

Book Reviews

“malaria as a disease” in the pre-DDT era must not be forgotten, for, as he states, “it is of great importance to keep alive the excitement of the malaria story, an aim to which this publication is dedicated”.

The author successfully meets this aim. The design of the book itself is simple and attractive and immediately offers both the specialist and non-specialist reader a fascinating insight into the debates as well as the problems and politics that have thwarted attempts over the centuries to eradicate and control malaria. The book is divided into three parts: ‘The yesterday of malaria’, ‘The today of malaria’, and ‘The tomorrow of malaria’. In the historical part, the ancient history of the disease receives a brief mention and it is the history of its control in different parts of the world during the twentieth century, following the discoveries by Charles Louis Alphonse Laveran, Patrick Manson, Ronald Ross, Giovanni Grassi and others of the plasmodium parasites and the mosquito cycle, that dominates this section. Litsios’s fascinating accounts of the researches, ideas, disputes and frustrations of five key malariologists, Paul Russell, Louis Hackett, C Percy James, Sir Malcolm Watson and Nicholas Swellengrebel, are especially illuminating. The second section explores the DDT era of malaria control and eradication. Revealing comments are taken from official reports as well as from the unpublished diaries of a number of leading players in the main malaria conferences and debates, allowing the reader to be drawn into the realities and complexities of malaria control efforts in the 1950s and 1960s. The final part of the book offers a valuable opportunity to understand how and why global politics have shaped the present and future malaria situation. It also includes a short discussion of the various strategies and scientific tools which are currently being adopted or developed in the hope of controlling the global threat of malaria. The book ends on a note of caution. Malaria is interwoven into the fabric of life in a complex way and, as Litsios demonstrates, there will be no easy answers to solving the very critical issue of the

“tomorrow of malaria”.

The book is published at a time when we shall shortly be “celebrating” the centenary of the discovery of the mosquito transmission of malaria and the golden jubilee of the World Health Organisation’s attempts at global eradication of the disease. It is a timely reminder that, in spite of important scientific discoveries and global campaigns, human endeavours have not solved the tomorrow of malaria. This is an excellent introductory text and highly recommended for all those who are concerned with the past, present and future of malaria and its wider implications.

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Henry Friedlander, *The origins of Nazi genocide: from euthanasia to the final solution*, Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 1995, pp. xxiii, 421, \$34.95 (0-8078-2208-6).

Since the early 1980s, the study of medicine under National Socialism has produced a veritable explosion of new works. From several major surveys of eugenic and racialist ideas in modern German science to numerous documentations of hospitals and medical faculties during the Nazi period, countless scholars have been investigating the role of doctors and medical science in the persecution and mass murder of Jews, Gypsies, the disabled, homosexuals and other groups condemned by the regime as “asocial”.

Friedlander’s *The origins of Nazi genocide*, one of the latest contributions to this ever-growing body of literature, is structured around one central thesis, a method of organization which accounts for many of the book’s strengths as well as its limitations. He posits, in short, that the Nazi “euthanasia” programme against the mentally and physically disabled—whose lives were deemed “unworthy of life” by the regime’s biologicistic ideology—set the stage for the subsequent genocide of Jews and Gypsies. It was through these earlier killings, Friedlander shows, that state and party officials

Book Reviews

developed their genocidal methods, inventing and refining the techniques of transportation, selection and gassing, and the schemes of subterfuge used to hide these atrocities from relatives and potential pockets of opposition.

To demonstrate the “intimate connections” between these two programmes, Friedlander chronicles the various stages in the Nazi campaigns against their most helpless victims, children and the mentally ill, whose tragic stories he sensitively narrates. He also spends considerable time on the identities, backgrounds and motivations of the perpetrators, often pointing out generational, social and psychological similarities. His attempt to deal with both sets of atrocities in the same framework is admirable, as is the attention Friedlander gives to relatively neglected groups, such as “Gypsies” and, in particular, “handicapped” Jews. He impressively incorporates a wealth of primary research into a tight and cogently argued study.

However, Friedlander’s central thesis imposes limitations on the material and at times seems overstated. Unlike Michael Burleigh, whose outstanding book on German “euthanasia” appeared one year earlier, Friedlander shows little interest in the economic roots of Nazi medical policy or in the pre-history of euthanasia in the Weimar era psychiatric reform movement. Determined to point out the connections between euthanasia and genocide, he offers too narrow an account of the origins of the “final solution”. That the path to Auschwitz was “twisted” and was reached by trial and error—as Karl Schleunes so convincingly demonstrated—seems to contradict Friedlander’s claims, which ignore such causative considerations as the impact of the war on Nazi racial policy or the strength of anti-Semitic sentiment in the German population.

Finally, the book is plagued by an even more significant problem. Friedlander argues against the notion of “medicalized killing”, repeatedly insisting that the murderous campaigns had little to do with medicine, and that doctors’ constant presence at gassings was merely incidental. That the physicians who staffed the

killing centres had medical degrees is, he asserts, “quite beside the point” (p. 219). Moreover, he sets out to show that Nazi eugenics “lacked a true scientific basis” and represented “scientific fraud” (p. 126). With statements like these, Friedlander seems to miss one of the essential points of this story. Indeed, as shown by Robert Proctor in 1989 and by many others subsequently, Nazi programmes against racial minorities and the disabled represented not a vulgar politicization of science, but rather the realization of ideas furthered by many of the leading scientists of the period.

Friedlander himself asks near the end of the book why doctors were always present at these killings, but he finds no satisfactory answer, other than claiming that this was Hitler’s wish and their presence facilitated bureaucratic aspects of the procedure. But the fact that it was doctors who ordered and carried out the murder of tens of thousands of disabled Germans seems to be far more than incidental and should be the starting point for a critical engagement with this period and its legacy.

Ultimately, as an argument about technical aspects of Nazi atrocities, Friedlander’s book is well-researched, cogent and informative. Yet, in his complete dismissal of the idea of “medicalized killing”, he ignores the biologization that characterized German society and politics in this period and thus fails to address the issues that historians of science and medicine, and many students of German history, will find most interesting and urgent.

Paul Lerner, Wellcome Institute

Eric L Santner, *My own private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber’s secret history of modernity*, Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. xiv, 200, illus., £16.95, \$22.95 (0-691-02628-9).

The deluge of Schreber scholarship shows no signs of abating. After being psychiatrized, psychoanalysed, historicized, Lacanized and antipsychiatrized, Daniel Paul Schreber’s role