

7. The Researchers

SUCH WAS THE WORK DONE IN THE GHETTO. THE MOST CASUAL reader, whether physician or layman, cannot help but be struck by the recurring phrases in their papers that betoken the life of the researchers. "Unfortunately our work was interrupted"—by the mass round-up and deportation to the gas chambers at Treblinka. "This work has disappeared"—leafed through by the German looters of the vacant apartments, thrown on the blood-stained floor, and finally burned to ashes with the rest of the Ghetto. "We could not pursue this phase of the investigation for technical reasons"—because every reagent that was used, every X-ray film, meant that much less food for the investigators and the food they had was little enough. "We gave the patient 120 ml. of blood"—not more, because the blood they gave was their own. "We procured apparatus"—from the smugglers. "This work was unfinished for reasons not of our own choosing"—but by choice of the German overlords.

To let perish the memory of the noble men and women

who participated in the research and who are now dead would be wrong, just as wrong as not to honor those still alive.

Dr. Roza Amzel (1906–1943)

After having received her degree in microbiology early in the 1930's, she worked in several State institutions until she became associated in 1937 with Dr. Ludwik Hirszfeld, who regarded her as his "trustworthy right hand."¹ Together they helped to develop bacteriologic research in Poland. She was extremely talented, enthusiastic and sincere, always ready to try out new ideas and with the faculty of generating desire for research in others.

For a time she taught at the Pasteur Institute in Paris and then returned to Poland for an investigation into the treatment of typhoid fever and later joined with Dr. Hirszfeld in an extensive study on blood groups. In 1939, she was again at the Pasteur Institute. She came back to Poland at the first rumblings of war. During the bombing of Warsaw, she helped in the organization of a blood transfusion service for which she received much praise.

Devoted to her work, she wanted to stay in the Ghetto to do what she could for her suffering compatriots. The "re-settlement" of July 1942 made her fearful for the life of her old mother with whom she lived. They made several attempts to escape together from the Ghetto and finally succeeded. They hid on the "Aryan" side for almost a year, in various places begrudgingly given by former colleagues and friends, having to change their hide-outs frequently because of fear that their hosts' neighbors would discover them. They were forced to spend large amounts of money on bribes and rent charges. Almost at the end of their tether towards the latter part of 1943, they were finally denounced by the *concierge* of the building where they were staying, turned over to the SS, and shot.²

Dr. Emil Apfelbaum (1890-1946)

Dr. Apfelbaum received his M.D. degree from the University of Warsaw in 1922. He had an extensive practice as a cardiologist in that city as well as being engaged in research into diseases of the circulation at the University Clinic in Internal Medicine.

He succeeded in obtaining false identification papers and escaped from the Ghetto at the end of January 1943. He remained in hiding on the "Aryan" side until the liberation. After the war, he changed his name to Kowalski because, he said, "he hated the Germans so much he could no longer bear a German name."

He died suddenly, presumably of a heart attack, on the street in Warsaw, on January 12, 1946.

Dr. Zdzislaw Askanas (1910-)

He received his M.D. degree from the University of Warsaw in 1935. In March 1943, he left the Ghetto and remained in hiding from the Gestapo until the abortive Warsaw uprising of 1944 in which he took an active part and during which he organized a field hospital for the civilian population evacuated from the city. After the liberation he served in the Polish Army. Demobilized in 1946, he took a position in the Internal Medicine Division of the Ministry of Health. In 1950 he became Docent and in 1954 Professor in the Medical Faculty of the University of Warsaw. At present, Dr. Askanas is Chief of the Fourth Clinic in Internal Medicine and Consultant in Cardiology at Warsaw University.

Dr. Owsiej Bielenki (1884-1943)

Dr. Bielenki took his degree in science in a Russian university and the M.D. degree in Warsaw in 1913, under the

Tsarist regime. His reputation as a specialist in diseases of the lung spread all over Poland. His practice was large, not only because of his knowlege, but also because of the personal magnetism which made his patients adore him. He was tall and thin, with an appearance that inspired confidence and with a gentle smile that convinced his patients of his interest in them.³

In the spring of 1940, before the closing of the Ghetto, he became Chief of the Division of Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases at the Czysta Hospital and retained that position after the removal of the hospital inside the Ghetto walls.⁴

After the hospital broke up, he got a "right to live" card as a factory worker. He worked in the factory up until the liquidation of the Ghetto on April 18, 1943.⁵ On that day, together with the other workers in his shop, he was sent to the Trawniki Labor Camp. There he helped in the organization of a camp hospital for the benefit of his fellow prisoners. He was killed in the mass extermination of the camp in November 1943.⁶

Dr. Leon Blacher (1894-1942)

An M.D. since 1922, Dr. Blacher practiced in Warsaw. He took an active interest in the research project and was assigned to write the section on the coagulation of the blood in starvation. His work was lost when he was taken away to Treblinka in the July 1942 "action."

Dr. Anna Braude-Heller (1888-1943)

Dr. Anna Braude-Heller, the daughter of a wealthy family, studied in Switzerland, taking her medical degree at Zurich in 1911. While there, she naturally mingled with her compatriots, most of them emigrated Bundists. From them she learned Socialist ideas and ideals and through

them she met her future husband, Heller, an engineer. She returned to Poland in 1914 to start what was to become her life-work—the care of poor children. One of her first accomplishments was the organization of a home for abandoned or war-orphaned children. After the war was over, she was a moving spirit in the development of the Medem Sanitarium and took the post of chief medical advisor.⁷ She later became the medical director of the Bauman-Berson Children's Hospital on Sliska Street, an institution whose fame was widespread under her administration. During the siege of Warsaw in World War II, under her guidance the hospital became a center for first aid and care of the wounded.⁸

With the establishment of the Ghetto, the Children's Hospital took on ever-increasing importance. Dr. Braude-Heller carried on despite the most heart-breaking obstacles, not the least of which was the depletion of the staff from hunger, typhus and "resettlement." After each setback she started over again to make the hospital a functioning place for the healing of sick children. To repeated offers of help in escaping from the Ghetto, she replied, "I am not going. I have agreed to send out my son with his wife and child. As long as there are Jews in the Ghetto I am needed here and here will I stay."

The total destruction of the hospital did not stop her. She worked as a doctor for the Resistance fighters. Her end came on May 3, 1943. She was killed in a bunker under the courtyard of the defunct hospital on Gensia Street, at her post to the last.⁹

Dr. Chaim Einhorn (1910-)

He received his medical degree in 1935 from the University of Nancy. Certified to practice in Warsaw in 1937, he worked as an assistant in the Holy Ghost Clinic under

Professor Filinski until 1939 when all the Jews were forced out of the hospital. He then became an assistant in the Czysa Hospital in the service of Dr. Beiles. After the latter was arrested in 1941 for crossing to the "Aryan" side, Dr. Einhorn took his place as head of the Division of Internal Medicine in the quarters at 2 Leszno Street. At the same time he worked at the tuberculosis preventorium center for refugees at Grzybowska Street, where Dr. Bielenki was director. He was also a doctor at the refugee center at 19 Niska Street, from which cases were chosen for referral for study on the hunger project.

Dr. Einhorn managed to escape to the "Aryan" side during the January 1943 uprising by bribing one of the wall guards. He remained hidden in a cellar until the liberation. He left Poland in 1946, going to Austria, where he was placed in charge of a displaced persons hospital (for lung diseases) in Hallein. There he remained until 1948. He now practices as an internist with special interest in pulmonary disorders in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Dr. Regina Elbinger (1889-1943)

Dr. Elbinger's certification to practice in Poland was delayed for two years because she received her medical degree from a foreign university. It was not until 1937 that she started her career as a pediatrician at the Bauman-Berson Hospital. At the outbreak of the first epidemic she was appointed head of the Typhus Fever Division in the hospital. She perished during the Ghetto uprising of April 1943.

Dr. Simon Fajgenblat (1900-1944)

Dr. Fajgenblat (M.D., University of Warsaw, 1930) was a well-known ophthalmologist in Warsaw. Shortly after the 1942 liquidations, he and his wife, Janina, also an oph-

thalmologist, escaped from the Ghetto and remained in hiding until the 1944 uprising, in which he took part. Severely wounded, he was taken to a secret hospital where he died. During the chaotic time of the revolt, he had become separated from his wife. After the liberation, in 1945, she finally discovered what had happened to him. Overwhelmed by the news, she committed suicide.

Dr. Henryk Fenigstein (1913-)

Dr. Fenigstein attended the University of Warsaw until 1937 and then the Medical Officers' School in Warsaw until 1938, when he received his medical degree. In 1939, on service with the Polish Army, he was wounded and taken prisoner. He was released from a prisoner-of-war camp in April 1940, and allowed to return to Warsaw. From May 1940 until the end of the Ghetto he was associated with the Czysta Hospital as an assistant in the Department of Pathology. During that time he did close to three thousand autopsies and, besides participating in the research on hunger, wrote a number of medical papers, all of which were lost.

Captured by the Nazis in April 1943 during the burning of the Ghetto, he was sent first to the concentration camp at Lublin, and then to the camp at Budzyn. There he was kept until May 23, 1944, when he was successively transferred to the camps at Radom, Auschwitz, Vaihingen, Hessenthal, and finally, Dachau. Liberated by the American Army on April 30, 1945, he started to work immediately as a doctor in the UNRRA Hospital in Munich. He left this post in August 1948 to become an assistant in the obstetrics and gynecology department of the Munich University Polyclinic. Since the end of 1948, he has been practicing in Toronto, Canada.¹⁰

Fajga Ferszt (1917-1942)

Miss Ferszt was a microbiologist, a graduate of a Polish school. She was an assistant to Dr. Goliborska in the Children's Hospital. In July 1942, she was ordered by the Germans to report to a labor camp to work as a nurse there. She never returned to the Ghetto and presumably died in the camp.¹¹

Dr. Julian Fliederbaum (1898-1943)

Soon after he had received his M.D. degree in 1924 from the University of Petrograd, Dr. Fliederbaum became a successful internist in Vilna, Lithuania. Before the outbreak of World War II, he had become Chief of the Endocrinology Service at the Vilna Cancer Hospital. Like so many refugees at the beginning of the war, he and his family fled to the presumed safety of Warsaw. There he joined his heavily laden colleagues in their desperate task of trying to hold back the advancing mortality in the Ghetto.

After the isolation hospital on Stawki Street was changed to a general hospital, he became its director and, as such, encouraged and took part in the research project.¹²

In the final liquidation of the Ghetto, rather than submit to a further tortured life under German rule, he, together with his wife and little son, jumped from the fourth floor of their apartment building and were killed instantly.¹³

Dr. Theodosia Goliborska (1899-)

Dr. Goliborska received her medical degree from the University of Warsaw in 1926. She became head of the Department of Pathology at the Bauman-Berson Hospital

and remained in that position until she finally left the Ghetto in 1942 after the "resettlement." With the aid of friends from the "Aryan" side, she escaped by bribing the wall guards. She stayed in hiding on the "Aryan" side until the liberation. In 1946 she emigrated to Australia, where she is now practicing.

Dr. Ari (Leo) Heller (1917-)

Dr. Heller, the son of Dr. Anna Braude-Heller, succeeded in escaping with his wife and child from the Ghetto during the January 1943 "action." They remained in hiding on the "Aryan" side until the liberation. He took his M.B. degree in 1945 at Lublin. For a short time he was an assistant in the biochemistry department of the University of Lublin, and then went to the University of Breslau. In April 1946 he moved to Sweden where he worked as a biochemist, and, since 1948, as a virologist. He is now associate professor at the National Bacteriologic Laboratory in Stockholm.

Jerzy Herzenkruk (1919-1943)

Mr. Herzenkruk had studied dentistry for four years before the beginning of World War II and it was only the collapse of Poland and its educational institutions that prevented him from getting his degree. His previous training and his enthusiasm were a great help in some of the more tedious aspects of the research project. In September of 1942, after the "Big Kettle," he and his wife managed to make their way to the "Aryan" side. There they were in hiding until they were discovered and denounced by blackmailers and killed early in 1943.

Dr. Mieczyslaw Kocen (1896-1943)

Dr. Kocen got his medical degree at the University of Rostov, in Russia, in 1920. Certified by the University of

Warsaw in 1935, he returned to Lodz, his native city, where he became a clinical pathologist, with particular interest in the field of hematology. He became director of the Department of Pathology at the Poznanski Hospital in that city. He was also in charge of a similar department in the Polish government institution "Kasa Chorych," besides having a large private practice. In 1939, when the Germans incorporated Lodz into the Reich, he and his family were deported to Krakow, and thence to Warsaw in 1940. In July 1942, after the mass deportations had begun, he found a way to send his ten-year-old son (now a physician in England) to the "Aryan" side. In October 1942, his wife was killed. He himself was taken to Treblinka for extermination after the liquidation of the hospital in January 1943.

Dr. Israel Milejowski (1887-1943)

Dr. Milejowski received his M.D. degree from Warsaw University in 1914 and practiced there as a dermatologist and venereologist. In addition to his medical work, he was an active leader in the General Zionist Party. One day, soon after the capture of Warsaw, he was set upon by a gang of Germans on the street. Disregarding his Red Cross band, they proceeded to beat him up, and then bade him sing and dance. He said later of this episode, "I could have shown character and refused, in which case the Nazis would have killed me. That would not have been too pleasant for me—so I danced."¹⁴ Because of his prominence as a physician and as a Zionist he was appointed by the German authorities as one of the original members of the *Judenrat*.¹⁵

He used his position to organize a Public Health Service for the Ghetto in order to mitigate the physical evils of the occupation as much as possible. On the spiritual side he

continued his efforts to maintain the sense of Jewish solidarity in his brethren, heavily borne down by their daily trials and tribulations.

Together with other leaders in the cultural life of the Ghetto, he organized discussion groups¹⁶ and actively participated in the setting up of the illegal courses for medical students, one of which, the course on general pathology, he gave himself.¹⁷

His attitude to life in the Ghetto was clear: he regarded it not as a throwback to the Middle Ages, as did so many of his contemporaries, but rather as a new, a degenerative, development in Jewish history in which no cultural life could evolve as it had in the medieval Ghettos. He felt that the Jews had to bend under the blows of the oppressors, to shrink away, in order that they might survive; he felt that the defeat of the Nazis was certain and, meanwhile, as much of Jewish culture as possible should be preserved. He looked on the research into hunger as one aspect of Jewish survival. In his reply to a questionnaire from the Oneg Shabbat (the legal pseudonym for the Underground Archives), in one section he said, "We will later—after the catastrophe—be able to demonstrate to the world that the murderous enemy could not destroy us. In the very moment while we are sitting here there is going on a small scientific session, concerning the Ghetto. The result of this work will be published later and I hope that it will be of great interest to the whole world."¹⁸

Dr. Milejowski happened to be in the building where the *Judenrat* had its offices on the day that the Germans told the chairman, Czerniakow, that ten thousand Jews were to be supplied daily for "resettlement" in the East. Unable to bring himself to comply with the order to arrange for the deportations, Czerniakow committed suicide

by taking potassium cyanide. Dr. Milejowski, summoned when the body was found, could do nothing other than pronounce him dead.

The terrible scenes of the deportations and the later discovery that "resettlement" really meant gassing and incineration made Dr. Milejowski change his opinion about how the Jews should act toward the Germans. He gave up the idea of passive resistance and was taking steps to join the Jewish Fighting Organization. His resolution came too late, however. On January 18, 1943, the Germans started a new liquidation. On January 19, all the *Judenrat* officials were arrested, including Dr. Milejowski. True to his new idea, he did not go quietly to the *Umschlagsplatz*, but had to be dragged there by force. His last words as he was loaded into the freight car for Treblinka were, "Murderers! Our blood will fall on your heads!"¹⁹

Dr. Ryszard Pakswer (1912–1943?)

Other than the dates of his birth and the granting of a medical degree to him by the University of Krakow in 1936, nothing is in the available records about Dr. Pakswer. It is hinted that he was one of the doctors taken away in January 1943, to Treblinka.

Dr. Moryc (Moritz) Plonskier (1896–1942)

Dr. Plonskier took his medical training at the University of Warsaw, getting his degree from there in 1925. Until 1939 he was head of the Department of Pathologic Anatomy at the Czysta Hospital. In that year he left for Lwow to take up a position there. He returned to Warsaw in 1940 and became a staff member at the Bauman-Berson Children's Hospital. He was taken away in the July 1942 deportations.

Dr. Boleslaw Raszkes (1902-1942)

Dr. Raszkes, a 1928 graduate of the University of Warsaw, practiced as a dermatologist in that city. He was an assistant in the Dermatology Clinic of his alma mater. He was killed at Treblinka in July 1942.

Dr. Israel Rotbalsam (Rom) (1909-)

Dr. Rotbalsam got his M.D. at the University of Warsaw in 1932. From 1933 to 1935 he was on the staff of the Holy Ghost Hospital; from 1935 to 1938, with the Pediatric Clinic of Warsaw University; and from 1938, on the staff of the Bauman-Berson Children's Hospital. He remained and worked in the Ghetto until after the January 1943 attack, when he succeeded in making his way to the "Aryan" side. The Gestapo was hot on his trail, however, and he was forced to return to the relative safety of the Ghetto in March of 1943. On May 11, 1943, during the uprising in the Ghetto, he was captured by the S.S. and sent to Treblinka and from there to the concentration camp at Majdanek. The next two years were spent in various concentration camps, including Buchenwald and Mauthausen. He was liberated from the last by the advancing American Army. After making his way to Paris, where he stayed for seven months, he left for Palestine. He began to work (and still does so) as a pediatrician for Kupat Holim (the Workers' Sickness Fund) except for one year's military service during Israel's war for independence in 1948. He now resides in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Dr. Joseph Stein (1904-1943)

Dr. Stein, described by those who knew him as a sweet and gentle man, had an unusually broad education, being a Doctor of Philosophy as well as having the M.D. degree

granted by the University of Warsaw in 1927. Before the war, as an anatomist and pathologist of great reputation, he was given a grant by the Potocki Foundation to do research in cancer as an associate in the Department of Pathology at the Holy Ghost Hospital.²⁰

In spite of the fact that he had been baptized into the Catholic faith and that he regarded himself as completely Polish, he was forced into the Ghetto.²¹ His extensive collection of typhus fever specimens was broken up by the Germans and distributed to various pathology institutes in Germany. He refused all offers of help to escape from the Ghetto, saying that, as Director of the Czysta Hospital, his duty was to his patients and he had to stay with them. In the last days of the Ghetto, on May 6, 1943, he was taken with his wife and daughter to Treblinka, where they were all killed.²²

Dr. Mieczyslaw Szejnman (1901-1943)

A graduate of Warsaw University in 1928, Dr. Szejnman confined his practice to internal medicine, with particular interest in hematology. During the early period of the Ghetto he was very active in the anti-typhus fever inoculation campaign.²³ He managed to leave the Ghetto just before the April 1943, uprising, but was caught by the Gestapo on the "Aryan" side and was killed.

Dr. Michael Szajnman (1912-1942)

A pediatrician since 1936 (M.D., University of Warsaw), Dr. Szajnman took an active part in the research on hunger. He himself died of malnutrition early in 1942.

Dr. Suzanne Szejnfinkel

Other than the fact that she received her degree in biology, no information is available.

Dr. Ichaskil Wohl (1895-1943)

He received his medical degree in 1923 from the University of Vienna and was licensed to practice in Poland in 1926. Influenced by his brother-in-law, the noted Mizrahi leader, Dr. Wolfsberg, he took a leading part in many Jewish community activities. He was indefatigable inside the Ghetto, working for his co-religionists, feeling certain that the Jews would outlive Hitler as they had Haman.²⁴ It was only after the great deportations of July 1942 that he realized that survival was possible only outside of the Ghetto walls. He cast about for ways to save his only daughter, but was unsuccessful. The Polish nuns who took so many other Jewish children into their convents, saying they were Polish orphans, refused to take her because she did not have a "good visage;" with her black hair and dark eyes she "looked Jewish."²⁵

In February 1943, he, with his wife and daughter, finally escaped to the "Aryan" side. There they lived for several months, kept by friendly Poles, until the end so common to other escapees overtook them also. They were discovered by *schmaltzovniks* (blackmailers) and, when their money gave out, were turned over to the Germans, who killed all three.

Jeanne (Janina) Zarchi (?-1942)

Miss Zarchi was the daughter of a popular general practitioner in Zambrow, which place she left to study medicine in Warsaw. She disappeared in September 1942, presumably taken in the "Big Kettle" of that month.

Dr. Kazimierz Zweibaum (Zakrzewski) (1918-)

Dr. Zakrzewski, the son of Professor Julius Zweibaum, took his medical training and got his degree from the Uni-

versity of Lwow in 1941. When the Germans invaded the U.S.S.R., he went to Warsaw, where his parents still were. He took an active part in the research project. He survived the German occupation and continued his medical studies after the war. He became a Docent in 1954 and now is Professor at a Warsaw Research Institute.