

Herb garden, frost cream and cancer research – the three key issues relating to Weleda during the Nazi era

Anthroposophists were persecuted by the Nazi regime. This statement, which is essentially true, similarly to how members of lodges, rotary clubs or other groups were also excluded from society by the NSDAP, a statement which was happily made by those in question after the war ended, does not automatically mean that members of the Anthroposophical Society or anthroposophists in general were not guilty of the crimes committed under the National Socialist regime. In order to verify the allegations of being complicit in the crimes of the Third Reich, which have been made for some time now, Weleda commissioned the GUG to comb through the archives to find any evidence. The following information does not constitute a full investigation, but relates to a few specific questions and the relevant sources identified or the absence thereof.

Literature and a short overview of Weleda in the Third Reich

The anthroposophist Uwe Werner uses this persecution narrative in his study “Weleda 1921-1945. The formation and early years of a humane and sustainable ecological company”, which is used as the basis for knowledge of the history of Weleda. The question of whether Weleda was partially culpable is publicly discussed with regard to two issues. Firstly, the question of to what extent Weleda could have known about the human experiments carried out by Dr Sigmund Rascher. Secondly, to what extent do the activities of the manager of the herb garden at the Dachau concentration camp, Franz Lippert, relate to his former employment as head gardener at the Weleda pharmaceutical garden in Schwäbisch Gmünd¹ until 1939.

Before examining these two specific issues, a few facts about Weleda should be made clear first to understand the context as relates to the company. The Swiss-headquartered company² operated two facilities during the Third Reich, one in Stuttgart and one in Schwäbisch-Gmünd. In 1940 the number of employees for both sites was given as 140; the Stuttgart site was reported to have employed 35 people in 1944³,

¹ In 1938 Lippert was still receiving a salary from Weleda. In 1940 he was employed by the company Wigo in Trittau. See Written statement made by Lippert to the denazification court in Rosenheim on 31 July 1947, as well as the questionnaire issued by the military government, in: State Archives, Munich (Staatsarchiv München), Spka-K-3902.

² The very limited number of annual reports from the National Socialist era show a significant increase in profits compared to the pre-war period. While the foreign branches (United Kingdom, USA, the Netherlands, Austria and Germany) operated satisfactorily, revenues in Switzerland even rose significantly. Annual reports in: Weleda company archive.

³ Letter from Weleda dated 11 December 1944 to the Chamber of Commerce for the District of Württemberg-Hohenzollern, in: Weleda company archive, ALT 368.

whereas for Schwäbisch Gmünd the equivalent figure for 1944 includes 15 male and 87 female employees.⁴ According to all available information, the latter figure does not include any forced labourers but indicates an entirely German workforce.⁵

Like all companies during the National Socialist era Weleda was also affected by the increasing shortage of raw materials in Germany, and after the outbreak of war had to make an effort to retain its status as a war-related company to prevent it from being shut down. Weleda tried to achieve this by obtaining a number of certificates from doctors confirming the relevance of Weleda products to the war effort.⁶ This status was secured for at least seven products, meaning that the continued existence of the company was assured.⁷ Economically things went well for Weleda during the Nazi era; only in the last two years of the war did profits decline.⁸

“Aryanisation”

With regard to the exclusion of Jews from German economic life, a policy known as “Aryanisation”, there is no evidence to suggest that these measures were applied to Weleda. There were also no indications of any Jewish employees working at Weleda, meaning that no conclusions can be drawn regarding how Jews were treated within the company.

Weleda and the running of the herb garden at the Dachau concentration camp

Franz Lippert was head gardener at Weleda’s herb garden in Schwäbisch Gmünd until at least 1939. After terminating his employment⁹ at Weleda however, he did not immediately start work in the herb garden at Dachau. After leaving Weleda he spent roughly two years (1940/41) at the Wigo factory in Trittau. He began employment as head gardener at the Dachau herb garden in 1941.¹⁰ Lippert was therefore not referred to the herb garden by Weleda

⁴ Letter sent by Weleda to the Schwäbisch Gmünd District Council of the Armaments Commission V dated 26 November 1944, in: Weleda company archive, ALT 368.

⁵ Ulrich Müller, *Fremdarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter und Displaced Persons in Schwäbisch Gmünd zwischen 1940 und 1950 (Foreign Workers, Forced Labourers and Displaced Persons in Schwäbisch Gmünd between 1940 and 1950)*, Schwäbisch Gmünd 2021. Müller did not find any evidence that forced labourers were employed by Weleda. It cannot be determined whether one of the foreign workers reported as working at the Stuttgart facility in 1944 was a forced labourer.

⁶ The company archives also include multiple letters from practising doctors written to the Reich Health Leader in summer 1941 with recommendations to use various Weleda medicines. An infantry doctor also reported in a letter to the Reich Health Leader on 8 July 1941 on the successful use of Weleda products in the treatment of injured soldiers in military hospitals, in: Weleda company archive, ALT 391.

⁷ See Letter from Director Götte dated 6 January 1945 to the Chamber of Commerce for the District of Württemberg-Hohenzollern, in: Weleda company archive, ALT 368.

⁸ The prospect that Weleda could be shut down at any moment was also clear to see as the Second World War went on. Financially, even the German branch did very well up until 1942. Revenues continuously increased up until that point, and also only fell slightly in the last two years of the war.

⁹ The exact date is not known. In any event, Lippert changed jobs in 1939 or 1940.

¹⁰ See Denazification court, Box 3902, file on Franz Lippert, born 9 April 1901, occupation: gardener and farmer, in: State Archives, Munich (Staatsarchiv München).

or posted there. Lippert's employment in the herb garden at Dachau is therefore not directly related to his earlier employment at Weleda.

However, Weleda has been proven to have been in contact with the herb garden at the Dachau concentration camp, which substitute materials were procured from. This was before 1942, i.e. before Lippert was employed at the camp. A letter sent by the German Experimental Institute for Food and Supply on 7 October 1941 shows that Weleda had ordered plants on 24 September 1941 from the herb garden in Dachau, which at the time used concentration camp inmates as labourers.¹¹ However, the delivery did not take place.

Beyond the question of the relationship between Lippert and Weleda after 1942, it is possible that the Weleda Executive Board was aware of the use of concentration camp inmates at the Dachau herb garden as a result of this business relationship in 1941. However, no evidence of this can be found in the surviving documents. The studies regarding the herb garden in Dachau currently being commissioned by the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site may yet bring additional findings to light.¹²

Weleda, Dr. Sigmund Rascher and the frost cream

Another link between Weleda and the crimes committed under the National Socialist regime relate to Dr Sigmund Rascher, who carried out brutal experiments on concentration camp inmates. In the context of these experiments carried out by Rascher, regarding the effects of cold temperatures on the human body, an order was also placed with Weleda. This raises the question firstly of whether Weleda knew the nature of the experiments being carried out by Dr Rascher, and whether Weleda benefited from Dr Rascher's findings as a result. The quantity of frost cream ordered was very small (20 kg), meaning that there is unlikely have been a commercial motivation behind the order.

Weleda had already developed the frost cream and launched it on the market before the National Socialists came to power. Assessments of the frost cream already existed going back to 1924, meaning that the effects of it had been known for a long time.¹³ Weleda did not require any help from a doctor in order to develop the medicine from a pharmaceutical perspective. However, Weleda was eager to have the frost cream classified as relevant to the war effort, and so had an assessment carried out by Dr Hanns Rascher, the father of Dr Sigmund Rascher. The assessment made in February 1940 emphasised the effectiveness of the ointment.¹⁴ Director Götte therefore recommended the frost ointment to the German Army, insofar as it

¹¹ See letter from the Dachau herb garden to the German Experimental Institute for Food and Supply dated 7 October 1941, in: Pharmaceutical Archive (Pharmazeutisches Archiv), Weleda, F95.

¹² See [Topic of the Week 11 – 17 July: The "herb garden" – the SS experimental farms at Dachau concentration camp Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site \(kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de\)](#).

¹³ The Weleda pharmaceutical archive also includes reports from November 1941 about the successful use of Weleda frost cream in treating German soldiers suffering from hypothermia. As reported by Staff Surgeon Dr Noll regarding the treatment of hypothermia cases among German soldiers during the First World War, as well as Staff Surgeon Dr Schulz in February 1940 regarding the treatment of hypothermia cases among German soldiers during the Second World War due to the use of Weleda frost cream, in: Weleda company archive, ALT 391

¹⁴ See letter from Hanns Rascher to Weleda dated 18 February 1940, in: Weleda company archive.

helped prevent persons suffering from hypothermia from having to have limbs amputated.¹⁵ Weleda was therefore not averse to helping a committed National Socialist in order to be classified as useful for the war effort.

The orders placed by Dr Sigmund Rascher with Weleda for 20 kg of the frost cream "Evron"¹⁶ between 18 December 1942 and 5 January 1943 – when Dr Rascher ordered Vaseline for Weleda in order for it to be able to produce the cream¹⁷ – do not give any indications of his intentions for the frost cream or what it could potentially be used for. The correspondence available does not permit any conclusions to be drawn that Weleda was aware that Dr Rascher intended to use the cream in the cold experiments in question and for what purpose.

The order to carry out the cold experiments came directly from Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler, who commissioned Dr Rascher on 18 December 1942 to continue the cold experiments on humans.¹⁸ As part of these experiments, which were referred to by the Reichsführer SS as "important secret experiments",¹⁹ the instructions were for experiments into the "treatment of partial frostbite, especially to the extremities", to be carried out in a "suitable manner". We can therefore assume that Dr Sigmund Rascher used the frost cream from Weleda on concentration camp inmates in order to test its healing effect on frostbite injuries in accordance with Himmler's orders. However, there is no evidence or reports in the archives to suggest that Weleda frost cream was actually used in cold experiments on concentration camp inmates and what the results were.

In any event, the order was made too late for Himmler's first big experiments. As early as October 1942, Dr Rascher, Dr Holzlöhner and Dr Finke presented the results of the cold experiments at the Dachau concentration camp at a conference.²⁰ The order placed with Weleda in December 1942 was therefore after that date. However, Dr Rascher continued to carry out experiments, meaning that the Weleda cream could still have been used.²¹ There is no evidence of any reports on the actual use of the creams, in particular reports addressed to Weleda on the use of the creams and the results thereof.

¹⁵ See letter from Weleda to Military District Medical Depot VII dated 23 February 1940, in: Weleda company archive.

¹⁶ See NS/21/915 page 261, in: Federal Archives Berlin-Lichterfelde (Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde). It is currently unknown why the cream was called "Evron". Weleda sold a range of cosmetic products under the brand name "Everon", including a sun lotion among other products. It remains to be clarified whether the frost cream and the sun lotion are of a similar pharmaceutical origin or the frost cream should also actually have been sold under the brand name "Everon".

¹⁷ Other documents available in file NS 21/915 also show that Weleda had received 5 kg each of yellow and white vaseline in January 1943 worth 11.29 Reichsmarks in order to produce the frost cream, as arranged by Dr Rascher via the SS heritage organisation "Ahnenerbe" from the main sanatorium of the Waffen SS (Dr Rascher had already ordered the Vaseline requested by Weleda on 5 January 1943 from the Ahnenerbe).

¹⁸ See file NS/21/914, page 25, in: Federal Archives Berlin-Lichterfelde (Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde).

¹⁹ See file NS/21/915, page 119, in: Federal Archives Berlin-Lichterfelde (Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde).

²⁰ See NS/21/916, Vol. 4 Low-pressure chamber and hypothermia experiments.

²¹ See Collection of files on the Doctors' Trial/Milch trial, in: Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, <https://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu/search/?q=&m=documents&m=transcripts&m=photographs>, Files no. NO-240, 241, 230, PS-1613, PS- 1610, NO-219.

Since Weleda had no economic or pharmaceutical interest in the experiments carried out by Dr Rascher, Weleda cannot be held responsible for the abhorrent experiments carried out on human beings. It can be (see above) proven that Weleda did not ask for its products to be used, ask for tests to be carried out or benefit from the results of these experiments. The frost cream had already been developed by the time of the First World War, and the effects of it were known to Weleda and had been tested. The frost cream partly prevented frozen limbs from having to be amputated. The specific purpose Dr Rascher intended the cream to be used for is not clear from any of the surviving sources.

Weleda and research into cancer drugs

While it cannot be proven that Weleda took an interest in the results of the human experiments performed during the Second World War, it appears that it took a direct interest in the findings of Dr Sigmund Rascher's cancer research carried out before the Second World War. After the rival company Madaus released a cancer drug developed from mistletoe, the leading pharmacist at Weleda, Hans Krüger, made close ties with Dr Rascher from 1939.²² There was contact between Weleda employees, Weleda management and Dr Sigmund Rascher on several occasions over a number of years. It remains unclear whether they were informed by Dr Rascher about the human experiments which took place that also related to research into cancer drugs, and if yes, to what extent. However, it appears that Weleda was more than happy to work with Dr Rascher regarding research into cancer drugs in order to develop a successful product.

Political stance

It can be proven that the members of the Executive Board of Weleda did not join the NSDAP or any other party organisation. The Weleda directors Emil Leinhas²⁴ and Fritz Götte²⁵ as well as the leading Weleda pharmacist Hans Krüger²⁶ were also persecuted by the Nazis and placed under surveillance. The 1938 edition of the company magazine "Weleda

²² See meetings of the monthly council meeting dated 20 April 1939, in: Weleda company archive.

²³ See *ibid.* and letter from August Heisler (3 January 1942), in: Weleda company archive.

²⁴ State Archives, Ludwigsburg (Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg), EL 350 I, State Office for Restitution (Landesamt für die Wiedergutmachung) Baden-Württemberg, bundle 6247, individual case files, restitution claims against Leinhas, Emil; EL 402-17, Regional Tax Office (Oberfinanzdirektion) Stuttgart, bundle 441, files relating to property control, NS property and restitution; FL 300/22 I, bundle 14525, Stuttgart District Court (Amtsgericht Stuttgart), files belonging to the arbitrator for claims of restitution (Akten des Schlichters für die Wiedergutmachung); EL 901-20, bundle 520, questionnaire based on the Law for Liberation from National Socialism and Militarism belonging to Emil Leinhas; Weleda company archive, Alt 365.

²⁵ FL 300/33 I, bundle 800, files belonging to the arbitrator for claims of restitution in Stuttgart after 1945 regarding Weleda AK from Stuttgart or Schwäbisch-Gmünd; EL 902-7, denazification court 14, Schwäbisch-Gmünd, bundle 4412, case file on director Fritz Götte; Weleda company archive, Alt 365, written statement by Fritz Götte; ALT 1524, report by Fritz Götte about his interrogation by the Gestapo.

²⁶ State Archives, Ludwigsburg (Staatsarchiv Ludwigsburg), EL 350 I, State Office for Restitution (Landesamt für die Wiedergutmachung) Baden-Württemberg, bundle 46561, individual case files regarding Krüger, Hans; FL 300/33 I, bundle 799, Stuttgart District Court (Amtsgericht Stuttgart), files belonging to the arbitrator for claims of restitution in Stuttgart; EL 901-7, bundle 18, questionnaire based on the Law for Liberation from National Socialism and Militarism belonging to Hans August Theodor Krüger; K 50, bundle 2219, Regional Tax Office (Oberfinanzdirektion) Stuttgart, Federal Assets Agency (Bundesvermögensabteilung), restitution, compensation for Hans Krüger.

News" does not include any Nazi rhetoric or symbolism. There is no sign of any ideological affinity with National Socialism. However, this clearly did not prevent it from cultivating a close relationship to the committed National Socialist Dr Rascher.

Frankfurt am Main, 10 April 2024

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Andrea Schneider-Braunberger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A' and 'S'.

Dr Andrea Schneider-Braunberger

Managing Director

GUG mbH

Weleda and the period between 1933 and 1945

Historians are working through the facts

Weleda was founded in 1921, and today can look back at a long history. This history also includes the National Socialist dictatorship between 1933 and 1945. And like many other companies, we have opened up our company archives for historians to research the situation which Weleda was in at the time and how those in positions of responsibility behaved.

Working with the [Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte \(Society for Business History, GUG\)](#), we have commissioned an academic institution to research the period between 1933 and 1945.

The results of the GUG study

The focus of the research carried out by GUG was on the links between Weleda and the concentration camp doctor Sigmund Rascher as well as the employment of the former Weleda gardener Franz Lippert in the herb garden at the Dachau concentration camp. The GUG also consulted various archives regarding the use of forced labourers, the seizure of property from Jews and the political beliefs of the company's management. The findings of the historians have been published in this [<<Link: research report>>](#). Its major findings:

- There is no evidence that Weleda benefited from the policy of 'Aryanisation' – meaning the exclusion of Jews from German economic life.
- Weleda did not employ any forced labourers.
- When Franz Lippert, the former head gardener of Weleda, began working in the herb garden at the Dachau concentration camp in 1941, this had no connection to his previous employment with Weleda.

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- Weleda ordered plants from the herb garden of the Dachau concentration camp, and those responsible at company management level may potentially have known about the use of prisoners at said camp.
- The concentration camp doctor Sigmund Rascher ordered 20 kg of frost cream from Weleda. It is not clear whether he used it as part of his experiments at the camp or whether this was his intention.
- The members of the Executive Board of Weleda AG did not join the NSDAP or any other party organisation.
- Weleda was able to avoid using Nazi rhetoric or symbolism in its company magazine “Weleda News” until it was discontinued in 1938.

[<< Link: to the in-depth study >>](#)

Publications from other researchers

As far back as the 1990s, the historian Uwe Werner researched the Third Reich in the Weleda AG archives for his 1999 book “Anthroposophy during the National Socialist era”. A few years later he published his book “Weleda 1921 – 1945”, in which Werner details the founding of the company and its vision of a social, ecological and economic ideal. In it, he describes the company's experience during the Nazi dictatorship as “surviving in an inhuman environment”. The historian does not claim that Weleda actively resisted the regime, but rather that it passively resisted.

Peter Selg, Susanne H. Gross and Matthias Mochner also researched the Weleda company archive for their book “Anthroposophy and National Socialism. The Anthroposophical Medical Profession”. The second volume of their three-volume study

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covers the tumultuous history of Weleda in the difficult years of the Third Reich, among other things, and is due to be published at the beginning of 2025.

The situation between 1933 and 1945

As an anthroposophical company, during the Nazi era Weleda was always on the verge of being banned. The Anthroposophical Society in Germany was banned by the National Socialists on 1 November 1935, and anthroposophists in the Third Reich were excluded from society. As a result of this, in the post-war era in particular they primarily saw themselves as victims. More recent research however, such as the studies mentioned above, paint a more mixed picture, and has come to the conclusion that while there may have been victims of the Nazi regime among anthroposophical circles, there were also passive followers and even perpetrators.

Was Weleda frost cream used in experiments on inmates at the Dachau concentration camp?

In 1943, Weleda supplied 20 kg of frost cream to the German army as a one-off. The delivery was made to the personal address in Munich of Sigmund Rascher, who was Staff Surgeon in the German Air Force and who carried out secret experiments on inmates for the SS at the Dachau concentration camp. As part of these experiments, he subjected inmates to hypothermia. Both the GUG and the team of researchers led by Peter Selg have come to the conclusion that there is no evidence suggesting that Rascher used the frost cream in his experiments. There is also no evidence that those responsible at Weleda had any knowledge of the human experiments carried out at Dachau. However, Peter Selg and his colleagues suspect that some individual Weleda employees may have known

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about Rascher's experiments due to their close personal contact with him, despite the high level of secrecy surrounding the experiments. Nonetheless, this cannot be proven by the evidence available.

The experiments carried out by Rascher were only discovered at the end of the 1990s. Weleda also first learned of them around this time. The company deeply regretted its association with the experiments, even if there is no evidence to suggest that Rascher used Weleda frost cream in the process. Nevertheless, Weleda issued a written apology to the [Aktion Kinder des Holocaust \(Children of the Holocaust Campaign, AKdH\)](#).

What were the links between Weleda and the gardener Franz Lippert?

Franz Lippert, who had created and managed the Weleda herb garden in Schwäbisch Gmünd as master gardener, left Weleda in autumn 1940 after 16 years of service. From September 1941 he was in charge of biodynamic cultivation at the Deutschen Versuchsanstalt (German Experimental Institute for Food and Supply, DVA) facility in Dachau. The facility, known as the "herb garden", was part of the Dachau concentration camp. Lippert remained here until March 1945. During this time he was exclusively occupied with the biodynamic cultivation of plants. He tried throughout to make the inmates' situation better. This is evidenced by affidavits given by former inmates after the end of the war. In his research, the historian Uwe Werner claimed that Lippert "must also be considered as suffering from a long-term delusion towards the Nazi regime, the inhumane nature of which only became apparent to him too late." The case against Lippert at the denazification tribunal in September 1948 was closed, with the reason being that he "has no case to answer".

Non-negotiable values

Today, Weleda is a community of more than 2300 employees in over 20 countries. There is no place for racism or discrimination at Weleda. We embrace diversity, and take responsibility for one another based on our values and principles:

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Präsident des Verwaltungsrates: Thomas Jorberg · Geschäftsführung: Tina Müller (CEO), Alois Mayer, Raphael Savalle

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1. Holisticness: We think, feel and act holistically.
2. Responsibility: We set an example and take responsibility for our behaviour.
3. Trust: We create trust through transparency and honesty.
4. Sustainability: We follow sound and efficient business practices, because economic success makes many things possible.
5. Open-mindedness: We embody the pioneering spirit of Weleda and are open to new things.
6. Inspiration: We inspire enthusiasm for the power of nature.

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