

World's "last trial" involving Nazi doctor ends in Austria after suspect declared demented

The world has likely seen the last trial involving a doctor accused of killing people in the name of medicine and Nazi Germany's euthanasia program and its perverse research involving human subjects.

Dr. Heinrich Gross, who is suspected of murdering mentally and physically handicapped children at the Am Spiegelgrund Clinic, the children's section of Vienna's Neurology Institute, went on trial Mar. 21. But barely an hour into the trial of the 84-year-old Austrian physician, the judge suspended proceedings after hearing evidence that the defendant was experiencing dementia.

Although Gross may no longer be competent to stand trial, it is difficult to ignore the evidence that derives in large part from the Nazi mania for collecting and storing scientific information. Gross took photographs of the children he treated. The records are precise: 772 children died in his clinic and the professor signed the death certificates of 238.

The preserved brains, kept in jars of formaldehyde in the basement, revealed traces of a powerful sleep-inducing drug, Luminal. The death certificates bearing Gross' signature give lung infection as the main cause of death.

Survivors like Alois Kaufmann, 67, make clear why: doctors were determined to do their bit for the Nazi war effort by researching the effects of cold and malnutrition on the human body. Drugged children were put out on the balconies in the middle of winter. It was common to dunk children in ice-cold water and then wrap them up like mummies, again to test their resistance to cold.

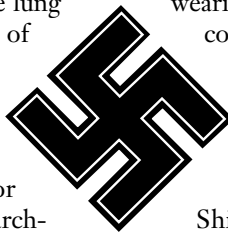
"They would take all the bedclothes away and put the children — even babies — naked on the balcony to check how long it would be before they got pneumonia and died," recalled Kaufmann, who was sent to the clinic as a 10-year-old in 1943 after a school psy-

chologist designated him "asocial."

Kaufmann identified Gross as the feared doctor known as The Scythe, who would stride into his Vienna clinic wearing polished boots and his crisp colonel's uniform, and point to the child patients marked down for euthanasia under Hitler's *Lebensunwertes Leben* (Life Unworthy of Life) program.

Gross joined the SA Brown Shirts in 1933, the Nazi party in 1938 and the Wehrmacht in 1943. After World War II he became a stalwart member of the ruling Austrian Socialist Party.

Almost 700 000 Austrians were members of the Nazi party, and the postwar Socialists quickly realized that they could not rule without the help of these ex-Nazis. With political protection, Gross rose to be one of the best paid forensic doctors and, helped by his clinic's unique collection of pickled brains, a respected neurologist. — *Gil Kezwer*, Toronto



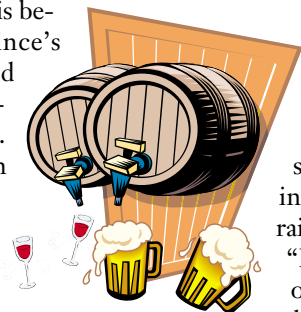
MDs' bid to raise drinking age meets opposition

A recommendation from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba to raise the province's legal drinking age from 18 to 21 is being opposed by the province's hospitality industry and some young people employed in the industry. Meanwhile, a major youth group supports the move.

The proposal is one of 22 recommendations in the college's Pediatric Death Review Committee report, which was released in early April. It suggests that raising the drinking age could significantly reduce traffic

fatalities by keeping alcohol out of the hands of young drivers.

Dr. Robert Walker, deputy registrar of the Manitoba college, said the recommendation is based on American experience, which shows that every state that lowered its drinking age in the early 1980s raised it back to 21 by 1988. "Data accumulated by US officials suggested that the change helped to reduce the number of traffic deaths among teenagers and young adults," says Walker.



The college's proposed age change is tied to another recommendation calling for a graduated licensing system, in which new drivers would hone their skills under conditions that minimize injury risk. The restrictions include a prohibition against driving at night for young drivers, a copilot program and zero blood alcohol tolerance. This program is already in place next door in Ontario.

Ron Ledohowski of the Winnipeg-based Hospitality Corporation says the college recommendation would make it difficult for the hospitality industry to

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