

Book Reviews

the retail trade of spices and drugs to the care of their servants (“*Apothekerknechte*”). One of these, Hans Minner, was to become the most important pharmacist of the German Middle Ages. Others became partners of their masters, e.g. Caspar Schneberger (c.1495), who probably was the first apothecary to specialize exclusively in medical pharmaceuticals. As retail traders in Zurich, “apothecaries” belonged to the traders’ and shopkeepers’ guild (*Krämerzunft, Zunft zur Saffran*); at this point the author convincingly destroys some old legends. As a member of the “*Saffran*”-guild, “apothecary” Jacob Schwartzmurer (1439–75)—Minner was his servant—was elected Burgomaster of Zurich.

The book is completed by biographical data from archival documents, some illustrations showing the localization of Zurich pharmacies from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, sixty pages of source publications, a bibliography, and an index of personal names.

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HUBERT FISCHER, *Der deutsche Sanitätsdienst 1921–1945*, 2 vols., Osnabrück, Biblio; Chichester, John Wiley; vol. 1 (1982): pp. viii, 290, DM.68.00; vol. 2 (1983): pp. 291–1430, DM.160.00.

The author, himself a military physician (for his numerous post-war publications in the field, see vol. 2, p. 1388f.), presents a vast collection of facts (concerning organization, ranks, etc.) and reports (concerning battle-field experiences and the like). Apart from German sources, he uses in particular many Russian publications to describe in some detail the Soviet-Russian “Sanitätsdienst” during World War II, thus following his plan to illustrate “the experiences of the—at that time—Allied Forces, too, because these show impressively what the ‘other side’ did to preserve the life and health of their soldiers” (vol. 1 p. III). All this gives the big compilation its undoubted value (which would have been still greater if there had been indexes of names, etc.) and makes it, as far as it goes, a sort of history of the German “Sanitätsdienst” in the period under discussion. The question is, however, whether the book goes far enough, the more so because by far the greater part deals with a peculiar political situation: that of the Third Reich.

Reviewed from this point of view, the work reveals a remarkable amount of political abstinence, occasionally (very rarely, to be sure) interrupted by remarks that seem to show, by implication at least, a certain political tendency. One example may illustrate this: in the author’s own words, the German war against Soviet Russia was “according to Russian phraseology (‘Sprachgebrauch’), an attack based on a broken word” (vol. 2 p. 447). Does the author think otherwise, in this respect?

As for political abstinence, we do not blame the author for having neglected the “Sanitätsdienste” of Nazi (National Socialist) paramilitary organizations such as the SA and SS (although some “Wehrmacht” doctors certainly came from such organizations or from the Free Corps, having been active in the early 1920s, partly under the name “Schwarze Reichswehr”, which meant an illegal part of the legal Reichswehr, with which the author deals briefly in vol. 1.). Perhaps it would have been appropriate at least to touch on the question how far, in the author’s opinion, the “Waffen-SS” was a genuine part of the “Wehrmacht” or not (a hotly debated theme in post-war Germany). But what we feel bound to criticize is the author’s attempt to evade certain—in the circumstances—essential aspects of his theme: (a) how far was the “Sanitätsdienst” of the “Wehrmacht” infiltrated by Nazi ideology, and how far, in particular, were “Sanitätsdienst” functionaries and institutions involved in those experiments with human beings that were characteristic of the Nazi system? (b) are there any traces of resistance against, or criticism of, that system on the part of German military doctors?

Recently, it has been argued that the “ideological manipulation” of German military doctors during the Third Reich was more or less complete (see H. Jentzsch’s paper in A. Thom and H. Spaar (editors), *Medizin im Faschismus*, East Berlin, Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Medizin in der DDR, 1983). This assumption remains to be checked very carefully. The question is, for instance, how far a journal like *Der deutsche Militärarzt* (full of political ideology in those years) mirrored the political attitude of a majority of German military doctors, and whether it was read by many of them. Was it typical, instead, that

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Dr.med.Gottfried Benn (the famous poet) joined the "Sanitätsdienst" deliberately as a kind of non-political refuge (as apparently other physicians did)? How many German military doctors reacted like Oberstabsarzt Dr Möller, who saw an SS unit shoot a group of Polish "partisans" (including children aged between three and eight) and wrote a critical report to Hitler, the "Oberste Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht" (the case is documented in the Militärgeschichtliches Archiv, Freiburg)? It is well known that leading military physicians such as Professor Handloser (chief of the Heeressanitätswesen) and Professor Schröder (chief of the Sanitätswesen der Luftwaffe) were responsible for crimes against humanity (see documentation *Medizin ohne Menschlichkeit* by A. Mitscherlich and F. Mielke, Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 1949). Was this a consequence of blind obedience ("Kadavergehorsam" is a German slang phrase used to describe the soldier's obedience)? Such questions must be put and dealt with openly, before one can hope to see in print a fully satisfactory history of the "Deutscher Sanitätsdienst" between 1933 and 1945.

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GERALD D. HART, (editor), *Disease in ancient man*, Toronto, Clarke Irwin, 1984, 8vo, pp. xvii, 297, illus., [no price stated].

This book consists of individual papers presented at the International Symposium held at the Royal Society of Medicine in 1979. The symposium was organized and developed largely by the late Dr Calvin Wells, and the book is a just testimony to this, one of his final achievements. It is regrettable, but in no way the fault of the editor, contributors, or organizers, that this volume has taken five years to come to publication, thereby losing some of its impact.

The book is divided, as was the symposium content, into five sections, the whole reflecting the spectrum of palaeopathology. Clearly, in 297 pages, studies in depth of many aspects of palaeopathology could not be undertaken. Anyone requiring a textbook of palaeopathological diagnosis or a catalogue of specimens and specific disease histories should look elsewhere. What is demonstrated is the blend of archaeology, palaeopathology, medical history, and physico-chemical science.

The opening section on interdisciplinary collaboration sets a rather philosophic scene. Professor Cramp remarked that "palaeopathological studies in Britain are uncoordinated and desperately understaffed". In large measure due to the stimulus of Calvin Wells, the symposium, and now the book, these remarks have been heeded and change is occurring.

The two sections on traditional "macroscopic" palaeopathology are rather limited in field but not in excellence. The papers by Professor V. Møller-Christensen, by Dr C. J. Hackett, and by Professor W. J. Moore and M. E. Corbett are now amongst the classics of palaeopathology. Dr D. A. Birkett's paper should have stimulated research into the enigmatic lesions of tibial periostitis: now that it is available in print, maybe such work will be carried out.

The laboratory section contains papers presented in a relatively non-technical way, to demonstrate the range of serology, physico-chemical analysis, and microscopy in palaeopathological investigations. The bibliography of each of these papers is adequate for technical follow-up.

The final section returns to some rather speculative and interpretative aspects of medico-social history. Dr Janssens has shown how the clinical acumen and diagnostic expertise of modern medicine can be applied to sixth-century disease, and surely meningococcal septicaemia must rank high in the differential diagnostic list of *morbus dysentericus*.

Quite appropriately, the scientific bibliography of Dr Calvin Wells is published in full, and what a busy and fruitful life it represents.

For those of us who attended this symposium, this volume has been long awaited. Our patience is amply rewarded with an excellently produced collection of papers, which is a major contribution to palaeopathology and medical history.

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