

Es geht wohl anders [Things Turn Out Differently]

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ABSTRACT Testimonies, articles, or books on Nazi medical atrocities written by physicians, whether Holocaust survivors or not and whether written during the Holocaust or just after 1945, are very important teaching materials. The professional views of physicians give special insight. In this review we highlighted a few biographical and eyewitness accounts by Jewish physicians about their medical activities and the inhuman medical activities of the Nazis. The activities of Jewish doctors in the ghettos and camps, including research projects on hunger or infectious diseases, are truly suitable case studies. We presented representative case studies that can be effectively introduced in medical school curricula.

IMAJ 2024; 26: 254–258

KEY WORDS: inhuman experimentations, Nazi medical atrocities, physician testimonies

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ES GEHT WOHL ANDERS [THINGS TURN OUT DIFFERENTLY]

Walter Arlen (Walter Aptowitz) (1920–2023) was an Austrian American Jewish composer. When he was 17 years old his father was imprisoned by the Nazis and his mother was committed to a mental hospital. The boy responded by writing a melancholy song based on a poem titled *Es geht wohl anders* [Things turn out differently]. He and his family later fled to the United States.

The free world could not believe that Nazi Germany was operating a devilish monstrous genocide. The few people who knew about the scientific systematic killing and the inhuman experimentations in the camps gave their testimonies to the leaders of the Allies. Shmuel (Arthur) Zygielbojm (1891–1943) was the Bund activist who managed to flee to Brussels in 1940. He later joined the Polish National Council in London. He tried desperately to awaken public opinion against the Nazi atrocities being committed in Eastern Europe. Zygielbojm committed suicide on 12 May 1943 after hearing of the extermination of the

MEDICAL EDUCATION MUST INCLUDE LESSONS FROM THE HOLOCAUST: BOTH ON THE NAZI MEDICAL ATROCITIES AND ON THE MEDICAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH PHYSICIANS IN GHETTOS AND DEATH CAMPS.

Warsaw Ghetto. It was in protest of the passivity with which the world was permitting the Nazis to decimate the Jewish population of Europe.

Jan Karski (Kozielewski) (1914–2000) was a Polish soldier, resistance-fighter, and diplomat during World War II. He visited Auschwitz several times, escaped to London, and reported to the western Allies about the situation in German-occupied Poland. He reported on the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto and the operation of Nazi extermination camps.

The two Slovak Jews, Rudolf Vrba and Alfréd Wetzler, who escaped from Auschwitz on 10 April 1944, reported and wrote the Auschwitz Protocols, which is a 33-page eyewitness account of the Auschwitz concentration camp in German-occupied Poland during the Holocaust.

In this review, we present memories and testimonies from physicians. These statements are a powerful way to detail the many aspects of the Holocaust. Behind every story there is also a person, and the testimonies can be a significant contribution to the re-humanization of the victims. These testimonies would make good case studies for medical education.

In the Nazi concentration and extermination camps there were doctors among the prisoners and the victims. They were deported as Jews, political prisoners, or as members of the resistance against the Nazis; therefore, their testimonies are of special interest. The topic of medicine and the Holocaust

has been addressed in articles that were published during or immediately after the War, even before

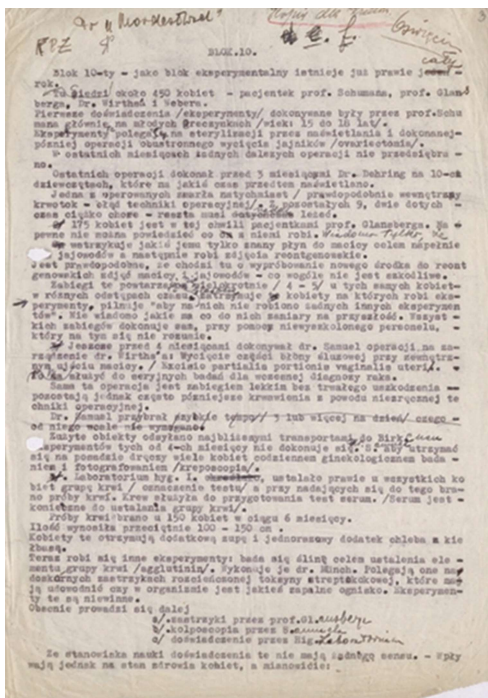
the extent of the Nazi cruelty was revealed [1,2]. Most of the memoirs were published many years after 1945.

THE DOCTOR'S REPORT SMUGGLED FROM AUSCHWITZ TO LONDON

Dora Kleinová (also known as Slawa Klein, Dorota Lorka, and Dora Goldszajer) was a Jewish Polish doctor

who served in the Spanish Civil War in several hospitals supporting the Spanish Republic against the rebels. With the defeat of the Spanish Republic, she went into exile in France. As member of the French resistance and the Czech Communist party in France she was deported to Block 10 at Auschwitz, one of the places where the Nazi medical experiments took place. Dr. Kleinová wrote an extensive report on the sterilization procedures inflicted on women by the Nazi physicians Horst Schumann and Carl Clauberg. With the help of the resistance movement, her report was smuggled out of the camp and eventually reached London. The testimony proved that medical crimes were happening in the camps [1,2] [Figure 1].

Figure 1. Reference ŻIH 209/72/3. The report is quoted according to the original entry. Archive of New Records, in Warsaw. Report written by Dr. Dorota Lorksa and smuggled out of Auschwitz (Source: Archiwum Akt Nowych in Warsaw)



THE BLACK BOOK OF POLISH JEWRY, 1943

The Black Book of Polish Jewry is a 400-page report about the progress of the Holocaust in Poland. It was published in 1943 by the American Federation for Polish Jews in cooperation with the Association of Jewish Refugees and Immigrants from Poland. It was compiled by Jacob Apenszlak, Jacob Kenner, Isaac Lewin, and Moses Polakiewicz, and released by Roy Publishers of New York with an intro-

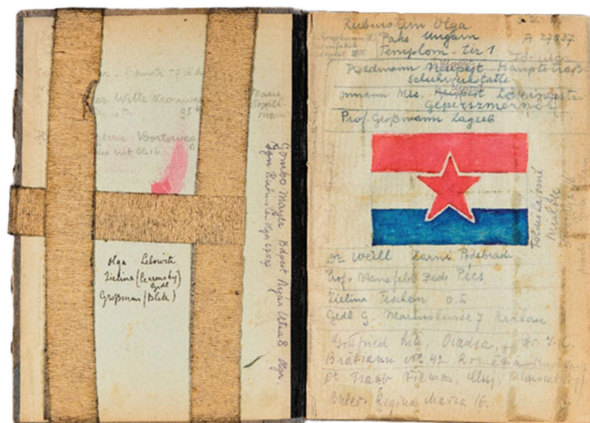
duction by Ignacy Schwarzbart from the National Council of the Polish Republic. Although it is not a medical book, it gives thorough descriptions of hunger and disease and the medical problems of the deportees. There are testimonies from the Polish orientalist Dr. Witold Majewski, who entered the Warsaw Ghetto three times and was twice imprisoned by the Gestapo. He managed to escape to Palestine. It is interesting to note the list of the sponsors of that book, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Salo Baron, Albert Einstein, and Fiorello Henry La Guardia.

THE CONCENTRATION CAMP SYNDROME, BY DR. ELIAZAR DE WIND

One of the first testimonies of the Nazi medical atrocities was given by Dr. Eliazar de Wind [3], a Dutch Jewish psychiatrist. He was imprisoned in Westerbork transit camp (Netherlands) and then deported to Auschwitz with his wife who was a victim of sterilization experiments conducted in the notorious Block 10. After the liberation of Auschwitz, Dr. de Wind stayed in the camp caring for former prisoners and writing his memories [Figure 2].

de Wind was the first doctor to describe the so-called concentration camp syndrome (KZ syndrome). He described the symptoms, aftereffects, and even the possibility of transmitting it to the second generation. In 1946 he published a book of his memories. In 1949 he compiled a complete description of the KZ syndrome in a Dutch medical journal. KZ syndrome was the precursor of post-traumatic stress disorder [4,5].

Figure 2. Image of the memories written by Dr. Eliazar de Wind in Auschwitz. It shows the Dutch flag and decorated with the Communist red star as a tribute to the Soviet Union Army as liberator of Auschwitz Birkenau camp (Source: de Sonja de Wind-Klijn Collection, Courtesy of Musealia, Auschwitz Exhibition)



DR. PAUL FRIEDMAN

Dr. Paul Friedman and his American team, which included a social worker and a psychologist, spent 9 months with Holocaust survivors in displaced persons camps in Europe, in Palestine, and in Cyprus, where the British Mandate forces detained Jewish Holocaust survivors who wanted to immigrate to Palestine. He illustrated Viktor Emil Frankl's (1905–1997) experience in Auschwitz [6]. Friedman described the plethora of psychopathological symptoms experienced by Holocaust survivors. He mentioned the French Jewish philosopher, psychiatrist, and resistance fighter Eugène (Eugeniusz) Minkowski [7,8] (1885–1972). Minkowski coined the term *affective anesthesia*. Friedman discussed David Rousset (1912–1997), a French writer and political activist and recipient of Prix Renaudot, who was a survivor of the Neuengamme and the Buchenwald Nazi concentration camps. He also elaborated on the experiences of Louis Martin-Chauffier (1894–1980) a French journalist, writer, member of the French resistance, and inmate of Neuengamme and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps. Friedman was born in Lublin, Poland, in 1899 and earned an MD in Switzerland and a PhD from Jena University in Germany. He became a famous professor of psychiatry in New York, USA, and an expert on suicidal tendencies [9,10]. His report on the psychological complications in children who survived the Holocaust still attracts many researchers [11].

CONCENTRATION CAMP SYNDROME AND THE POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH PHENOMENON

Concentration camp syndrome and the post-traumatic growth in Holocaust survivors describe people who experienced devastating events and survived the war and the Holocaust. Similar terms such as barbed-wire syndrome [12], KZ syndrome, survivor syndrome, asthenia progressiva, Muselmänner phenomenon, and Shoah syndrome describe the consequences of the being in concentration camps in two ways: either deterioration into despair, apathy, loneliness, and boredom (ennui) or development of joyful behavior (*joie de vivre*) and creativity. Some of the more positive symptoms show people moving into optimistic horizons, exhibiting capability, positive energy, cultural atmosphere, enterprise, and luck. This

TESTIMONIES, ARTICLES, OR BOOKS ON NAZI MEDICAL ATROCITIES WRITTEN BY PHYSICIANS, SOME OF WHOM SURVIVED THE HOLOCAUST, PROVIDE IMPORTANT TEACHING MATERIALS.

THE VIEWS OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS GIVE SPECIAL INSIGHT INTO THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE DURING THE HOLOCAUST.

phenomenon helps to explain the stories of Holocaust survivors who became productive physicians, scientists, and authors including Leo Eitinger [13], Jakub Penson, Ludwik Fleck, Victor Frankl, Bernard Bornstein [14], Lucie Adelsberger, Alfred Gilbert-Dreyfus, François Wetterwald, and Mark Dworzecki. One can explore the post-traumatic growth phenomenon of some well-known Holocaust survivors such as Elie Wiesel and Primo Levy, as well as physician Leonardo de Benedetto; poets and writers like Paul Celan, Jean Améry, Ida Fink, Imre Kertész, Nelly Sachs, and Romain Gary; and physician-writers Hans Keilson and André Léon Blum. Primo Levy coined the term: *ineffability*, which he defined as the inability to describe an experience in words. Perhaps some survivors experienced the *Todeserwartung Syndrome* (waiting to die) [15], but they regained enough energy for re-growth.

We believe that while discussing post-traumatic growth, we must include three more conditions: pathic pentagram developed by German philosopher-neuropsychiatrist Viktor von Weizsäcker (1886–1957); the concept of information metabolism, resilience, vulnerability by Polish psychiatrist Antoni Ignacy Tadeusz Kępiński (1918–1972) [16]; and the integration of health instead of pathology and illness by Aaron Antonovsky [17] (1923–1994), an American Israeli sociologist of medicine.

DR. LEO ALEXANDER REPORTS ON EUTHANASIA, KTENOLGY, AND THE NUREMBERG TRIALS

Dr. Leo Alexander [18] published an article on medical science under dictatorship [19]. Irrespective of other ideologic trappings, the guiding philosophic principle of recent dictatorships, including that of the Nazis, has been Hegelian in that what has been considered rational utility and corresponding doctrine and planning has replaced moral, ethical, and religious values. Alexander described the various methods and processes of euthanasia and suggested a new term, *ktenology*, the science of killing. Alexander (1905–1985) was an Austrian Jewish American neuropsychiatrist, educator, and author. He served as a key medical advisor during the Nuremberg trials and cooperated with others to write the Nuremberg Human Experiments Code of Ethics [20]. We could not find any published evidence of Alexander discussing the topic of psychopathology of Nazi leaders with the American psychiatrist Dr. Douglas

McGlashan Kelley (1912–1958), who examined the Nazi leaders before the Nuremberg trials [21]. In his publications, Alexander also used the terms *mortido*, coined by Paul Federn (1870–1950), one of Sigmund Freud's pupils. The term refers to an energy of withdrawal, disintegration, and resistance to life and growth as well as the desire to destroy life, both in oneself and others.) [22].

TO READ, TO WEEP, AND TO PONDER

When his younger brother was killed in a pogrom in Budapest, Max Thorek and his family decided to emigrate to Chicago, IL, USA. He completed his medical studies at Rush Medical College in 1904. Thorek worked in obstetrics, general medicine, and plastic reconstructive surgery.

Thorek (1880–1960) [23,24] was a Hungarian American plastic surgeon best known for founding the International College of Surgeons in 1935 and writing his autobiography entitled *A Surgeon's World* in 1943. In 1946 he published information on Palestine and the Near East as well on the new State of Israel in an article, *To Read, to Weep and to Ponder* [25]. In his 1946 article, Thorek wrote:

"In the Knickerbocker Weekly, the Netherlands Magazine (15 October 1945), Dr. Karel Sperber, formerly of Prague, Czechoslovakia, and now of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, gives details of his experiences as a prisoner of war. Dr. Sperber came to know a number of prison camps, the last being the notorious concentration camp of Oswiecim (Auschwitz). With commendable restraint Dr. Sperber limits his story to his experiences as a doctor, having been one among many imprisoned physicians forced to exercise his medical skill. The horrors of Oswiecim have already been widely publicized. Of the doctors' side less is known" [25].

Thorek added, "Further, not only were the majority of German physicians Nazi sympathizers but for reasons involving their career even placed their services at the disposal of the Nazis.....We beg all our colleagues not to let the doctors of Hitler's army think their diplomas will save them from the inevitable retribution or that they will not be made to answer for their crimes together with other Hitlerite criminals....Let it firmly be agreed upon, then, that when doctors from every land finally can come to the conference table for an interchange of experience and of knowledge, there shall be no taint of what Homer spoke of as "swine about the board." There must be no place at that table now or in years to come for those guilty

of such bestial crimes against our profession and against humanity."

Karel Sperber (1910–1957) [26] was a Jewish Czechoslovak surgeon who travelled to England after the Nazi invasion but was forbidden to practice medicine because he was an immigrant. He worked as a ship's doctor and was captured by Axis forces when his ship was sunk by the Germans. He was sent to Auschwitz concentration camp where he was forced to assist Horst Schumann and Carl Clauberg [27] in their sterilization experiments on Jewish and non-Jewish women. Sperber was awarded the Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire title in 1946 for the medical services he provided to prisoners of war [26].

SCIENCE AND MEDICINE IN GHETTOS AND CAMPS

In juxtaposition to the Nazi medical atrocities [28], some Jewish physicians and scientists managed to be involved in medical research on hunger disease or on infectious disease in the ghettos and camps. Most of the research was published after the war. The projects included the research on hunger disease in the Warsaw Ghetto, the Dutch Hunger Disease report, Ludwik Fleck's research on typhus, Ludwik Hirszfild's hematological research, Jakub Penson's nephrological research in Warsaw ghetto, and Joseph Weill's work on the hunger disease in southern France, which was published in Geneva, in 1943.

"It is as difficult for a former internee to write objectively of a concentration camp as it is for one who has not been interned to grasp the horror of existence in such a place," Dr. Lucie Adelsberger wrote in her testimony given in 1946 and published in *Lancet* [28].

Krystal [29] wrote, "Therefore, we try to make the Final Solution into something else, a part of God's plan, a necessary step for the creation of Israel, and we confer upon the dead the mantle of martyrdom. But in truth it is a story with no meaning and very few martyrs (Arthur Ziegelbaum, who committed suicide in London to call attention to the gas chambers, and Adam Czerniakow, chairman of the Warsaw Judenrat, who preferred suicide to sending more Jews to the gas chamber, being two notable exceptions). These millions of human beings did not die for a cause; they died because they were there and because they were Jewish."

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Acknowledgements

The authors thank Franciszek Bojańczyk from the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, Poland; Musealia, Auschwitz Exhibition *Not long ago, not far away* [Available from <https://auschwitz.net/>]; and Dr. Sabine Hildebrandt, Division of General Pediatrics, Department of Pediatrics, Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, USA.

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Capsule

Augmenting muscle fiber excitability

Myasthenia gravis (MG) is caused by an autoimmune response against postsynaptic components of the neuromuscular junction, leading to impaired communication between motor neurons and muscle fibers. Skov and co-authors showed that inhibition of the CIC-1 chloride channel with an orally bioavailable small molecule augments muscle excitability in response to motor commands and thereby

improves muscle function in rat models of MG. Data from a small randomized clinical trial demonstrated that this treatment was well tolerated in patients with MG and improved a quantitative disease severity score. These findings support further clinical development of CIC-1 inhibitors for MG.

Sci Transl Med 2024; 16 (739): eadk9109

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