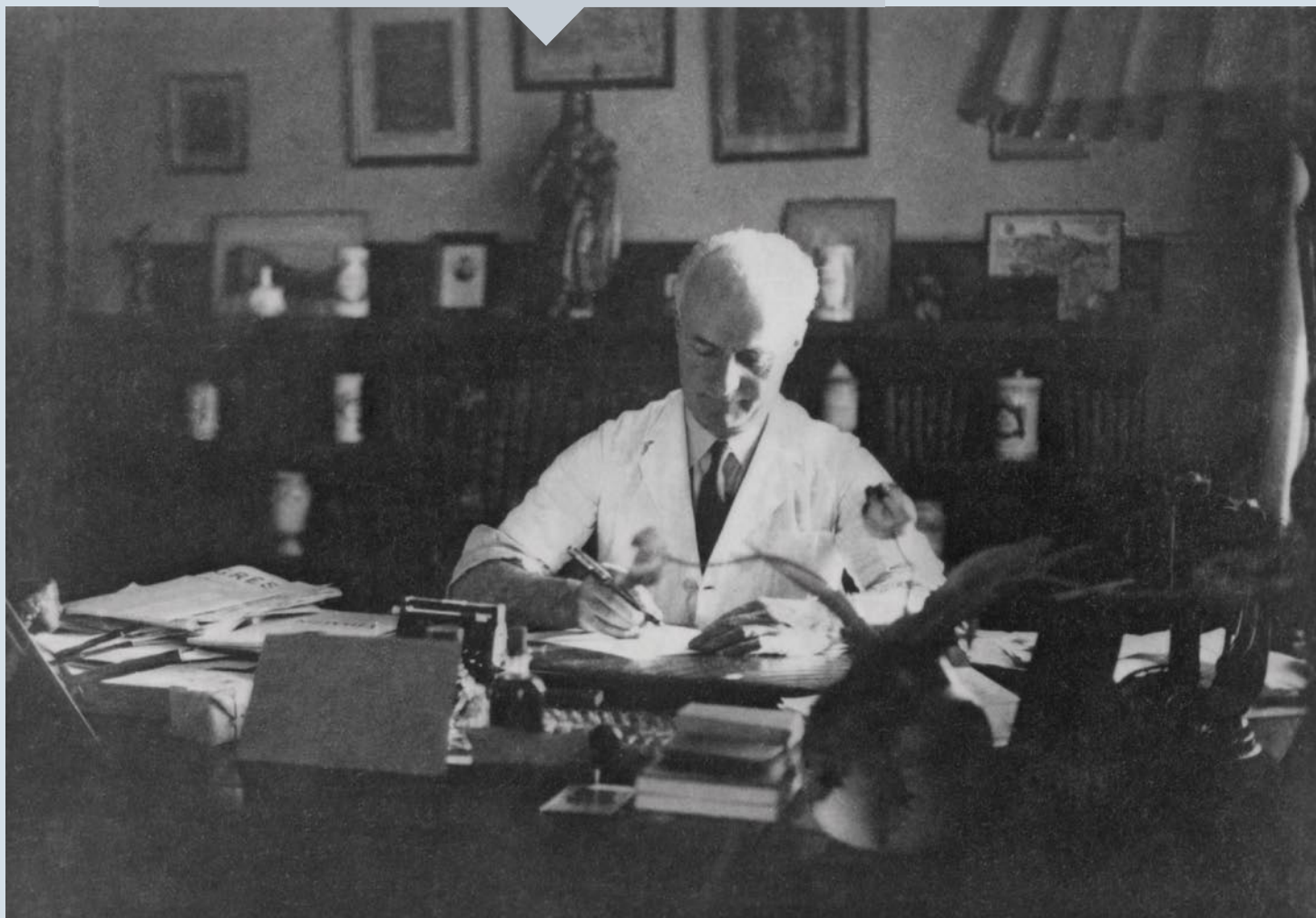
*Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial,
Günther Schwarberg collection, 2001-4422*



Prof. Gabriel Florence

Gabriel Florence at this desk in Lyon, undated. Professor Gabriel Florence was a highly regarded scientist in the fields of biochemistry and medicinal chemistry.

*Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial,
Günther Schwarberg collection, 2001-4421*



Prof. Gabriel Florence

Gabriel Florence in his professor's gown, undated.

On his gown, Florence wears the French War Cross, which he had been awarded during WWI.

*Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial,
Günther Schwarberg collection, 2001-4423*



Prof. Gabriel Florence

Gabriel Florence, undated.

*Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial,
Günther Schwarberg collection, 2001-4419*



Prof. Gabriel Florence

Gabriel Florence on a deckchair, undated.

*Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial,
Günther Schwarberg collection, 2001-4420*



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Drawing entitled “Professeur Florence de l’Université de Lyon” (Prof. Florence from Lyon University) by Bertrand de Vogüé, dated 9 September 1944.

Gabriel Florence worked as a prisoner doctor at the lab in the Neuengamme infirmary. Despite a ban on communication, the prisoner doctors at the lab tried to inform their fellow prisoners about the human experiments that were going on. After his liberation, former Neuengamme prisoner Paul Faure remembered a remark from Gabriel Florence: “If I were to tell you about all the atrocities, you probably wouldn’t want to believe me.”

The drawing was made by Bertrand de Vogüé who was imprisoned in the camp section for prominent French prisoners immediately adjacent to the infirmary at Neuengamme.

Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, 2001-4424



Professeur Florence
de l'Université de Lyon

9.9.44

par
BERTRAND
DE
VOGUE —

Prof. Gabriel Florence

Prisoner index card from the SS Economic Administration Main Office in Berlin, 1944.

The SS Economic Administration Main Office kept an index in which every concentration camp prisoner was registered. This index did not list the prisoners by name, but only included their prisoner number and the name of the camp in which they were held. Gabriel Florence's index card lists him as political prisoner no. 34193. He arrived at the Neuengamme camp on 7 June 1944 and was assigned to "sitting work". A note at the bottom states that he was assigned to the infirmary on 28 July 1944.

German Federal Archives, NS 3 1577

Häftlingskarte																
Einlieferungsstelle		Einlieferungsdatum			Häftlingsart	Geburts-			Geschlecht	Familienstand				Kinder		
01 S. P.		Tag	Monat	Jahr		Tag	Monat	Jahr		männlich 1	ledig 1	verheiratet 2	verwitwet 3	geschieden 4	m	w
2		3	07	06	44	4	21	06	86	6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8
9 Staatsangehörigkeit			10 Hauptberuf			11 1. Nebenberuf		12 2. Nebenberuf		13 3. Nebenberuf						
A. Franzose			Arzt			—		—		—						
14 Wehrdienstverhältnis		15 T.-Grad		16 Anzahl Vorstrafen		17 Gefängnis Monate		18 Zuchthaus Monate		19 Eingeliefert in KL						
—		—		—		—		—		Neuengamme						
20 Zugangsart		21 Überstellung an KL			22 Häftlings-Nr.		23 eingesetzt als			24 Abgangs-				25 Holl. Verm. Zu Ab		
E 1		Neuengamme			09 34193		sit-Arbeits 770									
Bemerkungen:										Kontrollvermerk						
Rev. 28-07-44										ausgestellt		verschlüsselt		Lochk. geprüft		
										J.B		NA		5		

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Excerpt from a letter written by former Neuengamme prisoner Henri Higelin to the Neuengamme Memorial, dated 7 May 2010. (Translated from the French)

In his letter, Neuengamme survivor Henri Higelin remembers the transport from France to Neuengamme in 1944, during which he met Gabriel Florence because the two men were handcuffed together.

“[...] In March 1941, I fled Germany. I left Lutterbach in Alsace, where my parents lived, to get to the free sector of France. After some twists and turns, which would take too long to describe here, I eventually arrived in Lyon [i.e. in the free sector]. [...] I won't linger on the activities we were involved in here [printing and distributing illegal pamphlets and publications]. [...] Two months later, in April 1944, my wife, my mother-in-law and I were arrested and detained at Fort Montluc, where we re-joined my sister-in-law. We stayed there for about three weeks, during which time we were subjected to regular questioning and torture, before being taken away in armoured railway cars around 15 May 1944. I was taken to the Compiègne camp and 'my' women to Fort Romainville. Near Paris, the car in which they were held was uncoupled. This gave me occasion to see them again and to say my goodbyes. The windows of my car were barred and there were eight of us prisoners inside, handcuffed together in pairs. As it happened, I was cuffed to Professor Florence, whose name and qualities were as unknown to me as the reasons for his arrest. We took a liking to each other. I was 25 years old at the time, and he was more than twice my age: We were teacher and student. One trivial detail I remember is that we had to go to the toilet together, handcuffed to each other, under guard from SS men who were posted at every corner. [...] Eight days after our arrival at Royallieu-Compiègne, to my great surprise, I received a package, which I shared with Florence and another prisoner whose name I don't remember. Starved, we fell upon the food, and the unavoidable happened the next day. I will always remember what Florence said to me then: 'You know, should you ever return from 'there', don't wolf down the food; don't eat too much.' He knew what he was talking about, he was a biologist and a pioneer in the field of special diets. We were in the same car

on the transport which took us to Neuengamme on 7 June 1944, where we were quarantined straight away. It was there that I lost sight of him one day. He was called and none of us, at least not I, ever saw him again. It was only after the war that I learned of his tragic fate, which he shared with Professor Quenouille, the two Dutch nurses and the 21 poor children. I cried.”

Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, prisoner account 1961

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Leads on the crimes and whereabouts of Kurt Heißmeyer, 1949/50

After the war, Gabriel Florence's wife learned about her husband's fate from French Neuengamme survivors. She wrote to different institutions and pointed out the crimes committed by Kurt Heißmeyer (whom she refers to as "Eisseneyer" and "Eissmeyer"). The International Office of the Association of Victims of Nazi Persecution (VVN) passed this information on to the Association's Hamburg section.

The first document below is a letter from the Hamburg VVN to the Association's international office, in which the Secretary General verifies Mme Florence's information concerning her husband's fate and gives Heißmeyer's correct name. The second document is the German translation of a letter from the French Association of Deportees, Interned Resistance Fighters and Patriots to the VVN's international office in Berlin which summarises the information on Heißmeyer's experiments and the Bullenhusen Damm murders and asks the VVN for further information on the case.

*Federal commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service
of the former German Democratic Republic,
HA IX/11 ZUV, no. 46, vol. 139, sheet 68-72*

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Neuengamme Abzug, II 4/4 A / Litzig 341 49

VVN
VEREINIGUNG DER
VERFOLGTEN DES
NAZIREGIMES
RAT DER VVN / SEKRETARIAT

Eingegangen
10. JAN. 1950
32804 K
Erledigt: _____

341
2. Jan. 1950
HAMBURG 39,
MARIA-LOUISEN-STRASSE 132
12/Jx. **682/50**

BSIU
000068

An die
VVN - Generalsekretariat
Internationales Sekretariat,
Berlin C.2.
Neue Schönhauserstr. 3

Betr.: Brief der Madame Florence, Mitglied des
Nationalen Büros der FNDIRP.
Bezug: ohne

Liebe Paula !

Der Kamerad Prof. Florence ist mir persönlich gut
bekannt. Er war im Revier von Neuengamme im Sonderbau bei
den 20 jüdischen Kindern tätig.

Die in diesem Brief genannten Experimente entsprechen den
Tatsachen. Im Neuengamme-Prozess vor dem Britischen Militär-
gericht wurden die dafür verantwortlichen Ärzte gemeinsam
mit der Lagerführung zum Tode verurteilt und hingerichtet.

Der in dem genannten Bericht erwähnte Professor muss richtig
Heissmeier heissen.

Mit kameradschaftlichen Grüßen !

Rat der VVN-Sekretariat
Hans Klaus
Generalsekretär

Übersetzung

Wahr 342
34290

Nationale Föderation der Deportierten, Paris, 2. Dezember 1949
und Internierten Widerstandskämpfer
und Patrioten

F.N.D.I.R.P.
R Nr.17.202

BSU
000069

An das
Internationale Sekretariat der VVN
Berlin C 2, Neue Schönhauserstr.3

Lieber Kamerad!

Wir wären Euch sehr dankbar, wenn Ihr Eure ganze Aufmerksamkeit auf folgenden Fall lenken würdet:

Frau F l o r e n c e, Mitglied des Nationalen Büros unserer Föderation, hat während der Gefangenschaft ihren Mann, Professor Florence, verloren.

Herr Florence, Professor der medizinischen Fakultät von Lyon, wurde am 6. Juni 1944 nach Neuengamme deportiert. Am 27. Juli 1944 kam er zur Sanitätsstube des Lagers. Er wurde dank seines Professortitels in einer Untersuchungssektion eingesetzt unter der Leitung des Physiologie-Professors von Berlin E i s s e n e y e r (oder E i s s m e y e r). Als Experimente wurden von Eisseneyer Spritzen mit Tuberkulosebazillen an Deportierten gemacht, und der Professor Florence war gezwungen, die Ergebnisse dieser Spritzen zu ermitteln.

Nach den Angaben der Frau Florence sind auf Anweisungen von Eisseneyer Drüsen entfernt worden. Diese Drüsen hat ein tschechischer Gynäkologe als Chirurg des Lagers ~~an~~ lebenden Menschen entfernt.

Diese Experimente wurden einmal an 15 erwachsenen russisch-polnischen Menschen bis Ende November 1944 gemacht, nachher an 20 jüdischen Kindern, die vor der Spritze vollkommen gesund waren; im Laufe von 1 1/2 Monaten waren alle erkrankt. Der Professor Florence hat alles Mögliche für die Schwächung der Ergebnisse dieser verbrecherischen Experimente mit Gefahr seines Lebens getan und hat einem dieser Kranken sogar einen Pneu eingesetzt.

Alle diese Experimente wurden im Augenblick der Evakuierung und der Tarnung des Lagers Neuengamme um den 15. April beendet.

Ein Lastwagen der Gestapo von Hamburg hatte damals die Aufgabe, die Kinder und die Ärzte in eine Schule von Bullenhuserdamm, die sich gegenüber der großen Fabrik Bill-Brauerei befindet, in der Straße Bulben Lausersrash, ein Südbezirk von Hamburg, zu bringen. Alle wurden getötet.

Frau Florence behauptet, daß der Professor Eissmeyer für den Tod ihres Mannes verantwortlich wäre und das ersterer nach Berlin geflüchtet sein soll.

Könntet Ihr uns die Auskünfte, die es Euch möglich war, in dieser Angelegenheit zu erhalten, mitteilen?

Mit

Abgepruft von Schäffer, Gumbel, Schwarz, Kuhn

Prof. Gabriel Florence

Street sign for the Rue Professeur Florence in Paris,
taken in 2000.

Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, 1999-1168



