

NO. 621

"E-10" (MEDICAL EDUCATION) INTERVIEW

SG

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August 1957

Geneva

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2. [REDACTED]
3. Geneva
4. 1919
5. M
6. Hungarian of German descent
7. Protestant
- 8.
9. Married
10. 2
11. Physician, working in the hospital in Geneva
12. Doctor assigned for work in the Clinic for Internal Medicine # 1 in Budapest
13. Intellectual
- 14.
15. Sergeant October 1944
- 16.
17. Russian POW
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19. Doctor of Medicine, University of Budapest 1944
20. Budapest
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- 23.
24. November 21, 1956
25. Geneva, Switzerland
26. No
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31. "H"
32. "H"
33. "H"
34. Hardly

Respondent's Brief Background

I am a Hungarian of German ancestry. I was formerly called Kosch and took up the Kincses name in 1933. I served in the Hungarian army from October 1, 1944, as a doctor and was captured in Moravia in 1944 by the Russians. When the Russians captured us, we were told that all Hungarians would be released and sent back to Hungary. We were put into a railroad car and were taken to Budapest with many other Hungarian prisoners of war. However, in Budapest we were not released but were sent to the Ukraine, to Mariupol on the Crimean Peninsula and were put in a camp, where I had to take care of the camp inmates with two other doctors.

We were released in 1947 and were sent back to Hungary with 100,000 other prisoners of war. Actually, our release was a political manoeuvre to help the Communists to victory in the August 1947 elections. Following my release I worked at the Clinic of Internal Medicine in Budapest, which was formerly known as the Herzog-Clinic. Professor Herzog, the former director of the clinic, was forced to retire because of his background. Following his retirement, István Ruzsnyák, a converted Jew, was appointed the new director of the clinic.

Appointment of Professors.

Prior to the war, the appointment of professors took place upon the recommendation of the Medical Faculty and the Ministry of Education. The appointment was made by the Regent. After

the war, theoretically the recommendation remained still in effect, however, in practice the party's voice became decisive.

Changes in Structural Organization

After the war, a reorganization took place in the structure of the Medical School. The Medical School, which used to be one of the faculties of the University of Budapest, after the war became a separate university with a separate rector and no dean. I do not know the reasons for the structural changes, but I believe that the supervision exercised by the Ministry of Education became more direct, since the rector was immediately and directly responsible to the Minister of Education. Under the former system, each year a different person held the position of the rector and the position was rotated among the five faculties of the University. In addition each faculty had elected its own dean, a different person each year.

Under the post-war system, the reorganized Medical University had only a rector, who did the functions of the former dean. He was a party man. For the last six years, Paul Jegesi-Kass held this position. I believe that the present rector of the Medical University has more power and authority than the former dean of the Medical School had, because he is the omnipotent representative of the party.

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Changes in Enrollment Policy

Since 1945, increasing emphasis was laid on the worker-peasant background in connection with admission to the University. It was the Communist policy to gradually bring about the exclusive representation of the working class at the universities, the same way as the working class carries the decisive role in politics. The aim was to establish a new intelligentsia. For a time the old intellectuals were considered a necessary evil. Their task was to train the new class-conscious and class-loyal intellectuals.

Removal of Old-Time Professors and the Chief Doctors

The politically unreliable professors of medicine and the chief doctors (head doctors) were removed in successive stages after 1945. Frequently they received a transfer to places and posts far not commensurate with their background and qualifications. For instance, Blonér Hajniss, the former director of the Childrens' Clinic No. I in Budapest, was transferred to the CTI in Kispeszt. Also I recall the case of Lajos Bakay, Professor of Surgery, who was ~~and~~ fired and was not permitted to assume any post whatsoever.

All the former directors of hospitals were removed and it was extremely rare that a non-party man would become the new director.

Under the old system, the director had not only administrative knowledge, but technical competence in his field. After 1945, many ignoramuses were appointed to be directors, who wanted to

have a say about everything in the hospital. While the director under the old system had always asked the advice of the head doctors, after 1945 the directors' attitude amounted to a dictatorship. They worked with much less professional knowledge and respect, they were mostly young people, who imposed their views on others largely by intimidation.

The head doctors in hospitals under the new system were appointed by the Minister of Health.

Organization of the Clinics in Budapest

All clinics in Budapest (surgery, internal medicine, childrens' clinic, etc.) were under the authority of the Minister of Education. At the head of each clinic there was a director, ^{under him there were a number of} an associate directors (usually called "adjunktus"), a "tanársegéd," (assistant to the professor), and a "gyakornok" (practitioner). In addition, sometimes they also allowed externists to study and practice in the clinic, without pay.

Appointments and Promotions

After you received your doctorate, you could go to the director and ask for an appointment as a practitioner to the clinic. He would usually send you KM to the representative of your trade union and to the local party secretary, to whom you had to hand in a complete rundown concerning your family background, your former associations, your religious activities, your participation in Communist-organized KM demonstrations (for instance, May Day parade).

and your financial status. If you were a former owner or operator of a business enterprise, or a former artisan, you had to indicate how many people you employed. If you had relatives abroad, you had to indicate how long ago they had left the country and whether or not they had left without a passport. At the time of severance of relations by the Soviet Union with Israel in connection with the doctors' alleged plot in the Kremlin, you had to indicate if you had any relatives in Israel. So, from this you can see that this was not a regular job application, but a thorough all-out description of your personal history. After your application had been handed in, the AVH would check on the information given by you. Your eventual appointment came from the Ministry of Education via the sector of the University and the director of the ~~XXXX~~ clinic. In order to be appointed ^{as} an assistant professor, you usually needed four years of practice in specialized medicine.

But the Communist Party not only changed the composition of those holding professorships, but also that of the associate directors, the so-called "adjuncts." For one thing, the number of the associate directors was increased. First you had an adjunct whose main task was teaching. Second, you had an adjunct whose main task was research, and finally you had an adjunct, mostly in the ^{older} ~~XXXX~~ category, whose task was curing.

The Communists emphasized mostly the teaching & research

functions, since the curing ^{desire} function is more or less innate with every doctor. They also stress ^{ed} the Communist philosophy, which based medical science entirely on materialistic grounds. Last, but not least, they constantly stressed the leading role and outstanding contribution of Soviet science to medicine and public health. Russian names which formerly had been unknown to me, had to be learned and taught, and repeated constantly. Anybody who did not accept this outlook fully and wholeheartedly, was denounced as a cosmopolitan imperialist and a fascist idealist. ~~XXXXXX~~ I recall, for instance, the ^{at} Professor Hajnal, who was the director of the Clinic for Internal Medicine No. II in Budapest, once was told by Professor Ruzsnyák that he was a cosmopolitan imperialist.

Indoctrination

Members of the Hungarian Academy of Science had to take a special seminar course in ideology. Professor Ruzsnyák, my boss, was the debate leader at the seminar. He, incidentally, was also a member of the Presidium of the Hungarian People's Republic as well as member of the Hungarian-Soviet Society.

Holders of lesser positions with a good ~~XXXXX~~ kader were sent to the ~~XXXXXXXXX~~ Party Academy for ideological training. In addition, the Study Center of the Central Party Leadership organized political indoctrination courses in Budapest.

Usually the party secretary and the leader of the personnel

section of the university made the arrangements for a political seminar course and invited a faithful Communist to lecture there. Actually, there was no compulsion to go to these courses, but of course people who did not go took a chance. Eventually, the party had ^{the} means of finding out who were those who regularly absented themselves from the lectures or who did not actively participate by questions and answers in the seminar. All this was indicated on your kador. The ideological training and indoctrination for everybody at the university was a never ending process.

Short courses

There were short courses organized for people with a good class background, who received at the evening ~~XXXXXX~~ school of the workers a special baccalaureat^s in the technical field which was closest to their occupation^x. These people, then, were admitted upon receipt of their baccalaureat^s to the university. In far as the Medical University was concerned, these consisted mostly of people who had some experience in hospital work or in clinics, such as nurses; teachers had to spend extra time with these people to help their educational development. Daily articles appeared in the Szabad Nép, stressing the importance ^{of} such education. Weak students were usually organized in groups of two, where each weak student had a good student classmate.

Naturally, this was not very popular with the good students, who considered it ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ as a waste of time to tutor the weaker students.

The results and achievements of both lower and higher education had to be indicated in terms of the class background of the students. Teachers had to indicate how many students in the class categories of workers, peasants, and intellectuals received a certain grade, or how many in these categories were flunked. If the ratio was not favorable to the students of working class background, then the teacher was exposed to endless questioning and bother. The result of this was that the teachers had learned how to make good statistics.

The above-mentioned procedure was not only characteristic of higher education, but was a general phenomenon. For instance my children, who went to grade school, told me that their classmates who had a working-class background always received good grades, whereas those students who were considered class aliens invariably received low marks.

Actually, the whole system of short courses had failed. In this connection Professor Kálmán Sánta, Professor of Psychiatry in Debrecen, pointed out that the short courses, just like the Stalinovite movement and the imposition of increasing demands upon the individual, eventually leads to the creation of

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neurotic personalities, since the fact that the individual cannot comply with the demands placed upon him creates dissatisfaction and piles up tension in him. It may be of interest to ^{note} that Professor Sántha, who was also a member of the Hungarian Academy of Science, was suspended from his job as a result of these remarks. I had a personal talk with him at the time when he was lying sick in the hospital. There was a formal debate before his expulsion from the Academy; however, the expelling decree was already predetermined by the party. Following this incident he was transferred to Balassagyarmat ~~XX~~ and was demoted to a head doctor. In 1956 he was rehabilitated and he regained his former post and became again a member of the Academy. The reason that the regime gave for his rehabilitation was that the debate at the time of his expulsion from the Academy was not well conducted.

In general, the whole education ^{on} ~~XXXX~~ was organized on a ^MMarxist-leninist basis. One of the most important tasks of the teacher was to show the superiority of Soviet science in every field. Teachers had to go to ridiculous extremes in stating this. Everything on earth was first invented by the Russians.

Publication of Professional Books and Articles

The most important Soviet publications in the field of medicine and public health were ~~XX~~ translated by experts into Hungarian. This task was carried out by the Soviet ~~XXXXXX~~

Documentation Center for Medical Science. No publication, book or article, could appear in Hungarian anywhere unless the work indicated that the author was thoroughly familiar with the Soviet bibliography; even if an author consulted German, French, English, or other periodicals or books, he had to mention the Soviet bibliography first.

Russian teachers and advisers

Among the professors there were only a few who knew Russian, but there were some visiting professors from Russia lecturing at the university, and also there were Russian advisers to see that the development of Hungarian medical science went along properly. The professors also had to go to indoctrination courses to learn about the party line. X Up to about 1953 no one dared to speak up independently, only during Imre Nagy's HEN regime was there a certain amount of criticism.

Among the Russian professors who lectured at the Medical University, I would like to mention Professor Boris Petrovski, professor of surgery in Moscow, whose official task was to help the reorientation of the Hungarian medical science along Russian lines. He was appointed to a Hungarian chair and lectured through the help of an interpreter. He lectured on the importance of the so-called "great patriotic war of the Soviet Union." In addition, he also organized the compulsory blood-donating service and center. He also lectured about the cure and therapy of certain diseases.

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In general, I felt, or had the impression, that he was about a hundred years ~~KA~~ behind. ²He give you an example, for instance in connection with the treatment of the inflammation of the lung, pneumonia, he recommended "köpölyözés" (the application of small glasses and air suction to the sore parts), as a major treatment. In my opinion, medical science today primarily uses penicillin and the sulpha drugs, and only if these don't work, then you may perhaps try the above-mentioned method. There were many other similar instances in which Professor Petrovski recommended outmoded methods of medical treatment which are no longer ~~KXXX~~ in use, following the discovery of anti-biotics.

Compulsory Courses in the Medical Curriculum

The studying of ~~M~~arxism and leninism as well as that of the Russian language was compulsory for every medical student at the university. Marxism and Leninism were taught at the Medical University by George Gábor. I am not familiar with the content of the course. The teaching of the Russian language was on a fairly primitive level. The students had to pass examinations every semester. Nobody liked to study Russian and nobody spoke Russian. One reason for this was the basic difference between the Hungarian and the Slavic languages, and another the use of the Cyrillic alphabet. In addition, from an emotional point of view, the students got fed up with the constant emphasis on the glorification of the Soviet Union. To give you an example,

my little daughter, who went to the third grade, told me one day after school that the whole school took a walk in the woods, guided by their teachers, and that they were told that such a walk was only possible because the glorious Red Army enabled us to take walks.

Finally, in connection with the difficulties in teaching the Russian language, I would like to mention the fact that there was a great shortage of Russian teachers in spite of the many scholarships and fellowships which were ~~XX~~ awarded to students on recommendation of the DISZ for the purpose of studying in Russia.

Textbooks

Many new textbooks were written under the sponsorship¹ of the Ministry of Education. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Usually there were several contributors to a book, who received their specific assignments from the Minister of Education. In the assignment the party line was laid down and the writings were thoroughly scrutinized from an ideological viewpoint before publication.

Professional Degrees and Qualifications

After completion of your studies at the Medical University and the passing of the necessary examinations, you became a doctor, or rather, a physician, since the former doctor's degree was abolished. If you specialized in a certain field, you could

become an "aspirant," and after four years, if you wrote a dissertation and you were able to defend it before two critics, you could become a candidate. If you wrote another book, then you could become a "doctor of medical sciences."

The above system, however, remained only on paper the way I have described it. In fact, some people received their various degrees even without the proper qualifications, and others did not, even if they had the proper qualifications. The Hungarian qualifying Committee ~~XX~~ on science gave the degrees and the titles. To show you how this worked in practice, I would like to recall the case of Dr. George Gotzegen, who was the director of the István Hospital. He was 52 years old, who had previously received the degree of a "dozent." In view of the fact that he was a member of the Social Democratic Party, after 1948 and after the merger of the Socialist and Communist parties, he was not taken over into the United Workers' Party; they did not allow him to become a doctor of the medical sciences. In 1955, they allowed him ~~XX~~ to defend his book, and finally he was allowed to become a candidate. On the other hand, the son of Mihály ~~XXXXX~~ Földi, who was the right-hand man of Professor Ruzsnyák, received the degree of a doctor of the medical sciences when he was only 32 years old.

Further titles which were allowed to be used were the corresponding and the regular members of the Hungarian Academy

of Science. A candidate was paid a monthly fee of 400 forints in addition to his regular pay, while a doctor of the medical sciences received a little more, a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Science received 1200 forints, whereas a regular member received 1600 forints per month in addition to their regular salaries.

In connection with the writing of the dissertations I would like to mention that 90 percent of the study had to be based on Soviet works and Soviet authors, only ten percent could be foreign literature. This way they compelled the candidates to occupy themselves almost exclusively with the study of the Russian scientific literature.

Job Applications

Under the former system, you had to submit an application if you were interested in a particular type of job. Under the new system you had to pass an entrance examination, which consisted of a written and an oral part. You were examined in the medical field and you were ~~XX~~ cross-examined from an ideological viewpoint on the tenets of ~~M~~ Marxism and ~~L~~ Leninism. In addition to the examination, you had to fill out special forms and had to give a detailed account of your life, former contacts, schooling, family relationships, business associations, financial status, relatives in foreign countries, and the like.

The entrance committee, which consisted of the rector of the Medical University, the leader of the personnel ~~section~~ ^{section} of the university, the representative of the trade unions, the party secretary, and the representative of the DISZ, ruled in regard to your appointment to the job you applied for. In the appointments usually the class background had a decisive role.

Private Practice

Private practice in Communist Hungary is a phenomenon which has been slowly dying out, just like artisanship and the small handicraft industry is dying out. In view of the fact that everybody belongs to the OTI (SZTK), and as such is entitled to free medical care (only 15 or 25 percent of the price of the medicine has to be borne by the patients), there is no need in principle for a private physician. Thus private practice has been on the way out. Only a small fraction of the peasants and certain other categories of people who are dissatisfied with the services received at the OTI look for private physicians.

Physicians were under the authority of the Minister of Health and they could be transferred from one place to another. Many doctors were transferred from the larger cities to the country if they were not considered good K kaders.

Salaries

The monthly salary of district doctors ranged from 2000 to 2500 forints. Sometimes they also received additional allowances

for travel, if they had to cover large territories in villages and in the country.

A specialized doctor in the OTI received a monthly salary of 2000 to 2200 forints.

In hospitals, the managing head doctor (igazgató főorvos) received approximately 2800 forints, whereas an adjunktus had 2200. A non-specialized associate doctor (alorvos) received 1800, whereas an assistant doctor (segédorvos) received 1500 forints.

In clinics, the director received 3500 forints per month, plus additional allowances. The adjunktus had 3000 forints, the assistant to the professor (tanársegéd) had 2500, and finally an intern received only a nominal fee.

No one in the above categories could conduct private practice, and even those doctors who were not in the above-mentioned categories needed special permission for private practice.

The general plight of doctors

Generally speaking, the doctors' plight has deteriorated after the war, with the exception of a few doctors, especially in the countryside. Out of the 22 professors at the Medical University of Szeged only one has a car.

Apart from the low salaries, the general working conditions are also ^{bad} worse. Doctors working in the OTI have to see approximately 60 patients daily. This, of course, imposes a tremendous burden on the attending physician, who works under constant strain.

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Medical Care

As compared to the pre-war situation, there is a wider coverage today in terms of quantity. However, one should point out that the quality of the medical care has deteriorated after the war. This is due not only to the lack of adequate facilities and of available skilled personnel, but also to the shortage of drugs and medicine. WH