

MIGUEL MARCO IGUAL. *Sergei Yudin (1891-1954), cirujano y humanista. La transfusión de sangre de cadáver y otras experiencias*. Aguadulce: Editorial Círculo Rojo, 2024, 239 p. ISBN: 9788410735217

Despite being acknowledged as the most outstanding Russian-Soviet surgeon of the 20th century, relatively little is known, outside of Russia, about the life and work of Sergei Yudin (1891-1954). In this groundbreaking, full-length book Miguel Marco not only highlights some of the remarkable achievements of this gifted surgeon, but also brings to life the private man – the cultured and sensitive humanist behind the internationally renowned scientist.<sup>1</sup> Marco also reveals details of the suffering to which Yudin was later subjected at the hands of the KGB. A decorated hero of two world wars, Yudin had achieved worldwide recognition. Nevertheless, along with many other compatriots, he became a victim of the Stalinist repression which contributed to his early death.

The work of Sergei Sergeevich Yudin had major repercussions for medical and surgical practice worldwide. It was Yudin who conceived and developed the use of cadaveric blood in transfusion and established the world's first known blood bank at the Nikolay Sklifosovsky Institute in Moscow. His work put the Institute at the forefront of Soviet and international medicine. Opposed to the idea of surgical specialization, Yudin was also accomplished in the fields of emergency-, digestive-, and trauma surgery; he was a leading expert in spinal anaesthesia and was considered the father of modern organ transplantation. He practiced surgery with great artistry and surgeons worldwide clamoured to attend his surgical demonstrations. As well as being a brilliant orator, Yudin was a prolific and accomplished author, and before his untimely death he had documented his work in 18 published monographs and almost 200 scientific articles.

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1. This book is preceded by an article published in the journal *Asclepio*: MARCO IGUAL, Miguel (2022), «Sergei Yudin (1891-1954) y la transfusion de sangre cadavérica. Sus repercusiones en Europa Occidental», *Asclepio*, 74, 581-590. The article focuses on Sergei Yudin's work with cadaver blood transfusion, a topic developed more extensively in the book.

During the First World War, Yudin was wounded three times and was awarded the St. George Cross for bravery. During the Second World War he was appointed surgeon in-chief to the army and devoted much of his time to military surgery, acquiring vast surgical experience and developing pioneering clinical techniques for the treatment of gun-shot wounds. In recognition of his surgical achievements, Yudin was awarded numerous international accolades. He was a member of the International Society of Surgeons and a founding member of the International College of Surgeons, a member of the Society of Surgeons of Paris, and of the Catalan Society of Surgery, among other such organisations around the world. He was also made an honorary member of the Royal College of Surgeons of Great Britain, and of the American College of Surgeons — achievements of which he was immensely proud.

In the post war period of the 'Cold War' and the 'Iron Curtain', Yudin continued to communicate with many colleagues abroad, especially in the United States of America and Britain. These frequent contacts were viewed with suspicion by the Soviet authorities. Yudin was not a member of the Communist Party and his independent and critical attitude towards the regime irritated its leaders. His own mother warned him of the danger of his blasé behaviour — behaviour which would eventually lead to his detention. Here, Marco also points to the professional jealousy of one of Yudin's former disciples as of potential significance.

In a skillful and highly readable narrative, Miguel Marco traces Yudin's tragic trajectory from internationally acclaimed, prizewinning scientist to the ignominy and suffering of imprisonment and exile. Despite his international renown (indeed, partly because of it), on 22 December 1948 Yudin was arrested and imprisoned by the NKVD. In addition to being subjected to physical torture, his name disappeared from medical journals and his publications were removed from libraries. After more than three years in jail without trial, he was condemned to exile in Siberia. It was not until after the death of Joseph Stalin, in March 1953, that Yudin was allowed to return to Moscow where, with indomitable spirit, he attempted recommence his work. However, his body now bore the long-term effects of physical torture and hardship, and barely one year later, on 12 June 1954, at the age of just 62, Yudin died from myocardial infarction.

After the fall of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the memory of Sergei Yudin has been slowly recovered. Miguel Marco highlights the importance of this work at the present moment in time, when Yudin's beloved homeland is once more embroiled in conflict. Ironically, Yudin enjoyed a close relationship with Ukraine, where he regularly attended surgical conferences, and maintained lasting friendships among his Ukrainian colleagues. It was in Kyiv that he received the first public support for his experiments with the transfusion of cadaveric blood and where the appreciation and respect he was afforded led him, for a time, to consider living, in order to escape the difficulties he was encountering in Moscow.

Impressively researched, the book combines a comprehensive appraisal of existing Russian and international literature and a range of fascinating inedited material, woven into a compelling narrative that makes it attractive to readers of medical biography as well as to anyone interested in the history and progress of medicine — especially of gastric surgery and of the development of blood transfusion using cadaveric blood.

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