Karl Moriz Menzel: a Viennese ENT specialist and his escape from the Nazis

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Abstract. This text covers the Austrian-born oto-rhino-laryngologist Karl Moriz Menzel (1837-1944) who, due to his Jewish descent, was forced to flee from his homeland in 1938. For this purpose, Menzel's estate, which was found in the archives of the College of Physicians in Vienna, is used for the first time ever. The correspondence between Menzel and his teacher Markus Hajek stands out in particular. It provides insights into the fates of two Jewish doctors who were forced to plan their emigration after the 'Anschluss'. It becomes clear that Hajek assisted Menzel in his escape to Brussels. Menzel is a prime example of the many doctors expelled by the Nazis for racist and political reasons. The authors systematically document for the first time the expulsion of members of the College of Physicians in Vienna.

Key words: Karl Moriz Menzel, Markus Hajek, oto-rhino-laryngology, Vienna, Nazis, Anschluss, expulsion, college of physicians in vienna

Introduction

The project 'History of the College of Physicians in Vienna: The Critical Years 1930 to 1960' is dedicated to a systematic reappraisal of the College of Physicians in Vienna, its role around medicine under National Socialism in Austria and its pre- and post-history. In the course of this project, a box was discovered in the archives of the College of Physicians in Vienna, which contained an estate of the ENT specialist Karl Moriz Menzel. As no attention had been paid to this material before, we decided to investigate it further.

The estate is of great importance for the project, especially because Menzel's escape from the Nazis is documented in letters to his former teacher Markus Hajek. It is primarily these correspondences that stand out also because they reveal that Hajek helped his former student escape from the National Socialists. Moreover, the estate contains a number of private photographs, which document Menzel's life in Brussels, where he had fled, as well as some medical records on some his and other colleagues' cases.

Methods

This article draws on the estate of Karl Moriz Menzel, which is in the archives of the College of Physicians in Vienna. It has not been possible to determine when the estate came into the archives. In the course of the project 'History of the College of Physicians in Vienna: The Critical Years 1930 to 1960' a survey of the estate has taken place. The estate contains notebooks and sketches of the scientific research of Karl Moriz Menzel, which have not yet been evaluated. The estate contains some letters, of which especially those from Markus Hajek to Menzel were relevant and therefore were transcribed for the most part and are printed here in the paper. Furthermore, an extensive collection of documents has been preserved that document Menzel's efforts to emigrate to various countries. A collection of academic and official documents has also been preserved. Finally, a large collection of pictures is present in the estate, dating from both his time in Vienna and his exile in Brussels. The pictorial material printed in this paper comes exclusively from

the estate. Furthermore, research was conducted in various Austrian archives (Josephinum - Collections of the Medical University of Vienna, Vienna University Archive, Austrian State Archives, Municipal and Provincial Archives of Vienna, Vienna City Library, Theatermuseum). A search in genealogical databases

was performed to fill in missing information.

Karl Moriz Menzel is one of the approximately 500 members of the College of Physicians in Vienna expelled in 1938 after the 'Anschluss' for racist and political reasons. Within the framework of the project 'History of the College of Physicians in Vienna: The Critical Years 1930 to 1960', the names of the expellees were reconstructed, primarily on the basis of the index cards available in the archives of the College of Physicians in Vienna, which document the membership status from 1938. A memorial plaque with the names of the expellees is in preparation and is intended to provide a reverent commemoration of the victims of National Socialism. Finally, an exhibition on this topic will be opened at the College of Physicians in the fall of 2023. In the course of this exhibition, material from Menzel's estate will be presented. Parts of the comprehensive photographic estate, of which only a small part could be published in this essay due to lack of space, will appear on the homepage of the College of Physicians in Vienna.

History of the College of Physicians in Vienna: the critical years 1930 to 1960

Within the framework of the project 'History of the College of Physicians in Vienna: The Critical Years 1930 to 1960' we have dealt with the personnel, institutional and scientific development of the College of Physicians in Vienna in the critical years between 1930 and 1960. The College of Physicians in Vienna is one of the world's most traditional medical societies. After the Medical Society of London, founded in 1773, and the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, founded in 1787, it is one of the oldest multidisciplinary medical societies in the world. All four Nobel Prize winners in physiology or medicine who studied or trained in Vienna – the oto-rhino-laryngologist Robert Bárány (1914), the neurologist and psychiatrist Julius Wagner-Jauregg (1927), the pathologist Karl Landstein (1930) and the pharmacologist Otto Loewi (1936) – had a close relationship with the College of Physicians in Vienna. They lectured at the Society and published their research in the College's organ, the 'Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift'. (1)

When Austria was annexed to the German Reich on March 13th, 1938, Jewish physicians were successively forced out of their profession and eventually forced to flee Austria. Those who did not manage to escape were persecuted and murdered by the National Socialists. In Vienna 3400 out of 4200 medical doctors lost their approbation (2) and 52% of all teachers and professors of the University of Vienna were affected by persecution measures. (3) These developments also affected 'Jewish' members of the College of physicians in Vienna. At the beginning of 1938, the College of Physicians in Vienna had 883 members, including 28 women. Of these 883 members, 520 were considered 'Jewish' and 32 'Mischling' ('mixed-Jewish') according to the Nuremberg Race Laws.^{a b} Immediately after the Anschluss, the leaders of the College of Physicians started to transform the institution. (4) Thus, a large part of the functionaries, about a third of whom were of Jewish descent ^c, were forced to resign. Famous members who were forced to leave the College because of their Jewish descent were, for example, Ludwig Teleky, or Anna-Simona Spiegel-Adolf. The probably most prominent member, Sigmund Freud, was accepted as a member in 1887 and remained a member of the College of Physicians in Vienna until the 'Anschluss' and the exclusion of all Jewish members as described above. Since 1931 he had been an honorary member of the College of Physicians in Vienna. His admission was preceded by his lecture 'On Male Hysteria', which achieved fame in Freudian research, on October 15th, 1886 at the College of Physicians in Vienna. However, the content of the lecture triggered a heated dispute at the meeting. In particular, Freud's teacher Theodor Meynert, a brain anatomist and professor of psychiatry who was vice chairman of the College of Physicians in Vienna at the time, was sharply critical. (5)

After the 'Anschluss' and the forced resignation of most of the board members, the College's long-time asset manager Adolf Irtl took on an important role: he was appointed provisional head. Irtl then ensured that the Jewish members were successively expelled from the institution. The College of Physicians in Vienna was finally deleted on October 14, 1938, on the basis of the 'Law on the Transition and Incorporation of Associations, Organizations and Clubs' (*Gesetz* über *die* Überleitung *und Eingliederungen von Vereinen, Organisationen und Verbänden*) (GBlÖ No. 136/1938) of May 17th, 1938, and the 'Decree of the Reich Governor for the Implementation of the Law' (*Verordnung des Reichsstatthalters zur Durchführung des Gesetzes*) (GBlÖ No. 136/1938). In February 1939, the 'Vienna Medical College' was founded, which functioned as a substitute organization and no longer accepted Jewish members.

So far, only a few of the victims have been explicitly commemorated.^d One of these members of the College of Physicians in Vienna whose fate we are investigating is Karl Moriz Menzel. Menzel became a member of the College of Physicians on March 7, 1903.

Karl Moriz Menzel

Karl Moriz Menzel was born on January 31st 1873 in Mistelbach in Lower Austria as son of the Jewish couple Simon and Sali Menzel (born Pollak).^e Menzel spent his school time in Vienna and Mikulov in South Moravia (now located in the Czech Republic) and later graduated from medical school at the University of Vienna on June 28th, 1897. (6)

After his general training in various departments of Viennese hospitals, he finally started his residency in laryngo-rhino-otology, which he completed in several university clinics. Some of his teachers included Adam Politzer (1835-1920), Heinrich von Neumann (1873-1939), Carl Stoerk (1832-1899), and Leopold Schrötter von Kristelli (1837-1908). Between 1901 and 1907, he served as the first assistant to Markus Hajek (1861-1941), director of the University Laryngo-rhinological Clinic at the Vienna General Hospital. In 1907, Menzel was appointed a specialist in ear, nose and throat diseases at the Workers' Health Insurance Fund, where he worked until 1936. In 1926 he became head of the laryngo-rhinological department of the Hospital of the Viennese Merchants. He held this position until 1937.(7)(8)

Menzel received the venia legendi from the University of Vienna in March 1920 as a private lecturer in laryngo-rhinology and taught at the University of Vienna from summer semester of 1920 until the end of the winter semester of 1937/38 (9) – when his venia legendi was revoked by the National Socialists.^f

During the First World War, Menzel was head of the laryngo-rhinological department of the war hospital in Mostar, which was then still part of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. In recognition of his war service, Menzel received the so called "Goldenes Verdienstkreuz mit der Krone am Bande der Tapferkeitsmedaille" (*Golden Cross of Merit with the Crown on the Ribbon of the Medal of Valor*). (7)

Menzel's escape and his life in exile

Menzel and his wife Marie (also "Miz" or "Mary") Fahn (born 1882 in Vienna), who he had been married to since 1906, (10) emigrated to Brussels in 1938, where, despite repeated attempts to find a safe haven after the Nazi invasion, they had to remain until the end of the war. The couple had two daughters, Gertrude Anna (born 1907 in Vienna) and Susanne Elisabeth Liberta (born 1911 in Vienna). (11) Susanne married Hans Ludwig Larsen, with whom she fled to the U.S. and later had two children with. She died in 2001. We do not know a lot about the older daughter Gertrud, only that in 1959 she got married a second time to Johann Dusek and later died in 1991 in Vienna. (12)



Figure 1. Postcard; field mail. Dr. Menzel to Dr. Viktor Schiller. Mostar. December 6th, 1914

Figure 2. Letter of thanks from the Austrian cabaret artist Fritz Grünbaum (1880-1941), who was murdered in the Dachau concentration camp on January 14, 1941.

Wien Maan 1931

Menzel, der Maler,
Menzel, der Jurist,
Menzel, der Arzt – alle drei
Klasse eins!
Der Erste hat mich entzückt,
Der zweite hat mich belehrt,
Der Dritte hat mich geheilt!
s/e Hals-Hippokrates in Dankbarkeit und großer Wertschätzung
Fritz Grünbaum
Wien, März 1931

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Menzel was supported in his escape by his teacher Markus Hajek. Hajek later also had to flee Vienna and finally was able to establish a new existence in London. Hajek tried to enable Menzel and his family to emigrate to the French Rivera, where Menzel's brother was staying at that time. For this reason, Hajek turned to Georges Portmann (1890-1985), the chair of otorhinolaryngology in Bordeaux:

I have a request to make to you: One of my students, who was my assistant for many years, a capable and quite honorable man, since he is completely paralyzed as a result of the upheaval in Austria, wants to immigrate to France, where he has a wealthy brother on the Riviera who wants to provide for him and his wife. [...] I ask you to do me the one favor that if you are asked for a reference to make immigration possible, you should not hesitate to do it in the favorable sense on the basis of information received from me. (Markus Hajek to Prof. Portman. Vienna, June 8th, 1938)

Menzel also considered moving to Great Britain. (13) Hence, he inquired with the responsible British authority what requirements would be necessary for him to obtain a license to practice medicine in Great Britain. (14) Later, Menzel considered emigrating to the USA with his family. Both plans were eventually not put into practice. Menzel and Hajek remained in contact even after Menzel's successful escape. When Menzel managed to flee to Belgium, Hajek, still stranded in Austria and increasingly worried, was relieved. His own departure, however, turned out to be difficult, as he reported to Menzel. The letter was written only a few days after the November progroms ("Kristallnacht").

Dear Dr Menzel,

I was really starting to get restless, since you haven't let me hear from you for such a long time. Now I am reassured to hear that you are doing well and even have your own apartment. In the course of events, I have come to the conclusion that emigration would be the most expedient thing for us as well. But how can that be, since I have no relatives abroad, and I would have to depend purely on the goodwill of someone willing to sacrifice or on the help of my foreign students?! There are indeed some indications, i.e., spontaneous inquiries from abroad, which show an interest in my existence, but it is still questionable whether this interest will develop into full action. Even from Brussels a Dr Capart, a former student of mine about 35 years ago, inquired about my situation and promised to write to me. Let us see what he intends to do. Perhaps it is possible for you to become acquainted with him; his address is: Dr. Alphonse Capart, Bruxelles: Rue Archimède 79. You could then learn how extensive his interest and attachment for me is.

You must forgive me if these lines deal mainly with myself. But, dear Dr Menzel, you are already thankfully taken care of, while I am in labor [in den Wehen liege], since the events of the last time have upset us very much.

We send our warmest regards to you and your dear wife.

Yours, Dr M. Hajek. (15)

Menzel inquired with concern about Hajek's situation at the end of 1938:

Dear Dr Menzel,

Your dear letter of 12/2/ [1938] reached me in the midst of my activity to take care of the departure. As far as the long affair with Dr Capart is concerned, he had me asked through an intermediary if he could do something for me. Otherwise, it would not have occurred to me to broadly disclose my circumstances to him, since I can remember him, but have never earmarked him in prospect for help. Don't worry about me, it will be all right, since my English colleagues are already trying to help me get away from Austria. Of course, I am leaving all my assets behind and nevertheless my only longing is to get away from Austria. You write about a residence permit in Belgium. That would not serve us at all. I need a patron who will maintain us. Without reflecting on ever being remunerated by my own work. This will also be found elsewhere. I expect to be able to inform you of my future plans in 1-2 months, once everything has come to maturity. It is also unnecessary to contact Dr v. Swieten, the English colleagues will take care of it if it would become necessary.

I am very pleased that you and your dear wife are doing well and am very touched that you are so sincerely interested in my further fate.

With best regards Your Dr M. Hajek. (16)

Hajek was still in Austria at the beginning of 1939. Menzel again inquired about the situation of his friend and teacher. To which the latter replied:

Dear Dr Menzel,

Your kind lines of IV. 19. [1939] have pleased me very much, since I conclude from it that the feelings of sympathy and attachment have not yet been extinguished in all my students. In answer to your inquiry about our health, I can only say that, apart from certain physical ailments which are peculiar to old age, we are feeling well and that our departure is imminent, if I may hope, in three weeks at the most. We have a permit from Sir St. Claire Thompson for England until we have made a definite decision about our further place of residence. My prospects for U.S.A. are also not unfavorable, where many of my students are endeavoring to secure my existence there. Hopefully the good preparations will pay off.

If we travel by way of Ostend, I will notify you; perhaps we can see each other at the Perron station. We would be delighted to be able to speak to you both there. A stop in Brussels would only complicate the trip, so we must refrain.

Best regards to you and your dear wife from your Dr M. Hajek. (17)



Figure 3. Private photo from the exile in Brussels. On the picture your can see Menzel and on unknow soldier.

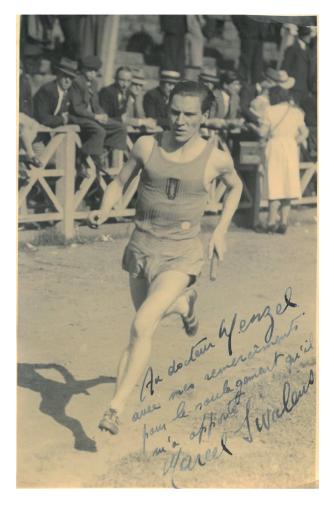


Figure 4. A letter of thanks from Belgian runner and national champion Marcel Swalens to Menzel. Swalens helped Bella Schildkraut, the mother of German actor and track and field athlete Eric Schildkraut (1906-1999), escape to Belgium. She was deported to Zamość in Poland during the German occupation and murdered immediately upon arrival. (20)

Menzel found employment at the St. Pierre Hospital (Hôpital universitaire St. Pierre), where he worked in the oto-laryngology department of Prof. Heyninx van den Branden (Vandenbranden). (18) Menzel received a confirmation of work from Heyninx van den Branden on November 18th, 1938. (19)

In the middle of 1942 Menzel tried to emigrate from Belgium. However, the attempt to enter Switzerland was unsuccessful. Menzel contacted the Swiss industrial psychologist and university teacher Franziska Baumgarten-Tramer (1883-1970) for support. But she found herself unable to offer any help. (21) Menzel and his wife Marie eventually remained in Belgium, where they lived in hiding for fear of deportation. (18) Menzel eventually died in Brussels before the end of the war on May 6th, 1944. In 1947 Marie Menzel emigrated to Hollywood (Los Angeles), where Susanne, the second daughter, had already fled to during the Second World War. (22)

The last letter from Hajek to Menzel in Menzel's estate was dated March 16th, 1940. Hajek died in London on April 4, 1941.

Dear Dr Menzel.

I am not aware of any omission in replying to your messages, I hope that these lines will arrive after all. We are especially pleased that you and your wife are reasonably well, with the exception of the symptoms indicating Ulcus ventriculi. Since you are in the care of your dear wife, I hope that you are able to follow the right diet, which is probably the most important thing. It is very gratifying that you have an occupation, albeit with the limitation of private practice. As long as you are spared from the war, be content and thank God that it is not worse, although so far, we have nothing special to complain about. After all, you have to put up with a little restriction because of inflation. That your daughter has emigrated from Holland to California does not surprise me very much, for Holland is a hot spot [brennender Punkt] Your work at the clinic must give you satisfaction and I am glad to see that you still have the ambition to be of some use to science.

The case you share with me with disseminated dermatostases seems particularly interesting to me and deserves to be established in literature.

When you have published it, do not forget to send me a separate print.

Our health continues to be very tolerable; apart from occasional catarrh, which everyone here suffers from, our health is still reasonably good. What more could one ask for?

Please write sometimes. It is also good to hear the sounds of our homeland [heimatliche Klänge] from time to time.

With the warmest greetings from my wife and your

Dr M. Hajek. (23)

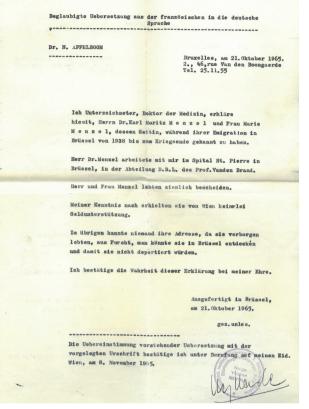


Figure 5. Dr. N. Appleboom, Certified translation fron Frenc to German, Bruxelles, October 21st, 1965

I, the undersigned, Doctor of Medicine, hereby declare to have known Dr Karl Moriz Menzel and Mrs. Marie Menzel, his wife, during their emigration in Brussels from 1938 until the end of the war. Dr Menzel worked with me at the St. Pierre Hospital in Brussels, in the ENT department of Prof. Vanden Brand.

Mr. and Mrs. Menzel lived quite modestly.

To my knowledge, they did not receive any monetary support from Vienna.

Incidentally, no one knew their address, since they lived in hiding for fear that they might be discovered in Brussels and so that they would not be deported.

I confirm the truth of this statement on my honor. issued in Brussels, on October, 21st 1965

Discussion

Emigration from Austria proved to be very difficult for many Jewish physicians. If one wanted to emigrate to the USA, for example, one had to prove that one would not be a burden to the American state in order to obtain a visa. For this purpose, an 'Affidavit of Support' was necessary: Relatives or close friends had to prove that one was "not likely to become a public charge." Most of the people who were able to flee to the United States after 1938 had previously found refuge in another country which was later occupied by Nazi Germany (24).

Unlike other countries of exile, France, where Menzel wanted to flee in mid-1938, remained accessible except for a few months before the outbreak of war, but even here the escape took place under difficult conditions. From 1934/35, doctors had to present an official French employment contract in order to obtain a work permit. Menzel's escape destination, Belgium, could practically only be reached by crossing the border illegally. The Belgian consulates in Austria had already been ordered to stop issuing visas on March 15. However, illegal border crossings were encouraged by Germany. Similar conditions prevailed for Holland, France or Switzerland. In Switzerland, a visa requirement for Austrians was introduced as of spring 1938 (25).

One can see from the letters, as Reiter-Zatloukal and Sauer have pointed out, that as long as there was the possibility of emigration, the hope of continuing the medical practice significantly influenced the choice of one's destination country. However, emigration was already difficult for physicians in the 1930s. In many countries, there was no need for physicians; especially in the cities, the need was often met. Particularly from 1933 onward, regulations regarding the practice of medicine by foreigners were tightened in many countries. In New York, where Menzel also wanted to emigrate to at a certain point in time, due to the many physicians emigrating from Germany and Austria, not only an examination in English but also the "Regents' Examination" was required for the issuance of a license as early as the end of 1936(2).

Conclusion

Karl Moriz Menzel stands for the many doctors of Jewish origin who were expelled from Vienna. For Vienna, the Anschluss meant the disfranchisement of about 65 percent of all physicians because of their Jewish origin. (2) Concerning the medical faculty of the University of Vienna, the consequences of the Anschluss were that slightly more than half of the habilitated physicians were affected by the measures taken by the National Socialists. (26, 27) This led to a dramatic decline in the quality of medical research from which Vienna never recovered and consequently to a decline of the tradition based on the international reputation of the 'Second Viennese Medical School'. (3, 28-41)

For the College of Physicians in Vienna, the 'Anschluss' of Austria to the German Reich meant a successive exclusion of all Jewish members, which at that time represented 59 percent. This project is a first attempt to find out who the affected persons where who had to leave the College of Physicians in Vienna due to racist and political reasons.

In the course of the project, many more victims will be researched. There were also members who were murdered in the Holocaust. The social physician Viktor Hammerschlag (member of the College of Physicians in Vienna since 1900) is probably the most famous of these victims. Another member who perished in the Holocaust is Oskar Färber (member of the College of Physicians in Vienna since 1933).

The authors' wish is not only to contribute to the reappraisal of Viennese medicine during the Nazi era with their work, but possibly the project 'History of the College of Physicians in Vienna: The Critical Years 1930 to 1960' can also serve as a model. Maybe this project is able to stimulate the scientific community to discover the company's archives to divulge this very sad chapter in the history of medicine which saw doctors abandon their profession in their country during the Nazi period.

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- a. We would like to thank Barbara Sauer and Ilse Reiter-Zatloukal for making available the data they compiled as part of the project 'Doctors in Austria 1938-1945 - Deprivation of Rights, Expulsion, Murder' (https://www.nationalfonds.org/ detailansicht/3916), which were central to these statistical analyses. For the end of 1937, Adolf Irtl, as asset manager, determined the number of 907 members. At the end of 1936, according to Irtl, the Society still had over 1000 members (Irtl A. Offizielles Protokoll der Gesellschaft der Aerzte in Wien. Sitzung vom 17. Dezember 1937. Wiener klinische Wochenschrift 1937; 49 (51): 1757). In the archives of the College of Physicians there also exists a list of members apparently prepared by Adolf Irtl, in which he entered who paid

the membership fee until the Society was deleted. This list counts 861 members, although it is not clear at what time it was compiled (Archives of the College of Physicians in Vienna, Kassen- und Rechnungsbücher. Mappe 1938. Mitgliedsbeiträge 1938). Membership fees were initially paid in Austrian shillings and later in Reichsmarks. Jewish members were urged by Irtl to continue paying the membership fee, although it was clear that they could soon no longer be members of the society.

- b. At this point, the question arises how appropriate it is to enumerate 'Jews' for this statistic according to the Nuremberg Race Laws. Not everyone who was declared 'Jewish' by the Nazis would have called themselves so. It should be discussed how respectful or -less it is to reproduce these classifications. In this statistic, we decided to use this categorization because we wanted to find out who was no longer allowed to be a member of the College of Physicians in Vienna. To do this, it was necessary to trace who was labeled 'Jewish' by the Nazis.
- c. Of 'Jewish descent' were Maximilian Weinberger, Carl Fleischmann, Hugo Frey, Julius Schnitzler, Josef Thenen, Ludwig Sallmann and Isidor Fischer.
- d. It should be mentioned that Leopold Arzt (1883-1955) held a memorial speech during the first annual meeting in 1946. In this speech he commemorated the Jewish oto-laryngologist Heinrich von Neumann (1873-1939), who was forced to emigrate in 1938, on behalf of all expelled and persecuted physicians. (Arzt L. In memoriam. *Wiener klinische Wochenschrift* 1946; 58: 117–118). This kind of commemoration was to be a first in an ongoing series, which, however, apparent-

ly ebbed away. In 1949, Viktor Frankl (1905-1997) gave a memorial speech at the annual meeting of the College of Physicians in Vienna. In this speech he remembered Jewish physicians who were murdered in concentration camps and whose death he had to witness himself as a former concentration camp prisoner. (Frankl V. In memoriam. *Wiener klinische Wochenschrift* 1949; 61 (15): 225–226; cf. also Reuter F. In memoriam. Den Opfern der Jahre 1938 bis 1945. *Wiener klinische Wochenschrift* 1946; 58 (1): 2–3).

- e. Menzel was originally called only Moriz, but later called himself Karl Moriz and finally had his name changed to this effect in 1930 at the Lower Austrian provincial authority (birth certificate excerpt). From the birth register of the Israelite religious community in Mikulov, volume IV, p. 17, post no. 252 (copy included in Menzel's estate).
- f. This happened on July 25th, 1938, on the basis of the Fourth Decree to the Reich Citizenship Law, which was the basis for the revocation of the license to practice of academic titles of "Jewish" physicians. (Hubenstorf M. Österreichische Ärzteemigration. In: Stadler F (eds) Vertriebene Vernunft I. Emigration und Exil österreichischer Wissenschaft 1930/1940, Wien: LIT; 1987. p. 359–415.

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