



## Erich Katzenstein

When naming Notgemeinschaft's most important co-workers, Schwartz put Erich Katzenstein (1893–1961) at the top of the list [4]. On the other hand, Katzenstein brought back to mind the very beginnings of the Notgemeinschaft: "Dear friend [...] we both met immediately after your arrival [in Zurich] and took the decision to found the Notgemeinschaft. You gave it its the name, as far as I remember" [5].

Just like the Notgemeinschaft itself, Katzenstein has been widely forgotten in Switzerland today. Although he was a member of the Swiss Neurological Society, the Psychiatric-Neurological Association of Zurich, and the Swiss Society for Natural Sciences for decades, no obituary for this eminent neurologist appeared in the *Swiss Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry*, in which numerous papers of his were published from 1929 to 1962. Among his publications, including more than 40 papers of original research, Katzenstein's monumental monograph *Cranio-cerebral Trauma* stands out [6]. But it is only through a magnifying glass, so to speak, that traces referring to Katzenstein can be found in issues of this journal dedicated to the history of neurology [7].<sup>1</sup>

Remarkably enough, two Swiss newspapers published obituaries. One was written by none other than Paul Parin (1916–2009) [8], pioneer of modern ethno-psychanalysis; the other was by Carl Seelig (1894–1961), an homme de lettres and patron of many needy literati in Swiss exile [9]. Both appreciated Katzenstein's medical career, starting with his PhD certificates at Bern in 1922 and at Padua in 1923, and his medical state examination with approbation at Berlin in 1928 [10]. Since 1924, especially, Katzenstein had been a student of the renowned neurobiologist Constantin von Monakow (1853–1930) at Zurich, and translated the latter's final magnum opus from French into German in 1930 [11]. Following this, Katzenstein became Deputy Director at the Institute of Brain Anatomy and the Neurological Poliklinik of the University, both initially founded by Monakow, where he continued to participate as Senior Consultant even after starting his private practice at Stadthausquai 5 in 1949.

In the obituaries, Katzenstein was portrayed as a real humanist, driven to help people but unencumbered by illusions. His flat at Mühlebachstrasse 140, which possessed a unique library of science and great literature, became a meeting point of prominent authors and artists. Only 2 years after his death was a first glimpse into hidden aspects of Katzenstein's life offered to the public: "He got into the Soviet Government of Munich and came to Switzerland" [12]. But further detail remained

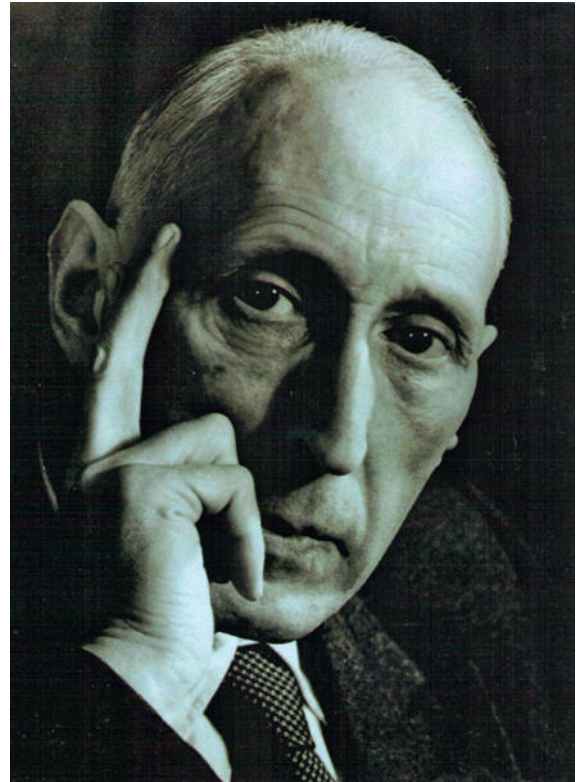


Figure 2: Erich Katzenstein (1893–1961).

vague. Today, we can discover the long shadow cast over the immigrant Katzenstein by looking at his police files at the Federal Prosecutor's Office in Bern: even in 1945, after the end of World War II, Katzenstein's telephone and mail services were being monitored by Swiss police, who suspected him of being a subversive communist. From 1920 until months after his naturalisation in Zurich in spring 1933, Katzenstein was the subject of sustained observation, the consequence of a German arrest warrant issued in 1919 that was cancelled only at the end of 1925 [13].

According to Katzenstein's police file in Munich, his flat in Herzog-Heinrich-Straße 11 had been a comfortable salon for subversive activities in 1919. Here, Ernst Toller (1893–1939), for a brief time one of the leaders of the revolutionaries, and later an internationally renowned expressionist dramatist, briefly found shelter during the collapse of the Bavarian Republic of Councils. To determine the specific nature of Katzenstein's activities, a more detailed source evaluation of the police file would be necessary than is possible here. Suffice it to say, he was categorised only for "aiding high treason"; and no public appearance is mentioned [14]. In this respect, the most recent note that Katzenstein was a member of Munich's Revolutionary Council of Workers ("Revolutionärer Arbeiterrat", RAR) is not

<sup>1</sup> Schweiz Arch Neurol Psychiatr. 2008;159 Suppl4:S43. Schweiz Arch Neurol Psychiatr. 1994, p. 145. Suppl1:S43,S49,S50, S59. On page 51, Katzenstein can be seen in a group portrait (standing, second from the left), but is not mentioned in the legend. This is also the case in another group portrait (where he is sitting, first from the left), in Karbowski K. Mieczyslaw Minkowski (1884–1972), Hirnforscher und Humanist. Nachfolger Constantin von Monakows. Schweiz Arch Neurol Psychiatr. 1995;146 Suppl1: S42 [7].

convincing in the absence of evidence [15].<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, he seems to have disagreed with the establishment of a Soviet Government in Munich [16]. For sure, he was no Bolshevik but a member of the Independent Social Democrats (USPD) [17], a secession from the SPD after the latter gave their consent to the war loans in 1914. Apparently, Katzenstein tried to prevent the execution of political hostages by the so-called Red Army [18].

In light of the above, it is no surprise that Katzenstein's home at Zurich was frequented by prominent German-Jewish authors like Ernst Toller, Jacob Wassermann (1873–1934), and Martin Buber (1878–1965). This fact was not published before the death of Katzenstein's wife Nettie Katzenstein-Sutro (née Gerstle, 1889–1967), who temporarily cared for 10 000 mostly Jewish children, saving the lives of 5 000, by founding the Swiss Emigrant Children's Aid Organisation in autumn 1933. Only in an obituary of his wife was Erich Katzenstein called "a Consul for all who do not have a Consul" [19].

### Impact of the Notgemeinschaft

On 16 May 1933, less than 8 weeks after Schwartz's arrival in Zurich, the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* announced the existence of a Zentralberatungsstelle für deutsche Wissenschaftler (Central Advisory Board for German Scientists). At this crucial moment, Plattenstrasse 52 became the first address for all German scholars full of despair. "During the next days and weeks", Schwartz recalled, "a torrent of inquiries and registrations from all German universities and colleagues arrived" [20]. Now, owing to Katzenstein's local connections, the Notgemeinschaft received a fully equipped office in one of the most eye-catching buildings in the centre of modern Zurich (Uraniastrasse 40/II; Schmidhof). Here, headed by Schwartz, paid and unpaid collaborators compiled an almost complete card index of present and potential Nazi victims in the fields of science and the humanities, which evolved into the famous List of Displaced German Scholars edited by the Notgemeinschaft, strictly confidentially, in London in 1936/37. Including 1794 individuals, this was the essential database for cooperating emergency committees around the world. In 1945, around 2 600 scientists, including Austrians and Bohemians, had been listed in the Notgemeinschaft's files, and found a new place abroad [21]. Most renowned is Notgemeinschaft's accommodation of more than 30 German professors into the newly opened *Istanbul Üniversitesi* at one fell swoop in 1933, the only group transfer in the history of scientific emigration during the time of Nazi Germany. In this way,

nearly 300 ousted scholars (accompanied by relatives and coworkers amounting to approximately 1 000 people) found refuge in Turkey for short- and long-term stays until 1945. Although their contribution to Turkey's modernisation – the so-called "German-Turkish miracle" [22, 23] – is widely recognised, accounts of the history of its genesis have up to now been full of mistakes.<sup>3</sup>

### The "German-Turkish miracle"

In the first days of June 1933, some two weeks after the newspaper clipping in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Schwartz received a postcard informing him about the possibility of finding positions for some university lecturers in Turkey. In Istanbul, Albert Malche (1876–1956), Geneva professor of education and member of the upper chamber in Bern for the group of radical democrats, was said to be organising university reform [24].<sup>4</sup> According to Schwartz, the postcard was "signed by an illegible hand". It was only decades later that I was able to identify the sender: Josef Messinger (1880–1950), preacher to the Jewish community in Bern. All the more surprisingly, the postcard was not addressed to the Notgemeinschaft directly, but to Martin Lippman (1864–1945), Rabbi of the Jewish community at Zurich, who obviously knew by himself to forward it to Schwartz. It is worth noting that the secular "German-Turkish miracle" was first anticipated by two Jewish clergymen.

Schwartz reacted promptly. He contacted Malche by telegraph and came to Istanbul. Katzenstein obtained £100 British pounds for travel and expenses. At the Bosphorus, Kemal Atatürk's (1881–1938) well-prepared project to build a Turkish university according to European standards was missing only one, but crucial, element: suitable professors. Now, referring to his card index, Schwartz was able to deliver. His perfect command of French, the lingua franca in Turkey, made it easy for him to negotiate with the government officials. While his European colleagues were upset by culture shock, Schwartz was able to balance critical periods in these proceedings drawing on his own past life experience. His hometown of Werschetz (Versec-Vršac), Hungarian at that time, was located in the Banat, a multiethnic region which had been strongly influenced by the Ottoman Empire over the centuries. Reminded of his childhood by the sounds of language and music of everyday Turkish life, Schwartz felt at home at once [25].

After he had been accepted for the chair in pathology at Istanbul in October 1933, Schwartz found an appropriate successor to lead the Notgemeinschaft in the jurist

<sup>2</sup> The only author referring to a primary source in order to prove Katzenstein's membership in the RAR is Bischoff WL. Artists, intellectuals, and Revolution: Munich 1918–1919 (dissertation). Harvard University Cambridge/Mass; 1970; p. 285, fn. 223. Strangely enough, this primary source, included in Katzenstein's police record [14], does not mention the RAR at al.

<sup>3</sup> Krefit 2012 [3], p. 120–3; Krefit G 2011 [16], pp. 131–3.

<sup>4</sup> See a colour reproduction of the postcard in [24].



Fritz Demuth (1876–1965), who transferred its headquarters from Zurich to London at the end of 1935.<sup>5</sup> At that time, three branches existed, in New York, Zurich, and Istanbul, the latter two headed by Katzenstein and Schwartz, respectively. By the summer of 1933, Schwartz had already established a Supervisory Committee of renowned scholars to select appropriate candidates for the vacancies abroad that had been offered to the Notgemeinschaft: Max Born (physics), Ernst Cassirer (philosophy), Richard von Mises (mathematics), Franz (later Sir Francis) Simon (chemistry), and Kurt Goldstein (medicine) were the initial members [26].

In Weimar Germany, Kurt Goldstein (1878–1965) had been an icon of ongoing professionalisation in neurology. On 1 April 1933, the day of the first nationwide boycott of Jews, this member of the Democratic Socialist Party (SPD), active in the Association of Socialist Physicians, was arrested and taken to a “wild concentration camp” by SA troops who burst into his clinic at the Hospital Moabit in Berlin [27]. According to an entry in his passport on 5 April, Goldstein was released under the condition that he left Germany by 1 June at the latest. A faint stamp in this document indicates that he crossed the Swiss border at Basel on 6 April [28]. He seems to have reached Zurich much earlier than any subsequent refugee scholar from Nazi Germany engaged in the Notgemeinschaft. Other than Schwartz, however, no one but Goldstein claimed to be among its founding fathers later in life.<sup>6</sup>

### Nucleus of neuroscientists

In April 1933, Katzenstein, Schwartz, and Goldstein shared more than the experience of forced emigration. While nothing is known about Schwartz during the time of the Soviet Republic of Budapest, where he finished his medical studies in 1919, not only Katzenstein but also Goldstein had by then been members of the USPD. The latter was even said to have reviled Germany, together with Kurt Eisner (1867–1919), first leader of the Revolution in Munich, whom he met in Switzerland in winter 1918/19 [29]. Finally, given their related disciplines in the field of neuroscience, it is not surprising that Schwartz, Katzenstein and Goldstein knew each other more or less personally before coming together in Zurich in 1933.

Prior to his appointment in Berlin in 1930, Goldstein had been the successor of the late Ludwig Edinger (1855–1918), first full professor of neurology in Germany at the University of Frankfurt in 1914. His legacy was an interdisciplinary neuroscience network centered at the Neurology Institute [30]. This was located in the



Figure 3: Kurt Goldstein (1878–1965).

same building as the Pathology Institute, where Schwartz’s habilitation treatise on brain injuries due to birth trauma was supported by Goldstein in 1923. Together, they published three papers in 1925, and Schwartz even became Goldstein’s assistant in 1926 and 1927 [31].

In 1931, Goldstein’s obituary of Monakow explicitly mentioned an “inner congruence in the development” of Edinger and Katzenstein’s mentor [32]. To Katzenstein, Goldstein was developing Monakow’s view [33]. Similarities and differences between Monakow’s and Goldstein’s approaches have been the subject of considerable investigation already [34]. Their biophilosophical understanding of the “wholeness” of human beings included social conditions and moral values as well. Actualising a Goethe-like understanding of nature as a self-organised process of creation, however, characterised a specific tradition of German-Jewish neuroscientists in Frankfurt-on-Main before 1933 [35]. Schwartz was part of this tradition [36]. Just like Monakow, he placed the concept of conscience within the realm of nature [37].

In his magnum opus, Katzenstein refers frequently to Monakow, Goldstein and Schwartz [6]. Moreover, in his historical reminiscence of the Brain Commission he offers a genuine link organisationally connecting Frankfurt and Zurich. This first international community of neuroscientists, including Edinger and Monakow, stopped with World War I [38]. During the 2 years before his death, Monakow tried but failed to revitalise this interdisciplinary neuroscience cooperation “irrespective of personal and national rivalries” [39]. Such a spirit united the Notgemeinschaft with its British sister organisation, the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Krefl 2012 [3], pp. 108–9; Krefl 2011 [21], pp. 138–9.

<sup>6</sup> Krefl 2012 [3], p. 106.

<sup>7</sup> For the history of AAC/SPSL/CARA see Marks et al. [21].

Against this backdrop, and by tracing the complex history of the Notgemeinschaft, we can readily see how this most important German aid agency for expelled scholars during the time of National Socialism was actually created by neuroscientists: Erich Katzenstein, Kurt Goldstein, and – most of all – Philipp Schwartz.

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#### Photos

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