

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF LYMPHOLOGY

In Memoriam

Stephen Rusznyak (1886- 1974)

As professor Weißleder, secretary-general of the International Society of Lymphology, asked me to write an obituary on professor Stephen Rusznyak, an honorary member of this society, I at first hesitated whether to do this. This had two reasons. First of all I have no detailed data about the life of professor Rusznyak, since I do not any more live in Hungary, but for years in Germany. On the other hand I am not able to write objectively, because I regard the deceased as my spiritual father and it is rather unorthodox that a son writes an obituary about his father. However, I decided to do as professor Weißleder wished, for I can assume that no one but I, who, already as a student of medicine, was fortunate to be admitted to the clinic of professor Rusznyak and had the possibility to work there until my own nomination as professor of internal medicine, can pay tribute to the greatness and significance of this man.

Professor Rusznyak was a scholar of Baron Alexander von Korányi, who is with justice considered the founder of scientific-orientated internal medicine in Hungary; his work on renal diseases is together with that of Volhard underlying in nephrology. Therefore, it is easy to understand that Rusznyak's interest was early directed to this field of research. He studied the pathophysiology of edema in the clinic of Korányi in Budapest. The monograph published together with Bennhold and Kylin in the 1930's on plasma proteins can be regarded as the synthesis of this creative period. In this monograph he already indicated that the problems of edema formation cannot be solved without considering lymphological viewpoints. So he was the one who first programmed me and then other scientists on this field of research and in this way lymphological research was started in Hungary.

In the early 1930's Rusznyak was appointed head of the Medical University Clinic in Szeged. At the same time professor Szent-Györgyi, the Nobel prize winner, was professor of biochemistry at this university. Very soon a deep friendship and a close scientific collaboration developed between these two men. The fruits of this collaboration were basic studies on hemorrhagic diathesis and bioflavonoids (vitamin P).

Only he who had the opportunity to spend many years near Stephen Rusznyak as his scholar and who had the possibility to take part in his sick-calls and lectures knows that the greatness of this man cannot alone be appraised by studying his numerous scientific publications. His sick-calls were a great scientific and spiritual experience. His attitude to patients, assistants, and students was characterized by humanity and goodness. Problematic cases daily came up for immediate discussions at sick-bed causing professor Rusznyak to give one of his assistants a research project concerning the case. During such calls many today internationally prominent scientists were given their lifetime projects. It is self-evident that all assistants in the clinic participated in these sick-calls and voluntarily: nobody was required to do this.

His clinical lectures were in every respect classic masterpieces. Every night he prepared them conscientiously – he never appeared unprepared before his students. It was his opinion that teaching in internal medicine should not only be based on imparting facts, because owing to the rapid development of medicine a doctor must always be learning. It is more important to teach him how to think when solving the problems of his patients. In addition to staff members, doctors often came from town to listen to these lectures and there was great disappointment when, for some reason, a lecture was cancelled. Professor Rusznyak's classical education illuminated these lectures. I have not yet known an academic teacher whose interest would have been so universal as that of professor Rusznyak: literature, arts, music, history, astrophysics, archaeology etc. were besides all disciplines of medicine objects of his interest.

Scientific research was sacred to him all his life. I do not want to omit mentioning his relation to money: he nearly always entrusted the care of his private consultation hours to senior colleagues – and they, not he, received the fees. He kept only a small fraction of the income of the private ward; nearly all of the money went into a so-called "small cash". This money was used for purchases of scientific instruments, test animals, books etc. and for the salaries of such assistants who at that time held an unpaid position.

Immediately after the Second World War professor Ruzsnyák became head of the 1st Medical Clinic at the University of Budapest, and soon after this, president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Through the last-mentioned office corresponding to the position of a minister he was more and more distracted from the clinic and did not any more give so many lectures and neither did he so often call on his patients.

I do not consider it my task to judge the decision of professor Ruzsnyák to engage in politics. But it is obvious that Hungarian science benefited from his activity enormously. In the 1950's the western medical literature was banned from the clinic and institute libraries in all countries of the East bloc: to read it was "cosmopolitanism"; only certain persons furnished with a special permission were allowed to read these journals. Through his great personal authority Ruzsnyák could prevent this development in Hungary.

Another example: As the authorities wanted to introduce an attendance recorder into the university clinics, professor Ruzsnyák prevented it explaining to dictator Rákosi: "A scientist is most valuable when lying on his couch and thinking". The humiliating attendance recorders were never brought into the Hungarian university clinics and institutes.

Through the death of Stephen Ruzsnyák the world has lost one of the most prominent scientists and humanists of this century.

Prof. Dr. M. Földi, 332 Salzgitter 51, Fichtenweg 10

FORTHCOMING CONVENTIONS

Vth International Congress of Lymphology, March 23-29, 1975, Buenos Aires (Argentina) – Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

Presidents: *Carlos Martin Grandval* (Buenos Aires), *Rubens Carlos Mayall* (Rio de Janeiro)
Executive Committee for the Congress: *P.R. Koehler, M. Viamonte, H. Weissleder, M.H. Witte*
Addresses: Austria 2626, Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Caixa Postal 1822, Rio de Janeiro – GB (Brazil) ZC-00

Buenos Aires Section, March 23-26, 1975

Scientific Program:

- 1) *Lymphomas*: etiology, physiopathology, diagnosis, classification, treatment, etc.
- 2) *Lymphatic System and Immunology*: lymphocyte structure, formation, transportation, lymphatic system in immunology, methods to establish the immunologic condition, immunotherapy, etc.
- 3) *Lymphatic dissemination of cancer*: mechanism of lymphatic invasion, prognosis, value, lymphadenectomy, endolymphatic therapy, etc.
- 4) *Progress in Lymphology*
- 5) *Miscellanea*
- 6) *Latino-american session*

Location of Congress: Buenos Aires Sheraton Hotel

Official Languages: English – Spanish with simultaneous translation

Rio de Janeiro Section, March 26-29, 1975

Scientific Program:

- 1) *Progress in Lymphadenography*
- 2) *Medical and surgical treatment of lymphedemas and chylous effusions*
- 3) *Anatomo-physio-histo-pathology of the lymphatic system*

Several round-tables will be arranged and a Post Graduate Course on Lymphology will be held.

Location of Congress: Hotel Gloria, Rio de Janeiro

Official Languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, with simultaneous translation.

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