

Death of Dr. Gertrud Weiss-Szilar

April 27, 1981

Dr. Gertrud Weiss-Szilard, associate researcher in the Program on Science, Technology and Public Affairs at the University of California, San Diego and the widow of Dr. Leo Szilard, died early today (April 27, 1981) at University Hospital after a short illness.

Dr. Weiss-Szilard was born in Vienna, Austria, on December 28, 1909, and had been a resident of the United States since 1937. She received an M.D. degree from the University of Vienna in 1936 and a post graduate degree from the Columbia University School of Public Health in 1944.

She served as a faculty member in preventive medicine at New York University, the University of Colorado and Georgetown University before joining the staff of the School of Public Health at UCLA in 1965. She also served as a research associate and a lecturer in the UC San Diego School of Medicine for eight years before joining the Program on Science, Technology and Public Affairs in 1975.

Dr. Weiss-Szilard was the widow of Dr. Leo Szilard, the first scientist to envision the theoretical possibility of a chain reaction resulting from the fission of atomic nuclei. Since Dr. Leo Szilard's death in 1964, she has devoted much of her time to speaking on her late husband's life and works including his collaborations with Einstein and Fermi, his successful attempt to influence President Roosevelt to establish the Manhattan Project and his futile attempt to influence President Truman to use the first atomic bomb in a non-lethal demonstration of its power.

Dr. Weiss-Szilard also organized, edited and published the papers of her late husband. The first volume, "The Collected Works of Leo Szilard: Scientific Papers," was published by the MIT Press in 1970 and the second volume, "Leo Szilard: His Version of the Facts," was published by MIT Press in 1978. She was working on a third volume, to be titled "Beyond Science to a Liveable World," at the time of her death.

Dr. Herbert York, director of the Program on Science, Technology and Public Affairs at UC San Diego and with whom Dr. Weiss-Szilard worked during the last few years, said Dr. Weiss-Szilard was associated with a number of nuclear disarmament causes and had written and spoken extensively on the subject.

"She was active in the international Pugwash Movement and with a number of groups working toward disarmament in addition to her active participation in our program and the editing of her husband's papers," York said.

Dr. Weiss-Szilard served as a consultant to the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization and served as the project director for the Southeast San Diego Health Study in 1968 and 1969. She was a fellow of the American Public Health Association, a member of the Association of Teachers of Preventive Medicine and a research fellow with the New York Academy of Medicine.

She had been a resident of La Jolla since moving to this area with her husband in 1964. She is survived by a sister and a brother. Services are pending.

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