

Beddoes would give up his researches on gases”—has neatly disposed of the argument as to whether all historical knowledge is in the past or in the present. For him, at least some of it is in the future.

This book is strongly recommended as essential reading for all interested in the history of anaesthesia or dentistry.

David Zuck, London

**Götz Aly, Peter Chroust, and Christian Pross**, *Cleansing the Fatherland: Nazi medicine and racial hygiene*, transl. Belinda Cooper, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, pp. xvi, 296, illus., \$48.50 (hardback 0-8018-4775-3), \$16.95 (paperback 0-8018-4824-5).

**Michael Burleigh**, *Death and deliverance: 'euthanasia' in Germany 1900–1945*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. xvii, 382, illus., £35, \$59.95 (hardback 0-521-41613-2), £14.95, \$18.95 (paperback 0-521-47769-7).

Historians are all too familiar with the many episodes in the past that resemble the Nazi era of twentieth-century Germany. Such episodes were exquisitely summarized by Alessandro Manzoni, writing ostensibly of seventeenth-century Italy: “From the inventions of the ignorant, educated men borrowed all that they could reconcile with their own ideas; from the inventions of the educated, the ignorant borrowed as much as they could understand. Out of all this emerged a confused and terrifying accumulation of public folly”.<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, Manzoni’s “educated” men have been politicians, soldiers, priests, lawyers and scholars. In a modern totalitarian society it is now apparent that the list must include physicians, making their own contribution to crimes against humanity. The roots of what was to become a process of medicalized mass murder can be traced to before World War I, when the intellectual atmosphere in Germany was already thick with notions of social

Darwinism, militant nationalism, eugenic theory and anti-semitism, all part of a political tinderbox which smouldered after military defeat and was ignited by the National Socialist regime in the 1930s. The terrible consequences constitute the substance of these two books. Both tell essentially the same story of a programme of medical “euthanasia” cloaking a policy aimed at the systematic destruction of sick populations and involving the active participation of the caring professions.

Michael Burleigh, a British historian, has written a scholarly monograph which is more red-blooded than is suggested by his rather anaemic description of “an attempt to study the relationship between psychiatric reform, eugenics and government cost-cutting policies during the Weimar Republic and Nazi periods”. Euthanasia was always implicit in the rise of eugenics and became a public issue in Germany after World War I with the publication in 1920 of the tract by Karl Binding (a lawyer) and Alfred Hoche (a psychiatrist) entitled ‘Permission for the destruction of life unworthy of life’.<sup>2</sup> The ways in which the euthanasia debate was subsequently perverted to justify the extermination of countless mentally and physically sick adults and children make up the core of Burleigh’s book. The grim narrative is illustrated throughout with telling anecdotes and individual portraits which constantly remind the reader of the horror behind the documentation and the statistics.

Occupying centre-stage is the role of the medical profession in these events. In the course of the trial of Adolf Eichmann there was a memorable exchange between the judge and Eichmann’s German defence counsel, who “declared the accused innocent of charges bearing on his responsibility for ‘the collection of skeletons, sterilizations, killings by gas, and similar medical matters’, whereupon Judge Halevi interrupted him: ‘Dr Servatius, I assume you made a slip of the tongue when you said that killing by gas was a medical matter’. To which Servatius replied: ‘It was indeed a medical matter, since it was prepared by

physicians; *it was a matter of killing, and killing too, is a medical matter*'.<sup>3</sup>

The murderous techniques developed for these "medical matters" were to be the progenitors of the methods that were to be employed for larger-scale extermination during World War II.<sup>4</sup> How far they were accepted by the medical profession is a focal point of *Cleansing the Fatherland*, comprising principally a collage of edited translations from the German of four long articles published during the mid-1980s in the journal *Beiträge zur Nationalsozialistischen Gesundheits-und Sozialpolitik*. The three authors—a journalist, an historian and a physician—cover much of the same territory as Burleigh, though rather more superficially. The principal additions are the two chapters devoted to the diaries of the anatomist Herman Voss and the letters of the SS "euthanasia doctor", Friedrich Mennecke. Here, without frills, is Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil" in a medical context. As Pross observes, furthermore, it is now clear that a majority of German doctors were involved, directly or indirectly, in their government's policy. Although the full proceedings of the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial of 1946–1947 have still to be published, the charges are manifold. They include the propagation of the pseudo-scientific doctrines of racial hygiene; the abrogation of ethical standards to the point of active or passive participation in mass murder; the involvement in criminal experimentation; and the systematic concealment of misconduct during the post-war period.

Truly a subject for medical historians.

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<sup>1</sup> A Manzoni, *The betrothed*, New York, 1962 (first Italian edition: *I promessi sposi*, Milan, 1825).

<sup>2</sup> K Binding and A Hoche, *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens. Ihre Mass und ihre Form*, Leipzig, 1920.

<sup>3</sup> H Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, London, 1994, p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> G Reitlinger, *The final solution*, New York, 1953.

**Jean Barclay**, *In good hands: the history of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy 1894–1994*, Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann, 1994, pp. xvi, 367, illus., £19.95 (0-7506-1745-4).

This work was commissioned by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy in its centenary year, to update the previous history—*The growth of a profession*—which was written by one of its members, Jane Wicksteed, in 1948. Barclay's work is very much a celebratory history—giving a chronological run-through of the major events and developments as collated from the minutes of the Society's various committees and its annual reports and newsletters. Barclay could equally well have given the book the title she chose for the third chapter, 'No false steps', because she presents all developments as natural and inevitable, with no analysis of the wider context of their genesis or their effect. As a history for practising and retired physiotherapists, looking for an overview or an aid to reminiscence, the book works well—many individuals are mentioned by name and the photographs are well chosen—and it is physiotherapists whom Barclay identifies as her primary audience. However, in the introduction she claims that she also hopes the book will tackle five "keynotes"—including the development of physiotherapy as a profession, the role played by men, and the development of new techniques, but events are generally merely described rather than analysed or put into context, so that the "keynotes" are left unexplored.

For example, between 1974 and 1979 debates took place within the Society over registration as a trade union and affiliation to the TUC—a crucial decision affecting the Society's perception of the place of physiotherapy within the medical professions—but Barclay devotes only one page to these discussions, and glosses over the poor relations the Society had with the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs, which represented many physiotherapists at the time and had "recently led them in a strike". Physiotherapy is never