

Eching, February 16, 2017

**Interview with Peter Kubierschky
in his house at Kaaganger Weg 86, 82279 Eching**

Peter Kubierschky's father Heinz (1894–1965) was a student of medicine at Munich University at the beginning of World War I. During the war, he became one of the first drivers of the recently invented German army tanks. After the war, he became a surgeon, first in Erlangen until he moved with his family to Munich in 1928 and opened a doctor's office in Schwabing, one of the city districts. During World War II, he was called up to serve as an army doctor and employed during the winter campaigns in Russia in 1940/41. There he contracted a disease and in 1943 his health completely broke down. No longer considered fit for active duty, he was transferred to German military hospitals. At the beginning of 1944, he worked in a military hospital at Garmisch. In the summer of that year, he asked to be transferred to the military hospital of Bad Wörishofen and soon afterwards to St. Ottilien where he was closer to his family. After a partial destruction of their Munich house during air raids, his family (wife, daughter and son) moved to their grandmother in Eching, 7 kilometers from St. Ottilien. From their home in Eching, the family sometimes visited the father in his official residence (one of the villas at St. Ottilien) or the father went home on weekends. At this time, the military hospital at St. Ottilien was completely overcrowded with patients because the military fronts in the East and West were moving ever closer and the wounded soldiers were being brought into this still unoccupied part of Germany. The hospital was divided into three parts: the former monastery, the former school and the former retreat house. A head doctor was responsible for each part. Dr. Kubierschky was in charge of the former school. His daughter also worked as nurse at the hospital where she met her future husband, a patient whose leg had been amputated. Peter Kubierschky was 15 years old at this time and still has vivid memories.

During a weekend visit of the father (probably Saturday, April 28, 1945), he told the family that recently, perhaps on Thursday, the village doctor of Schwabhausen, Dr. Philipp Arnold, had come together with a Jewish doctor named Grinberg. They had asked if a group of severely wounded concentration camp prisoners could be received and treated in the hospital. The doctors of the hospital agreed because of their Hippocratic oath to receive the most desperate cases. This was still highly risky because in these final days of the war (capitulation was on May 8), SS commandos roamed the country and killed on the spot anyone who doubted a final victory. The only free room in the hospital was the theater in the basement of the school used for assemblies and celebrations (today separated into classrooms). This was transformed for the use of about 30 seriously wounded concentration camp prisoners.

The first American troops arrived in Eching on Sunday. In the Ottilien hospital, the American troops moved the German soldiers out of the school and accommodated the wounded concentration camp prisoners there. The German soldiers were brought to the other two wings of the hospital (monastery and retreat house). Later, they were transferred into other nearby hospitals (Herrsching and Dießen) and the less serious cases were dismissed. Dr. Grinberg continued to employ the German doctors and nurses for the care of the Jewish patients. Most of the recently arrived patients were in a dreadful state with gunshot wounds. Dr. Kubierschky told his family: It looked like after a battle. Many of them were amputated during the first weeks and many died. The high death toll was also connected to the unusually plentiful food provided by the American troops. For this reason, a severe diet was introduced which not all of the liberated camp prisoners readily accepted. Dr. Kubierschky worked in the UNRRA Hospital until the summer of 1946, until there was less and less work to do for a doctor and

the hospital was slowly transformed into a DP camp. So he asked for a transfer to another hospital.

From the reports of his father and sister, Peter Kubierschky still remembers the following details:

- During a visit to a specialized medical shop in Munich, his father discovered a great number of modern crutches (i.e. lower arm crutches instead of the usual arm pit variety) which he instantly ordered for the amputated patients. After the war, it was difficult to find crutches.
- The usual food shortage after the war was never a great problem in the UNRRA hospital: the monastery farm provided for the basic needs (especially potatoes); in addition the American army provided more nutrient food.
- Within the hospital there were several national factions which sometimes had conflicts among themselves. The dominant groups were Jews from Lithuania and Poland who were much more cultivated.
- The musically gifted Dr. Kubierschky had his concert grand piano brought from the destroyed house in Munich to the theater in the school. This piano was probably used for the liberation concert; at least it had become damaged because it was left outside of the building for some time. When he left the hospital in the summer of 1946, he was not allowed to take the piano with him because it was confiscated with everything else in the hospital. So he “stole” the piano with some helpers during a lunch break. The piano is still used by his grandnephew.

Summarized by Fr. Cyrill Schäfer, OSB

The interview was also filmed