

In the 28 Jan 2015 issue of Frankfurter Rundschau, Arno Widmann reports on a talk by historian Götz Aly in Berlin-Dahlem on the issue of crimes committed in the name of science by Kaiser Wilhelm Institute (KWI) scientists. Some of those implicate the KWI für Hirnforschung (then in Berlin-Buch). In his book, as yet unpublished, Götz Aly also purports to demonstrate efforts by the successor of the KWG, the Max Planck Gesellschaft (MPG), to hide and hinder access to the truth. As current, active directors at the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research, now in Frankfurt, and thus in charge of an institute whose ancestor is in question, we wish to make the following statements.

The crimes committed in the name of science by former directors of our institute during the third Reich, are abject and a stain on humanity, science, the KWG, and our institute. We could not express in stronger terms the shame that this history forces us to carry.

While preparing for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this institute in 2014, some of us became aware of the horrors described by Aly, and in great part thanks to his tireless work. Together with former director Heinz Waessle, we prepared a public exhibit at the institute, and wrote a book (ISBN:978-3-00-045977-1, [www.brain.mpg.de/mindsinmotion](http://www.brain.mpg.de/mindsinmotion)) in which we report on this disgraceful part of our history. In both book and exhibit we state: *The ancestor of our Max Planck Institute for Brain Research was implicated in some of these crimes. We consider it essential to expose this grim history. We commit to never allowing it to be forgotten.* We state this again here.

Götz Aly in his new book, makes allegations about the MPG administration's resistance to exposing the truth up to the 1980ies. If true, we completely dissociate ourselves from the MPG's actions at the time. How some at the MPG acted or failed to act during this period about owning up to crimes committed by its scientists during WWII may indeed bear further examining by historians.

Mr. Widmann, in his article, made several mistakes that need correcting. First, human specimens collected between 1939 and 1945 in Berlin were not locked up after a long delay but *immediately* after Aly found evidence that the collections contained tissue from murdered victims. Second, locking up of these specimens was done at the initiative of the directors at the time (Wolf Singer and Heinz Wässle) and not in response to pressure from any authority. Third, we can affirm that no research whatsoever was carried out on these specimens beyond 1981, year in which Wolf Singer and Heinz Wässle became directors at the institute.

Finally, Mr. Widman mentions that the talk in Dahlem had a ghost-like quality because there were no comments from the directors of the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research during the discussion that followed. The reason for this is simple: none of us had been invited to, or informed about this event. Had we known about it, we would have set the record straight, as we are doing now.

Gilles Laurent, director

Erin Schuman, director

Moritz Helmstaedter, director

Wolf Singer, director emeritus

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