



“Jüdisch versippt” and “materialistic”: The marginalization of Walther E. Berblinger (1882-1966) in the Third Reich^{☆, ☆ ☆}

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ABSTRACT

The pathologist Walther Berblinger (1882–1966) became famous for his scientific studies on internal secretion, namely on the pathology of the pituitary and the pineal gland. The results of his research on the hormonal control of the reproductive system contributed significantly to the consolidation of the young discipline of endocrinology. His later pioneering work on the use of chemotherapeutics in tuberculosis was similarly important.

Despite his “Aryan” ancestry, Berblinger was targeted by the National Socialists and forced to emigrate to Switzerland due to the pressure of political events – a fact that has only been partially investigated by researchers to date. Accordingly, this essay focuses on Berblinger’s professional exclusion and on the implications and consequences associated with it. It also examines why Berblinger decided not to return to Germany after 1945.

Primary documents from the University Archives Jena and the Main State Archives Weimar served as the central source for this study; they were supplemented and compared with the research literature available to date on Walther Berblinger and on the history of pathology and medicine under National Socialism.

The study documents that Berblinger – unlike his Jewish colleagues – was initially able to continue his career in the Third Reich almost without restriction, but was dismissed from service when he refused to separate from his Jewish wife in 1937. Subsequently, the National Socialists’ victimization of Berblinger even reached him in Swiss exile. Notwithstanding the hostile treatment and harassment from Germany, Berblinger succeeded in continuing his scientific career in Switzerland. After 1945, he decided against remigration – not least because negative experiences with German authorities made led him doubt the rule of law in post-war Germany. It was not until the last phase of his life that Berblinger was “rediscovered” by his homeland, as is shown by a series of late honors.

1. Introduction: Berblinger’s life and work

Walther Emil Berblinger (Fig. 1) was born on July 13, 1882 in Karlsruhe. He was the son of the merchant Karl Wilhelm F. Berblinger (1856–1912) and his wife Franziska E. A. Berblinger, née Bils (1856–1944) [1–6].

After completing his school education at the Grand Ducal Grammar School in Karlsruhe with the *Abitur* examination, Berblinger studied medicine at the universities of Heidelberg, Munich and Strasbourg. He passed the state medical examination in the summer of 1907, received

his medical doctorate in Strasbourg in February 1908, and his licence to practise medicine [3,7] in September 1908.

Berblinger started his career as an assistant to Friedrich Daniel von Recklinghausen (1833–1910). Recklinghausen, the first describer and eponym of “Morbus Recklinghausen”, had been a pupil of the famous Rudolf Virchow (1821–1902). At the time of Berblinger’s appointment, Recklinghausen was teaching general and special pathology in Strasbourg. He became a pioneering figure for Berblinger and was largely responsible for Berblinger’s early dedication to pathological anatomy. In fact, Berblinger remained grateful to his (former) teacher

[☆] “Jüdisch versippt” is a specific Nazi term to describe somebody related by marriage to Jews.

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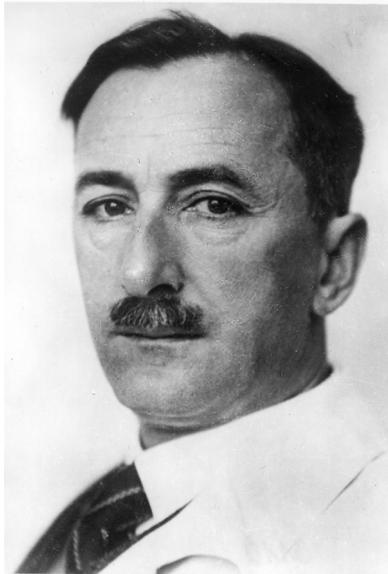


Fig. 1. Portrait Walther Emil Berblinger [UAJ Photo Collection, no. 311].

throughout his life [1,3].

After completing his military service, Berblinger became an assistant at the Institute of Pathology in Zurich under Martin Benno Schmidt (1909). On September 28, 1909, he married Hedwig Elstaetter, born on February 17, 1885, in Karlsruhe. She was the daughter of the Jewish factory owner Rudolf Elstaetter [8] and his likewise Jewish wife Bertha [4,9]. Two children resulted from the marriage: Klaus W., born on September 8, 1910, and Ellen Charlotte, born two years later [10,11,12]. Hedwig Elstaetter was the sister-in-law of the internationally renowned German painter and art professor Max Frey (1874–1944); Frey had already married Hedwig's older sister, Anna Luise Ellstaetter, born 1884, in 1904 [13].

Berblinger followed Martin Benno Schmidt to Marburg in April 1911 and became his first assistant at the local Institute of Pathology [7,14,15]. In 1912, he also received his authorization to teach general pathology and pathological anatomy at the University of Marburg [7,14,15]. His habilitation thesis, reviewed by Schmidt, dealt with the glycogen content of the human heart muscle [7], his inaugural lecture with acromegaly [3]. During the First World War, Berblinger served as a medical advisor at the reserve hospital in Meiningen from August 1914 until the end of 1915 [7]. He became co-editor of the "*Centralblatt für allgemeine Pathologie und pathologische Anatomie*" in January 1915 and was appointed as a titular professor in Marburg in 1916 [3].

Two years later Berblinger moved with Schmidt's successor, Leonhard Jores, to Kiel, where he became the first assistant and first prosector at the Institute of Pathology. He was appointed associate professor there in 1920 [11]. As early as 1919, he had been offered an appointment as first prosector in Bochum; however, he rejected both this offer and a later one of 1921 from the University of Zagreb [7].

Due to the sudden death of Max Löhlein, the director of the Institute of Pathology in Marburg, Berblinger was offered the position of head of pathology on a provisional basis at the turn of the year 1921/22. Berblinger accepted and kept this position until September 1922 [3]. The University of Kiel had granted him temporary leave for this purpose [7].

In July 1922 Berblinger was considered – along with Walter Gross from Greifswald and Johann Georg Mönckeberg from Bonn – for the Chair of Pathological Anatomy at the University of Jena as a potential successor to Robert Rössle [16]. Rössle had decided to move to Basel. The choice in Jena did, in fact, fall on Berblinger, who accepted the offer in September 1922 [17]. Later, in 1928, he was offered a professorship in Halle, which he rejected in favour of Jena [18,19].

Berblinger held the chair in Jena until autumn 1937 [20,21] – the year when he was dismissed by the National Socialists.

Berblinger had earned himself an excellent professional reputation in Jena over the years. His studies on the control of the reproductive system contributed significantly to the establishment and consolidation of the emerging discipline of endocrinology [20,22].

According to the records, Berblinger experienced harassment by the Nazi regime [3] in 1937 at the latest. As a result of this, he emigrated to Switzerland at the turn of the year 1937/38 and took over the management of a tuberculosis research institute in Davos, which he headed until 1954. In 1950, he was able to move into a new institute building there, which had been constructed according to his plans [3].

Berblinger did pioneering work in the field of tuberculosis research in Davos, especially in the field of tuberculosis chemotherapy [23]. Even after 1954 he remained active as a teacher and scientist, and as late as 1958 as a lecturer at the aforementioned institute [11]. Berblinger died at the age of 83 in 1966 in Muri near Berne. He thus outlived his wife Hedwig by almost three years: She had already passed away on August 25, 1963 at the age of 78 – also in the canton of Berne [8].

In retrospect, the Jena years were probably Berblinger's most productive ones – both as a researcher and as a teacher. It was during this period that he founded the theory of the partial functions of the pituitary gland and devoted much energy to proving the functional connection between the interbrain and the adenohypophysis system [24]. In his works on the pars intermedia of the human pituitary gland, he showed the function, morphology and ontogenesis of the oldest part of the gland, paying special attention to the pathogenesis of pituitary disorders [25]. Berblinger had already discovered in 1920 that the gonadotropic pituitary anterior lobe hormones, of which little was known at that time, were produced in the basophilic anterior lobe epithelia [3]. His focus was on the connection between morphological and functional disorders of hormone production and their repercussions on the male sex organs. As early as 1920 he was able to prove hypogonadism of the pituitary gland, which in turn leads to atrophy of the Leydig intermediate cells [23]. Of fundamental importance were his specialist contributions on the pineal and pituitary glands in humans, both of which appeared in important handbooks [26,27]. The latter were also published as a monograph in 1932 [28].

Furthermore, Berblinger was one of the first researchers to describe the influence of streptomycin on miliary tuberculosis and tuberculous meningitis [23]. Other fields of work were arteritis and nerve regeneration [25]. His list of publications includes a total of 231 contributions [1].

Berblinger gained recognition not only as a researcher and university lecturer, but also as a (co-)editor of several scientific journals, such as the above-mentioned Central Journal for General Pathology and Pathological Anatomy (*Centralblatt für allgemeine Pathologie und pathologische Anatomie*), the Journal of Endocrinology (*Zeitschrift für Endokrinologie*), the Journal of Medical Research (*Zeitschrift für Ärztliche Forschung*) and the Medical World (*Medizinische Welt*). He was also involved in various professional associations and received several, mostly late, honors.

The various stages of Berblinger's biography and his scientific oeuvre are comparatively well documented. In contrast, this article focuses on Berlinger's political exclusion by the National Socialists. Of particular interest here are the background to this exclusion, the accompanying deprivation of rights and the long-term effects of these on the life and work of the pathologist. It is also important to examine how Berblinger's relationship to post-war (divided) Germany developed and why he ultimately decided *against* remigration to Germany and *in favor* of remaining in Swiss exile.

2. Materials and methods

The work is mainly based on archival documents. The main sources

were documents from the University Archives Jena (UAJ), the Thuringia State Archives / Main State Archives Weimar (LAT/ HStW), and the City Archives Karlsruhe (StA K). These archival documents were supplemented and compared with the available research literature on Walther Berblinger and on the history of pathology and medicine under National Socialism.

3. Results

The results of the research into Berblinger's political exclusion by the National Socialists can be divided into four thematic (and also chronological) sections: they concern (1) Berblinger's dismissal as a university lecturer, (2) his struggle for recognition of his pension rights after his dismissal, (3) his politically motivated removal from office as editor of the *Centralblatt für allgemeine Pathologie und pathologische Anatomie*, and (4) the question of reparation – and thus the question of Berblinger's relationship to (divided) post-war Germany.

3.1. Berblinger's dismissal from the University of Jena (1937)

Before the actual fate of Walther Berblinger in Jena during the Nazi era is discussed, it will be useful to give a brief outline of the University of Jena at the time of Hitler's seizure of power and in the further course of events – with a specific focus on the *medical* faculty there:

A wave of "cleansing" and "dismissal" of personnel took place at German universities immediately after the assumption of power by the National Socialists. In contrast to other German medical faculties, the Medical Faculty of the University of Jena did not initially see any attacks on Jewish university lecturers initiated by the National Socialist German Student Union (*NS Studentenbund, NSDStB*) or the Storm Department (*Sturmabteilung, SA*) [29]. Looking at universities in Germany as a whole, the University of Jena was initially in the bottom third in terms of dismissals, with a dismissal rate of "only" around 8%. Many of the professors first emerged unscathed from this wave of job losses [30].

This should change in the following two years: In October 1935, the Thuringia Ministry of People's Education (*Volksbildung*) reported to the Reich Ministry of Science, Education and People's Education that no Jewish employees or civil servants as defined by the "Nuremberg Laws" remained at the University of Jena. In 1937, in fact, only two physicians were described as "related by marriage to Jews" (*Jüdisch versippt*) – Berblinger and Emil Ritter von Skramlik (1886–1970) [30]. By this time at the latest, Jena had become a "National Socialist model university" [31]. Between 1938 and 1945, the university withdrew nearly 30 doctoral degrees from Jewish holders of doctorates [29].

In winter 1937/38, almost 42% of the physicians of the Jena Medical Faculty were members of the NSDAP. This percentage had been significantly lower in winter 1934/35 (about 25%) [29]. The increase can be explained not only by opportunistically motivated party entries, but also by the fact that numerous NSDAP members were among the professors appointed to Jena from 1935 onwards [29].

Berblinger probably still felt relatively safe when the "Law for the Restoration of the Occupational Civil Service" (*Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums*) was passed on April 7, 1933. He himself was not of Jewish descent. Subsequently, he became a supporting member of the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) in October 1933 [32]. A supporting membership was not tied to party membership, but often offered sufficient protection against political suspicion or sanctions [29]. This probably played a significant role in Berblinger's decision to become a supporting SS member – after all, his wife was of Jewish descent [9].

Berblinger was definitely not a member of the NSDAP – a contrary claim in Holzmann's dissertation is incorrect [20] – and he was politically unencumbered in general [33]. In addition to the aforementioned supporting membership, he belonged only to the German Air Sports Association (*Deutscher Luftsportverband*) and the National Socialist

People's Welfare Association (*Nationalsozialistischer Volkswohlfahrt, NSV*), both of which were politically insignificant organizations [32]. At first Berblinger had nothing to fear because of his "Aryan" origin, especially since he was under the protection of the rector of Jena, Abraham Esau (1884–1955). This protection is evident from a letter from Esau to Berblinger dated June 1933, in which the rector asks Berblinger for information about the "political reliability" of a dissector who was subordinate to Berblinger [34].

At the end of August 1934, Berblinger took the "oath to the Führer" – as demanded of all those employed by the state [35]. Even when the University of Jena appointed a new rector, Wolf Meyer-Erlach (1891–1982), in 1935, nothing seemed to change. This is remarkable insofar as Meyer-Erlach, a Protestant theologian, showed himself to be a convinced anti-Semite at that time. He wrote numerous racist diatribes and took part in various right-wing activities. Meyer-Erlach's employment also corresponded with the increasingly National Socialist orientation of the University of Jena mentioned above. It had not been a problem for the relevant authorities to appoint Meyer-Erlach as a full professor at the University of Jena [36] at the end of 1933 despite his lack of doctorate and habilitation, and now, barely two years later, to even appoint him as rector. As late as 1937, the new rector described Berblinger as an "extraordinarily gifted, versatile and witty person" (*transl. dg*) and as indispensable as Professor of Pathology and Director of the Institute of Pathology in Jena (Fig. 2) [37].

But supporters such as Meyer-Erlach were soon no longer sufficient to keep Berblinger in office: The enactment of the Nuremberg Laws on September 15, 1935, namely the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor (*Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre*), was to become Berblinger's undoing in the course of 1937. Berblinger was now regarded as "Jewish-like" and those in power therefore asked him to separate from his Jewish wife [37]. Berblinger refused, as a result of which he was threatened with forced retirement [30]. In precisely this situation, Meyer-Erlach, in a letter to the Thuringian Minister for People's Education, spoke out in favor of keeping Berblinger in office despite "certain reservations" [37]. The rector's request for tolerance in Berblinger's case failed: The pathologist was retired on September 28, 1937 with effect from the end of the year by order of the Reich Governor for Thuringia, Fritz Sauckel (1894–1946); the reason given was his wife's Jewishness [33]. As soon as Berblinger knew about his pending dismissal, he asked to be given early leave as of October 2, 1937 [38]; this was immediately granted [39].

The National Socialist and later NS Brigade Leader Werner Gerlach was appointed as Berblinger's successor with effect from January 1, 1938 [40]. Gerlach was at times a member of Heinrich Himmler's personal staff. The Institute of Pathology under the direction of Gerlach performed dissections for the SS in Buchenwald concentration camp in 1938. Gerlach was commissioned to draw up guidelines for the relevant dissections. These were presented to Himmler at the beginning of July 1938 [29].

While Berblinger refused to terminate his marriage to Hedwig despite political pressure, his brother-in-law, the famous Karlsruhe painter and graphic artist Max Frey, divorced Hedwig's sister Anna Luise in 1938 [13].

Berblinger surely expected his dismissal and the associated deprivation of his rights. Nevertheless, he was never able to come to terms completely with this experience according to the Essen pathologist Karl Husten [3].

3.2. Berblinger's emigration and the fight for recognition of his pension rights (1937–1938)

Only three days after the beginning of his leave – and well before his official discharge on December 31, 1937 – Berblinger informed the Thuringian Ministry of People's Education that he had been offered the position of head of the department of pathological anatomy and bacteriology at the Tuberculosis Research Institute in Davos (today: Swiss

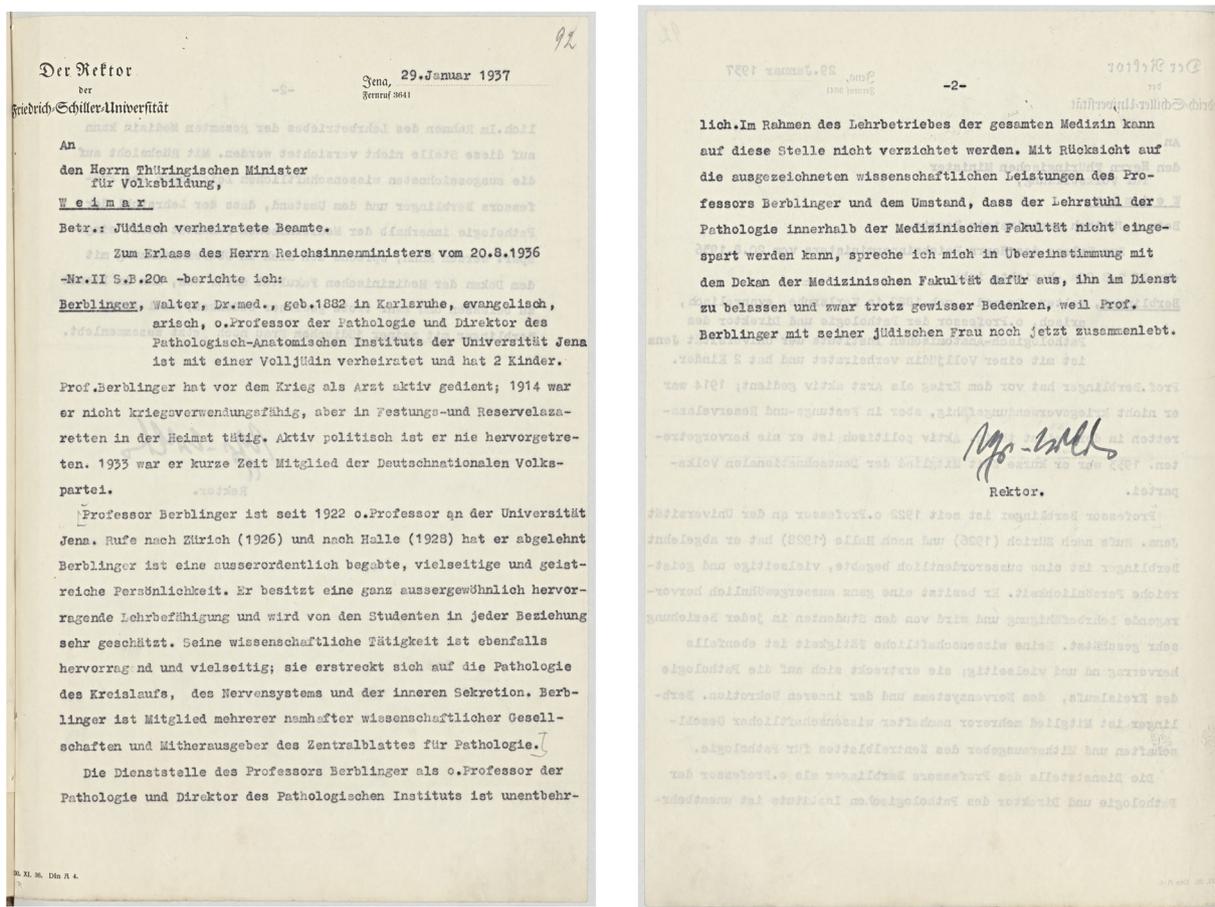


Fig. 2. The Rector of the Friedrich Schiller University to the Thuringian Minister for People's Education dated 29.01.1937 [37].

Institute of Allergy and Asthma Research) and that he intended to accept this position. In this very correspondence, Berblinger also requested approval for this move from the highest official authority [41] and was informed quite quickly that no reservations existed. In addition, he received permission (revocable at any time) to move his residence to Switzerland [42].

Berblinger's skilful argumentation proved helpful in this situation: He neither distanced himself from the German Reich nor explicitly expressed his support for Nazi politics. In his letter to the Thuringian Ministry of People's Education, he stated ambiguously: "I regard this offer as a recognition of German science and as an opportunity to contribute to the enhancement of German renown through such an activity abroad" (*transl. dg*) [41].

After the positive decision of the authority, it looked as if Berblinger's emigration would take place in agreement with those politically responsible. In fact, however, Berblinger was to face considerable difficulties, and he soon became painfully aware that the "long arm" of the National Socialists extended as far as Switzerland.

The reason for the degrading treatment in question was an exchange of letters between Berblinger and the German authorities concerning the correct calculation of the pension due to Berblinger following his retirement and in respect of recognition of his total period of service.

The Thuringian Minister of Finance took the view "that a university professor retired according to § 6 DBG could only receive the correspondingly reduced retirement pension of a civil servant" (*transl. dg*) [43]. Moreover, it was stated that Berblinger's pension payments were to be paid in full into a "special account for pension payments" at a foreign exchange bank. This meant that the deposited money could only be used within the borders of the German Reich [44]. Berblinger therefore had no access whatsoever to his assets from Switzerland.

Previously, there had already been an (alleged) "misunderstanding" between Berblinger and the Thuringian Ministry of People's Education: On November 9, 1937, the Reich and Prussian Minister for Science, Education and People's Education had granted Berblinger's request to move his residence to Switzerland [42]. The ministry in Thuringia construed Berblinger's move as a waiving of his pension rights and had accordingly concluded that his financial rights in Germany were to be suspended [43,45]. Berblinger complained about this interpretation in several letters, some of which seem desperate [45,46]. He wrote to the Thuringian Ministry of People's Education in Weimar on November 11, 1937:

"My income in Davos is sufficient to cover my maintenance expenses there. I am dependent on the continuous payment of the pension claims for my wife, who remains in Germany, and for a part of my expenses that cannot be met by the position in Davos, e.g. life insurance, etc., [...] With this letter [...] I am linking a request for disclosure of the pension rights to which I am entitled and in respect of which I have neither made nor can make a waiver in view of my economic situation" (*transl. dg*) [46].

It can be inferred from the above letter that Berblinger emigrated to Switzerland around the turn of the year 1937/38 without his wife. Why Hedwig Berblinger initially stayed in Germany is not apparent from the files. However, it is certain that she followed her husband within one year: She arrived in Davos on September 20, 1938 [8].

It was probably not only the increasingly hostile mood and aggression towards German Jews in Nazi Germany and the forced emigration of her husband that prompted Hedwig Berblinger to leave for Switzerland as well. It is likely that the fate of their son Klaus also played a role: Like his father, Klaus had decided to become a doctor after graduating from high school in Jena and had begun studying

medicine in his home town during the Weimar Republic (1929). After passing his intermediate examination, he moved to the University of Munich. There he was able to complete his studies in 1934. As a "Half Jew", however, he was denied his license to practise medicine and the opportunity to obtain a doctorate. To earn a living, he joined a group of students who worked as cabaret artists. Klaus W. Berblinger was obviously critical of the political system. In any case, he was accused of mocking the political conditions in Germany and was interned in Dachau concentration camp. Only with the help of friends was he released and able to flee to Switzerland. Here he enrolled at the Medical Faculty of the University of Berne in 1935 to acquire the qualifications refused in Munich. He did not obtain final permission to settle in Switzerland, however. So he decided to emigrate to the USA in 1938 – the very year in which his mother emigrated from Germany to Switzerland [8,10].

In Switzerland, too, the lives of the Berblinger couple were overshadowed by existential worries: The financial point of contention was the pensionable period of service that Berblinger had completed in Germany and which now had to be determined officially by the German authorities. Berblinger's work in Marburg, for example, was not taken into account at first, the argument being that the conditions for consideration were not met [47]. In February 1938, a decision was taken to pay Berblinger's retirement benefits into a special account for pension benefits for 20 completed years of service only [48]. It was not until April 1938 that Berblinger's time in Marburg was also credited to him, giving him 28 completed years of service [49,50]. From a letter of Berblinger of July 1946, however, it emerges that only 20 completed years of service were de facto credited to him in spite of the ultimate recognition of 28 years; the reason for this cannot be derived from the available sources [33].

3.3. Berblinger's forced resignation as editor of the "Centralblatt"

But the degrading notifications concerning his pension benefits were not the only instances of victimization by National Socialist Germany that Berblinger had to endure in Swiss exile. Similarly depressing and humiliating was the fact that he was forced to give up his beloved editorial position at the "Centralblatt" in 1939 – a function he had been performing with great success since 1915. He was finally informed in Switzerland in 1939 that he had also been removed from this post [23,51]. These facts have mostly only been briefly mentioned in research literature to date. The commentary by Husten (1966), for example, is rather nebulous. He states: "In the times of ignorance in 1939, Berblinger had to give up this activity, which had been carried out successfully and with recognition" (*transl. dg*) [3]. Georg Dhom interprets the same process in his "History of Histopathology" 2001 as follows: "He was forced to give up this activity in 1939: A shameful event that also documents the progressive isolation of German pathologists under National Socialism" (*transl. dg*) [23].

Jänisch and Pätzold, on the other hand, dealt in more detail in 1990 with the circumstances that forced Berblinger to give up his position as editor [51], without, however, providing the usual academic citation and documentation for the sources to which they refer. Nevertheless, it was possible to verify the information provided by Jänisch and Pätzold on the basis of the original sources kept in the Main State Archives Weimar [52,53].

It is certain that the board of the "German Pathological Society" (*Deutsche Pathologische Gesellschaft* – today: *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Pathologie*) received an conclusive letter from the "Reich Lecturers Leader" (*Reichsdozentenführer*) at the beginning of January 1938 describing Berblinger's political attitude as liberal and "materialistic" [51] and suggesting his dismissal; the letter states that Berlinger had no relationship to the ideas and goals of National Socialism and was therefore unsuitable as editor of the journal. The chairman of the society, Theodor Fahr (1877–1945), then contacted Berblinger's co-editor (and long-time mentor) Martin Benno Schmidt, who in turn wrote to

the owner of the publishing house, Dr. Gustav Fischer jun., in August 1938. Schmidt's letter ended with the statement: "So I fear it will not be possible to stop fate and avert the loss of Prof. Berblinger for the *Centralblatt*" [...] (*transl. dg*) [51]. Fischer informed Berblinger in the same month about his removal from office – not without expressing his personal regret at this development: "[...] If we now oppose the clearly expressed wish, the establishment of a new organ of society is certainly to be expected, and the light of life would be extinguished from the *Centralblatt*, which would serve neither you nor us [...] You know how highly I have always valued the joint work with you and that I must decide only under the constraint of circumstances to support the request made to you by privy councillor Schmidt [...]" (*transl. dg*) [53].

Thus Berblinger was dismissed as co-editor after 24 years. This also marked the beginning of the temporary decline of the journal, which had to temporarily cease publication towards the end of the war.

3.4. The question of reparation and Berblinger's relationship to post-war Germany

Berblinger's relationship with Germany remained problematic and tense even after the end of the Second World War and the reorganization of political conditions. This had not least to do with the fact that he was still plagued by economic worries and was still trying to assert his existing financial claims against Germany, which automatically forced him into the unpleasant role of petitioner:

Berblinger had not received any pension payments into his account at the Deutsche Bank in Jena since March 1945 [54]; he therefore felt compelled to address his claims in this regard to occupied Germany. His efforts were made more difficult by the fact that he did not really know to which authority he should address his complaints. Archive documents show that he wrote to the State Office for People's Education (*Landesamt für Volksbildung*) in Weimar in January 1947. In his letter, he referred to his status as a Nazi victim and made a demand for the continuation of his pension payments (Fig. 3) [55]. Berblinger had previously learned through the Swiss newspapers and radio that several official bodies in occupied Germany had apparently been designated to process the claims of professors who had been unlawfully dismissed. Probably in light of this, Berblinger had written to different authorities in Germany at the beginning of 1946, including the Ministry of People's Education in Berlin and the rector of the University of Jena [54]. Just how humiliated and embittered Berblinger was at that time becomes clear from the letter to Weimar and also from his letter to the ministerial representative (*Kurator*) of the University of Jena dated July 2, 1946 (Fig. 4) [33]. He repeatedly emphasizes the unlawful loss of his professorship in Jena, his unlawful retirement, and finally the degrading circumstances of his retirement, in which he was ultimately not granted the pension to which he was entitled on the basis of his certificate of appointment and the university statutes [54,55]. Berblinger also tried once again to draw the German authorities' attention to his difficult financial situation and his resulting absolute dependence on pension payments.

His letter of March 31, 1946 to the rector of the University of Jena states, for example:

"My employment in Davos is only a contractual one and is not linked to any pension rights. I am therefore dependent for myself and my wife on the pension to which I am legally entitled" (*transl. dg*) [54].

Berblinger's attempts were, however, in vain: In December 1946, the aforementioned *Landesamt für Volksbildung* indicated that no offers of further payments could be made and that the Soviet Military Administration prohibited any kind of retirement benefits to persons outside Thuringia [56]. Berblinger's demand to be re-instated on the list of professors of the University of Jena was also rejected. The reasons given here were that this could only take place following confirmation by the Soviet Military Administration and that this procedure, in turn, would require a detailed application to the latter. Neither of these conditions were fulfilled [57].

451

Schweizerisches Forschungsinstitut
in Davos
Pathologisch-anatomische und bakteriologische Abteilung
Davos, den 5. Januar 1947
Professor Dr. med. W. Berblinger

18. JAN. 1947

An das Landesamt für Volksbildung in Weimar.

Nach 16 jähriger Tätigkeit als Professor der Pathologie an der Universität Jena bin ich wegen der nichtarischen Abstammung (auf Grund des Gesetzes zur Wiederherstellung des Berufsbeamtentums am 28 September 1937 zum 31 December 1937 vorzeitig in den Ruhestand versetzt worden. Diese Entscheidung ist durch das Gesetz 1 des Kontrollrates vom 20 September 1945 hinfällig geworden.

Am 11 Januar 1946 habe ich das Ministerium für Thüringen Abt für Volksbildung auf meine widerrechtliche Entlassung aufmerksam gemacht. Nach Einführung einer Postbestellung zwischen der Schweiz und Deutschland habe ich mit Datum vom 31 März 46 in der gleichen Sache an den Rector der Universität geschrieben, der mir am 27 Juni 46 den Empfang meiner Ausführungen bestätigte.

Mein Aufenthalt in Davos am Tuberkuloseforschungsinstitut war dem Rector wie dem Dekan der Medizinischen Fakultät wie dem Volksbildungsministerium bekannt. Die Professur für Pathologie ist im Mai 46 anderweitig besetzt worden.

Am 2 Juli 1946 richtete ich ein ausführliches Schreiben an den Kurator der Universität Jena, in welchem ich sowohl die Umstände meiner Entlassung wie meine Anstellungsbedingungen in Jena bis 1937 genau darlegte und darauf hinwies, dass ich in Davos vertraglich ohne Pension berechtigt tätig bin.

Mein Gesuch um Gewährung einer Pension ist nach der Antwort des Kurators vom 19 August 1946 dem Landesamt für Volksbildung zur Entscheidung zugestellt worden.

Ich bitte das Landesamt um Nachricht über den Stand dieser Prüfung. Dabei möchte ich darauf hinweisen, dass ich bei einer Rückkehr nach Deutschland bei Aufgabe meiner Position in Davos für mich und meine kranke Frau auf eine Pension angewiesen bin. Über den Verbleib meines durch die mir bis 1945 gewährte Pension bei der deutschen Bank in Weimar entstandenen Guthabens habe ich nichts in Erfahrung bringen können. Ich bin also mittellos geworden.

Das Landesamt bitte ich um eine ernsthafte und wohlwollende Prüfung meines Gesuchs und um Gewährung einer Pension als durch das Naziregime geschädigter, indem ich auf der Höhe meines Sachfahrs unter

W. Berblinger

Zwang habe meine Lehrstelle aufgeben müssen.

Im Übrigen verweise ich auf meine Eingabe an den Kurator der Universität vom 2 Juli 1946, welche dem Landesamt zugegangen ist.

W. Berblinger

Professor W Berblinger Davos.

Fig. 3. Berblinger to the State Office for People's Education (Landesamt für Volksbildung) in Weimar dated 05.01.1947 [55].

Berblinger seems at first to have considered a return to Germany. In another letter to the Landesamt für Volksbildung in Weimar dated January 1947, he stated that he and his ill wife would be dependent on a pension if they were to return to Germany after his giving up his

professional position in Switzerland [55].

Indeed Berblinger's financial circumstances were to become even more precarious: He had tried in vain to find out the extent of his assets at "Deutsche Bank" [33]. Finally, in January 1947, he was informed that

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29. JULI 1946

Professor Dr. med. W. Berblinger
Schweiz Forschungsinstitut für
Tuberkulose Pathologisch-anatomische
u. bakteriologische Abteilung

2 Unge

Herrn Dr. Bense Kurator der Universität Jena i Thüringen

Sehr geehrter Herr Kurator.

Nachfolgend erlaube ich mir Ihnen eine Darstellung über meine Pensionierung als ord. Professor der Pathologie u Path Anatomie an der Universität Jena zu geben. Die Richtigkeit meiner Angaben kann ich durch die entsprechenden Ausweise voll belegen.

Ich bin geboren am 13 Juli 1882 in Karlruhe Baden, verheiratet mit Hedwig Berblinger geb Elletatter. Seit 26 November 1937 bin ich wohnhaft in Davos Schweiz. Mit Genehmigung des Reichserziehungsministeriums vom 8 November 1937 und des Thüring Volksbildungsministeriums vom 13 I 31 B 13/38 habe ich am 26 November 1937 die Stelle des Leiters des Schweiz Tuberkuloseforschungsinstituts in Davos übernommen.

Vom 15 Oktober 1922 bis 31 December 1937 war ich ord. Professor der Allgem Pathologie und pth. Anatomie und Direktor des Peth Instituts der Universität Jena.

Durch Verfügung des Reichsstatthalters für Thüringen -Sauckel- wurde ich am 28 September 1937 auf Grund des Gesetzes zur Wiederherstellung des " Berufsbeamtentums" zum 31 December 1937 in den Ruhestand versetzt. Grund: die nichtarische Abstammung meiner Frau.

Ab 1 Oktober 1937 wurde ich beurlaubt, weil die Professur möglichst bald für den Professor W Gerlach, späteren Generalkonsul von Island frei gemacht werden sollte.

Der NSDAP und ihren Formationen habe ich als aktives Mitglied nie angehört, politisch bin ich völlig unbelastet.

Da ich von Jena aus Rufe nach Zürich wie Halle abgelehnt hatte, erhielt ich ein Jahresgehalt von 12 600 RM a 400 RM pensionsfähige Zulage seit Sommer 1928-Thüring Volksbildungsministerium IV 1978 D 1. Mein letzter monatlicher Gehalt betrug RM 944. RM 07 Pf. Meine monatliche Pension im März 1945 RM 938.. Pf 60. Die Versorgungsbezüge wurden auf Sperrkonto bei der Deutschen Bank in Jena, später Weimar bis März 1945 regelmäßig ausbezahlt, konnten nicht nach der Schweiz transferiert werden. Über den Verbleib meines dadurch ent-

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standenen Bankguthabens in Weimar habe ich auf Anfrage nichts in Erfahrung bringen können.

Durch Verfügung des Thür. Ministerium für Volksbildung 23.2.38 IV C 1 31 B 13/38 wurden mir entgegen einer früheren Festsetzung meines Besoldungsdienstalters 2 1/2 vollendete Dienstjahre angerechnet.

Meine Anstellung als Leiter des Davoser Instituts ist eine jederzeit kündbare, vertragliche seitens einer privaten Stiftung und ich erkläre an Eidesstatt, dass mir aus meiner Anstellung in Davos keinerlei Versorgungsansprüche zustehen.

Nach Ausscheiden aus meiner jetzigen Anstellung muss ich nach Deutschland zurückkehren, und ich bin zum Unterhalt für mich und meine ausserdem kranke Frau auf die Gewährung einer Pension angewiesen.

Am 2.1.46 hatte ich die Zentralstelle in Berlin zur Wiedergutmachung des durch die Nazi begangenen Unrechts Abt für Hochschulen u Wissenschaft auf meine Situation aufmerksam zu machen versucht, am 11 Januar 46 das Ministerium für Thüringen Abt. Volksbildung, am 22.1.46 die Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung in Berlin. Antwort mir durch keine dieser Stellen erteilt worden, ich kann jedoch nicht beurteilen, ob meine Briefe bestellbar waren. Mit Datum vom 27.1. März 1946 habe ich dem Rector der Universität Jena von meiner Lage Kenntnis gegeben mit dem Ersuchen mein Schreiben der vorgesetzten Dienststelle zuzuleiten. Der Rector ist in den Besitz meines ausführlichen Schreibens gelangt, hat mir bisher Bescheid nicht zukommen lassen. Ich habe also nichts unterlassen um eine Verbindung mit der Universität Jena herzustellen. Dieser war mein Aufenthalt in Davos bekannt, eine Anfrage aus Jena ist nicht an mich gelangt.

Ich bitte meine Darlegungen einer Prüfung zu unterziehen und mir eine Pension zu gewähren, denn ich bin darauf später angewiesen und durch meine vorzeitige Pensionierung wie durch die ungenüchertigte Entziehung der Lehrbefähigung schwer geschädigt worden. Ich sehe Ihrer höflich erbetenen Antwort entgegen und bitte um Auskunft welche Unterlagen einzureichen sind, um einen günstigen Entscheid des Volksbildungsministeriums im Sinne der Wiedergutmachung zu erzielen.

Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung

Berblinger

Professor Dr med. W. Berblinger

Fig. 4. Professor Dr. med. W. Berblinger to Dr. Bense Kurator of the University of Jena in Thuringia dated 02.07.1946 [33].

there was no possibility of his making use of his assets in the Soviet occupation zone and that he could at best be helped once a peace treaty had been made with Germany [58]. However, there are no documents in the files to suggest that Berblinger's financial claims were ultimately met.

Attempts were at least made by university scientists to reconstitute Berblinger. He was offered the chairs of pathology at the universities of Hamburg (1946) and Erlangen (1947) respectively [3]. The University of Jena also made Berblinger an offer of this kind; however, it only concerned the vacant Chair of Forensic Medicine and not the more relevant Chair of Pathology [59]; the latter went first to Harry Güthert in 1945 and then to Walter Fischer in 1946 [60].

It is to be assumed that Berblinger was at least disappointed that his home university of Jena had not offered him the traditional Chair of Pathology. It is also obvious that Berblinger – in view of his negative post-war experiences with German authorities – doubted the rule of law in the German occupation zones and furthermore that the role of (rejected) petitioner, into which he had inevitably been forced, distanced him from Germany.

In any case, Berblinger decided to reject the offers in question [3] and not to remigrate. Whether the illness of his wife [55], which he mentioned but did not define more closely, played a role here, must be left open. The Berblinger couple even rejected an invitation from the University of Jena in 1958 on the occasion of the awarding of an honorary doctorate to Berblinger [8].

Berblinger shared the negative experiences outlined above with many other emigrant university teachers, including eminent colleagues like Paul Kimmelstiel [61] and Walter Pagel [62]. Sometimes it was German doctors who made the return of the emigrated colleagues more difficult by negative expert opinions – for example the Hamburg pathologist Carl Krause in the case of Kimmelstiel [61,63]. In fact, only four to five percent of Jewish emigrants returned to Germany after 1945 [64].

4. Discussion and conclusions

From Berblinger's point of view, the frustrating and shameful experiences at the hands of the rulers of the Third Reich and his sense of helplessness in this regard ultimately continued in post-war Germany: Even after 1945 he was in the position of a petitioner who was convinced of the legitimacy of his claims, but once again had difficulty in asserting them. In any case, Berblinger suffered "under the confused circumstances" of post-war Germany and decided not to remigrate "due to the impact of the grievous insult which he had suffered" (*transl. dg*) [3]. It can at least be assumed that the frustrating experiences with the (East) German post-war authorities ultimately contributed to his decision to give permanent priority to the predictable, albeit sedate, life in his country of immigration, Switzerland.

How Berblinger's life would have developed if he had kept his position in Jena in 1937 or if he had returned to Germany after 1945 remains open. In point of fact, the most successful period of his career was his research work in the field of pathological endocrinology in Jena. Had he stayed in Nazi Germany, he would presumably have been able to expand these studies further and/or, in a second step, to give his research an even more international orientation. On the other hand, he had an excellent opportunity for tuberculosis research after emigrating to Davos, – here, too, he achieved considerable scientific success, which was only made possible in this form by the forced career break and the subsequent new start in Switzerland.

It is also true, however, that Berblinger lost an important position with his dismissal as editor of the "*Centralblatt*": The aforementioned office had not only brought him into direct contact with the most important scientists of the day and allowed him to participate closely in the latest research results in his field, but had also secured him a not inconsiderable position of power. As a longtime editor, Berblinger was instrumental regarding the acceptance or rejection of submitted contributions. In this respect, too, Berblinger was an authority who could

hardly be ignored.

The offers of professorships in Hamburg and Erlangen show how much the university teacher Berblinger was appreciated in German university life after the war – despite his being of retirement age. The thinking behind the appointment policy of the University of Jena, by contrast, was difficult to understand: Here he was only offered the Chair of Forensic Medicine rather than the more appropriate Chair of Pathology. Berblinger must have felt this offer to be at least inadequate, if not a personal affront.

After 1947, Berblinger lived a rather secluded life in Switzerland. He only came to the attention of the German specialist world again at the end of his life: He was appointed an "Honorary Member of the German Society for Endocrinology" in 1956 – then already 74 years old [3]. Berblinger seems to have been "rediscovered" in Germany at that time, because further, quite notable honours followed in the ensuing years: In September 1958, for example, the University of Jena awarded him an honorary doctorate during the celebrations for its 400th anniversary. The university paid tribute to his services "for research on the pathology of the endocrine glands" (*transl. dg*) [65]. Berblinger saw this award as a recognition of his work at the University of Jena and also as a late sign of goodwill [66].

The last award presented in Germany in particular was a source of satisfaction for Berblinger: In spring 1965, the "German Medical Association" (*Bundesärztekammer – Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Deutschen Ärztekammern*) awarded him the "Ernst von Bergmann Plaque" (*Ernst-von-Bergmann-Plakette*). Berblinger was one of the first people to be presented with this award, which was only introduced in 1962. It paid tribute to Berblinger's services to further medical training and medical science [3]. This honor came just in time, because Berblinger died on April 10 of the following year at the age of 83.

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