

**“VWI invites the Medical University of Vienna”**

**Tuesday, April 14 2020, 3.00 pm**  
**1010 Vienna, Rabensteig 3, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor**

**Andrew WISELY**

**THE DECEPTION OF SS-PHYSICIAN FRANZ LUCAS (1911-1994)**

**Making Sense of His Defense Narrative Between 1955 and 1980**

Dr. Franz Lucas, who spent the last sixteen months of the war as a camp and troop doctor in Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Stutthof, Ravensbrück, and Sachsenhausen, was one of twenty defendants in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial (1963-1965). For fourteen months, he denied the charge of selecting thousands of deportees on the Birkenau ramp in 1944 for the gas chamber. Forced to confess in March 1965, he then claimed that he feared the consequences of refusing the order to select. He was sentenced to three years and three months. In October 1970, a second district court accepted his putative claim of superior orders and acquitted him. Lucas has served as a contrast figure in discussions of Nazi doctors, thanks to stellar references, he received, mostly from Ravensbrück political prisoners that were echoed by trial onlookers like Hannah Arendt and Peter Jochen Winters. This presentation will dispute the rhetoric of entanglement (*Verstrickung*). Instead of accepting that Lucas was caught unaware by his SS duties, we should examine his claims of how he spent the war years. Much of his shifting narrative, preserved in transcripts of interrogations and trials and in judicial correspondence, shows his maneuvers to avoid all acknowledgement of culpability. The author traces his narrative from the mid-1950s to 1980, the decade after his acquittal. Over time and with help from his attorney Rudolf Aschenauer, Lucas became a careful scholar of his own defence. For example, he eventually denied connections to his Birkenau colleague Josef Mengele, while making Commandant Josef Kramer his chief antagonist in his tale of fear.



**Commented by Herwig CZECH**

*Andrew Wisely* is a Research Fellow at VWI and an Associate Professor of German at Baylor University: he is currently completing a book titled *Between Auschwitz and Frankfurt: The Deceptions and Exceptions of SS Dr. Franz Lucas (1911-1994)*. Articles include *War Against 'Internal Enemies': Dr. Franz Lucas's Sterilization of Sinti and Roma in Ravensbrück Men's Camp in January 1945* (*Central European History* 2019) and *Confession that Isn't: The Fear Claims of Dr. Franz Lucas Between Accusation and Acquittal in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial (1963-65)* (*Holocaust Studies* 2020). The essay *Renewed Trauma: Abraham de la Penha's Testimony against Dr. Franz Lucas in the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial*, will appear in *Recognizing the Past in the Present: New Studies on Medicine Before, During, and After the Holocaust* (New York 2020).

*Herwig Czech* is a postdoctoral researcher in the history of medicine at the Medical University of Vienna (Josephinum/Department of Ethics, Collections and History of Medicine) and co-director of the research project *Brain Research at Institutes of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society in the Context of National Socialist Crimes* (funded since 2017 by the Max Planck Society). He has numerous publications on medicine and biopolitics under National Socialism, more recently a paper on the pediatrician Hans Asperger, *National Socialism, and „race hygiene“ in Nazi-era Vienna* (*Molecular Autism* 2018).

Photo: The accused Franz Lucas (in the middle) on Dezember 14, 1964 on the ramp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, © Fritz Bauer Institut

Please register at [anmeldung@vwi.ac.at](mailto:anmeldung@vwi.ac.at) by latest Friday, 10 April, 12.00 am and bring your ID.

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