

Kurt Steinitz,ⁱ a medical doctor and a PhD medical chemist was born in Breslau, Lower Silesia, or Wroclaw, Poland, and obtained his medical degree from Leiptzig in 1931. He left Germany immediately after Hitler came to power, since Jewish physicians were not allowed to work anymore in the non-Jewish hospitals. Steinitz first went to Italy where he did unpaid work in Milan. After a few months, he left for Palestine with a cousin on a tourist visa.

Notwithstanding his immigration status, Steinitz bought a farm in Ramoth Hashavim, a community north of Tel Aviv, where many German immigrants, mostly academics, opened chicken farms. He wanted to learn how to raise chickens and tend bees, there being no jobs for physicians in Palestine at that time. In 1934, he returned to Breslau, Germany, in order to marry Elisabeth Bruck.

Steinitz's, Breslau's mentor happened to be the famous internist Alfred Erich Frank who was among the original group of *Notgemeinschaft* invitees to Turkey. Frank was among those given the right to bring with him a competent assistant. Dr. Frank opted for two, each to be paid half of one salary. Kurt Steinitz was one, and Steinitz's sister-in-law, *Dr. Erica Bruck*, was the other. For reasons not stretching one's imagination, both accepted the invitations extended to them. In turn, they tried to bring Erica's mother, *Ada Bruck*, to Turkey but did not succeed. Ada Bruck was one of the six million who perished.ⁱⁱ

While in Turkey, in addition to continuing his research activities with Drs. Frank and Bruck, Steinitz was active in setting up modern clinical testing laboratories. To facilitate work in the new clinics, he enabled the Internal Diseases Clinic's laboratory in Istanbul to perform most of the needed tests. Steinitz also published numerous articles. Their daughter, Irene, was born in Istanbul at the end of 1936. The family was forced to live a very frugal life on the husband's half-salary. During summer months, they lived in a very old Turkish house on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus and Kurt moonlighted on one of the regular steamboat ferries crisscrossing the Straits. In winter, they lived in the old quarter of Istanbul.

The most significant service that Steinitz performed for Turkey was establishing the infrastructure for transferring conserved blood. This had never before been done anywhere in that part of the world. Not only was he

successful in establishing the means to do so, he also published instructions for performing the procedures. Additionally, in 1942, he published the Turkish textbook book *Clinic Laboratory Procedures*. His colleague, Dr. Alfred Erich Frank, wrote the book's preface, explaining its importance.

Steinitz's final contract expired on June 1 1943 and he went back to Palestine. There he first went straight to work for *Kupat Holim*, the national health service and insurance agency in the port city of Haifa and at the same time in a small inland farming community called Afula which is located in the Jezreel valley of northern Israel over 30 miles away. In the 1940s, a bus or train ride would have taken at least an hour (the train is long gone). To this day, with no more than 40,000 residents "within Israel, Afula is known (somewhat rightfully so) as a boring, dusty place in which it is far from desirable to live, whose inhabitants are close-minded, and all dress and act the same."ⁱⁱⁱ

Between 1945 and 1960, Steinitz was on the staff of the *Rambam*, the major research and teaching government hospital in Haifa. At the same time, he worked for Haifa's *Rothschild* Municipal Hospital. Between 1960 and 1966, he directed the chemistry laboratories of *Beilinson* Hospital in Petah Tikva, a prominent research institution. Steinitz died in 1966.

Kurt Steinitz built the first artificial kidney in Israel and continued to publish in the best-refereed journals worldwide. Many of his publications are still available through the services of Pub Med.

ⁱⁱ This section is based on an oral history provided by Elisabeth Steinitz, (Kurt Steinitz's widow), and recorded in Hod Hasharon, Israel, on August 10 2005 by Miriam Schmidt for the purposes of this book.

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