

# Giants of Science

<https://gigancinauki.pl/ge/biographies/8261,Rudolf-Stefan-Jan-Weigl-Weigel.html>  
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## Rudolf Stefan Jan Weigl (Weigel)

Rudolf Stefan Jan Weigl (Weigel) (born 2 September 1883, died 11 August 1957). He was born in an Austrian family, but after his mother's second marriage he grew up in a house with strong Polish traditions. He studied at the gymnasium in Jasło and Stryj, where his stepfather was a teacher. In 1907, Rudolf Weigl graduated from Lviv University, where his academic career started. In 1913, he was awarded habilitation in zoology, comparative anatomy and histology. His first experience in the fight against epidemic typhus came from his work as a parasitologist for the army; he developed the world's first effective vaccine for this disease.

In independent Poland, in 1920, Rudolf Weigl became a professor in general biology at his alma mater. He continued his work on improving the vaccine against typhus and was also involved in the vaccination campaign against typhoid fever in China. He also helped in suppressing the typhus epidemic in Abyssinia. Apart from that, he was also involved in work for the community – he became a city councillor in Lviv.

When World War II broke out, his skills were used by both occupants. The Soviets significantly expanded his research laboratory, which increased vaccine production. When Lviv was occupied by the Germans, Weigel decided to lead the Institute for Research on Epidemic Typhus and Viruses, which he did out of his concern about the existence and life of the scientific community. The Institute worked for the German army, but Weigel, enjoying full freedom in selecting his associates, was able to protect a large group of professors and assistants (including, for example, Stefan Banach and Bronisław Knaster). He refused, despite repeated pressure, to join the German national list (Deutsche Volksliste; German People's List).



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After the war, he moved to Krakow and continued his work at Jagiellonian University and later at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. The communist government of Poland cancelled his nomination for the Nobel Prize in 1948. He was also falsely accused of collaborating with the Germans. Posthumously, in 2003, he was awarded the Righteous Among Nations medal by the Yad Vashem Institute.

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