

## Book Reviews

to concentrate his rancour on the evils of bioethics. Yet whatever the reservations of his fellow historians, Rothman's impassioned analysis of class and medical technology may deservedly win more readers to history than drier, more circumspect tomes.

**Harry M Marks,**  
The Johns Hopkins University

**Wolfgang U Eckart, Christoph Gradmann** (eds), *Die Medizin und der Erste Weltkrieg*, Pfaffenweiler, Centaurus, 1996, pp. 377, DM 58.00 (3-8255-0066-7).

Until recent years, medicine in the First World War has been a neglected topic of social historical research, especially concerning the German side. The present volume, fruit of a conference organized by the Heidelberg medical historians Eckart and Gradmann in 1994, makes a substantial contribution to this just emerging field. In seventeen papers (all with English abstracts and three entirely in English) three major areas are addressed: medical perspectives on the experience of the "Great War"; epidemics and the war; and the transformation of medicine through wartime challenges.

Within the first area a divide between "official" medical voices and personal assessments by individual doctors can be observed. As Ingo Tamm shows, the medical professional press in Germany declared its unstinting loyalty to the government throughout the war. But German doctor-poets such as Gottfried Benn and Wilhelm Klemm, analysed by Ingrid Kästner, expressed the horrors of the war with painful "clinical" sharpness and, according to a paper by Udo Benzenhöfer, the Heidelberg physician Viktor von Weizsäcker (then a young medical officer) was led through his experiences towards his "anthropological medicine". Also the Russian scientists Vladimir Bechterevev, Elie Metchnikoff, and Ivan Pavlov saw the world war as a social and moral catastrophe, as Natalja Decker documents.

Differentiated perspectives arise further from the contributions on epidemics. Bernardino Fantini gives an account of the disastrous effects of malaria on the Macedonian front despite prophylactic and therapeutic uses of quinine. The precise relation between the war and the pandemic of Spanish influenza in 1918/19 remains debatable. While Jürgen Müller argues that the virulence of the new influenza subtype was more important than the spread of the disease through transports of troops, Lion Murard and Patrick Zylberman suggest in a study of the health conditions in France that the shift of medical services in favour of the army, together with wartime hardships, made the civilian population especially vulnerable to death from infection. Views of contemporary scientists on the war epidemics are elucidated by Wolfgang Eckart and Paul Weindling. The former shows how German hygienists regarded epidemics as grand *in vivo* experiments and claimed beneficial results for their field after the lost war. His historical judgement acknowledges some successes, for example, in research on typhus, gas gangrene, and especially in the prophylaxis of tetanus and typhoid fever, but also stresses that they helped to prolong the war. Moreover, in the case of typhus control in the occupied East, Eckart identifies racist notions among German hygienists, who targeted the Jewish population as a "focus of epidemics". Antisemitism and racial prejudice in the German delousing campaigns against typhus are also topics of Weindling's paper. He furthermore distinguishes a German approach to the typhus problem which concentrated on mass delousing with hydrocyanic acid, from a British approach which emphasized the need for personal hygiene.

Eckart's and Weindling's contributions thus reach also into the third major area of this book, the transformation of medicine by World War I. One change, with reference to German medicine, can be described as a move by doctors towards a harsher and more biologicistic view of their patients. Cases in point are provided by Paul Lerner's discussion of German psychiatrists' understanding of war

## Book Reviews

neuroses as weakness of will and lack of commitment to the community, and by Susanne Hahn, who identifies an increase of social-Darwinist interpretations of suicide as a consequence of constitutional inferiority. The emphasis on constitutional characteristics in German “war pathology”, examined by Cay-Rüdiger Prüll, reflects the same tendency. Lerner’s and Prüll’s papers further make clear that the professional status of psychiatrists and pathological anatomists was at stake here as well.

“Professional gains” through the war can be noted for the German Red Cross, which according to Dieter Riesenberger established its leading role in voluntary (non-denominational) nursing, and for the young discipline of orthopaedic surgery, which was able to prove its importance by providing treatment and rehabilitation facilities for wounded soldiers in the German Reich’s institutions for disabled children (as shown by Klaus-Dieter Thomann). Moreover, doctors became accepted as experts in questions of sexuality, as Lutz Sauerteig argues from his discussion of preventive strategies against venereal diseases among the troops.

That the challenges to medicine could lead to different responses among the belligerent nations is illustrated, in addition to Weindling’s paper, by a study on blood transfusion by Thomas Schlich, who contrasts Anglo-American leadership in this field with German-Austrian scepticism towards the method. And Christoph Gradmann shows in a paper on chemical warfare how Germany lost its technological superiority in this area in 1916/17 and was forced to concentrate more on gas protection and therapy of gas injuries.

On the whole, this volume demonstrates that the old simplistic notion of medical progress through war must be regarded as obsolete. Medicine was transformed by World War I, but neither were these changes unequivocally beneficial nor can they be described as uniform and general developments. Apart from this, the scope of this book points to desiderata for further research, such as international comparisons of the organizational structures of

military medicine, of problems in the acute surgical treatment of the wounded, and (in view of the mass quinine use and poison gases) of the role of the pharmaceutical and chemical industries.

**Andreas-Holger Maehle,**  
University of Durham

**Manfred Berg and Geoffrey Cocks** (eds), *Medicine and modernity: public health and medical care in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany*, Washington, DC, German Historical Institute; Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. vii, 242, £40.00, \$59.95 (0-521-56411-5).

Based in part on a conference sponsored by the German Historical Institute, this collection of essays seeks to examine particular aspects of German medicine before and after the Third Reich. As one of the editors admits, the Hitler era is still a “black hole” in German history, its gravitational pull extending as far back as Wilhelmine Germany and forward into our own time, shaping much of the discussion and interpretation of events. Unlike for America and even Britain, there is not a historical treatment of medicine in the German lands that attempts to submerge its individual characteristics within a more comparative, universal framework. The stated task of the conference, therefore, was to “place the medical crimes of the Nazis and collaborations of the National Socialist era into their larger German and Western contexts”.

The book is only partially successful in accomplishing this goal, although readers interested in the topic will find most of the individual contributions quite useful. Some authors set out to cover a particular subject or issue but eventually neglected to place it within broader horizons. This applies, for example, to Johanna Bleker’s insightful treatment of the German hospital from 1820 to 1870. Her analysis clearly shows the dual nature of hospital care as part of the local poor relief system as well as a new proving ground for