

VWI goes to the Josephinum

Wednesday, 20 May 2015, 3.00 – 4.30 p.m.
Josephinum
1090 Wien, Währinger Straße 25

SARI J. SIEGEL

Changing Circumstances, Shifting Approaches: Jewish Prisoner-Physicians in Nazi Concentration and Forced Labour Camps

Although they are relatively absent from Holocaust historiography, Jewish prisoner-physicians served as functionaries at Auschwitz-Birkenau and concentration and forced labour camps throughout the “Greater German Reich,” thereby playing a significant yet under-researched role in the Nazis’ exploitation and attempted annihilation of European Jewry between 1938 and 1945. These Jewish men and women who utilised their medical training in camps’ *Häftlingskrankenbauten* and *Reviere* facilitated Nazi goals to varying extents and in a multitude of ways.

Revierpersonal :			: sjeest (1/200)K		
16.	34170	Tsch.	Pipka	Vladimir	Arzt
17.	63329	Fr.	Wetterwald	François	"
18.	62238	Fr.	Debrise	Gilbert	"
19.	37351	ZR.	Jerilo	Jury	"
20.	72639	Ung.Jude	Törek Gryula		"
21.	72462	Ung.Jude	lövy	Andor	"
22.	72429	Ung.Jude	Kraus	Bernat	"
23.	72207	Ung.Jude	enedek	Josef	"

Verzeichnis der im Lagerbetrieb beschäftigten Häftlinge, K.L. Mauthausen Arbeitskommando "S.-Kalksteinbergwerk" [Ebensee], 30.6.1944 (Courtesy of the Archive of the Mauthausen Memorial)

Bringing together findings from eight months of archival research in Austria, Germany, and Poland, this presentation offers insight into the Jewish prisoner-physicians’ activities and their attempts to preserve their own lives while honouring their oath to do no harm. It draws particular attention to behavioural shifts in response to dynamic contexts—on both immediate and more distant levels. The former category includes fluctuations in the availability of medicines, medical supplies, and food, as well as in the severity and nature of epidemics, while the latter highlights variables such as the German war economy and the Third Reich’s military fortunes on the battlefield.

Such dynamic factors reveal the limitations of Primo Levi’s “grey zone” model for prisoner-functionary behaviour and demand, instead, a coercion-resistance spectrum—a model that emphasises changes in behaviour and thus encourages us to contemplate fluctuations in conditions, which are, despite their being central aspects of life (and death) in the camps, often overlooked.

Comments by Herwig CZECH

Sari J. SIEGEL is a Junior Fellow at the VWI and a doctoral candidate at the *University of Southern California*. She was the American recipient of the 2014 IfZ-USHMM Exchange of Scholars Award and holds a 2014-15 Kagan Fellowship in Advanced Shoah Studies. *Treating an Auschwitz Prisoner-Physician: The Case of Dr. Maximilian Samuel* appears in the current issue of *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*.

Herwig CZECH is Research Fellow at the *Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance* (DÖW).