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*THE PURGE WITHIN THE PROFESSIONS
OF HEALTH AND MEDICINE*

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The German attempts to get political control of the professional bodies

Few months after the military German occupation of Norway April-May 1940, the German occupational administration system called Reichskommissariat was established. The Reichskommissar Terboven appointed in september 1940 a puppet assembly of cabinet ministers as heads of each of the departments, most of them members of the Norwegian pro-german party Nasjonal Samling (NS), so also for the health services. The intention of the German politics was gradually to introduce a national-socialistic administration system, building upon the ideology and experiences of the German system.

A part of the process was to gain political control of the professional bodies. This should be done by introducing the authoritarian leadership under a so called commissarian leader- usually a member of NS and loyal to the "new time", appointed by the Reichskommissar and responsible to him. These measures were of course met with great resistance from the different professional associations that in the first hand had been selected for the experiment. A collective protest was sent by 41 associations to the Reichskommissar. Among these was also the Norwegian Medical Association. It was considered of special importance to get the medical profession under control as soon as possible- important as it was with its wide surface of contacts.

The 15th. of June 1941 representatives of the 41 associations were called to "eine Besprechung" with the Reichskommissar in Oslo. Here was announced the decret about commissarian rule of the professional bodies. A limited number of the present leaders were arrested immediately, among them the Secretary General of the Medical Association. One of his colleagues, a former famous and respected surgeon, who was member of the NS party before the war, had already been appointed as the new leader of the Medical Association. He left the "Bespechung" and marched directly to the offices of the Medical Association and tried to get in contact with he Central Committee. The Commitee refused any form for cooperation, and in a short time the Medical Association was paralyzed during the rest of the war. The members withdraw their memberships with a few exceptions. The Association existed mostly as a formal body, in reality an appendix to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. From time to time, however, the earlier members were threatened to re-entry the Association or pay a certain fee for license to practice. In most cases these threats were rejected without any serious consequences, as the German authorities wanted as peaceful co-existence with the medical profession as possible, to keep the health services intact. The registred number of doctors being members of NS party, was in 1942 altogether 133 out of 2700 doctors. Another 2-300 had given in for the political pressure, paid their fees and thus considered illojal to the illegal leadershp.

Illegal leadership: The "doctors' front"

Already during the autumn 1941 a number of young physicians organized a specific medical resistance organization "the doctors front". The key persons lived in Oslo, but some of the members were allowed to travel with German permit around in the country on the pretext of a fictive scientific project purpose.

A secret network all over the country for information and distribution purpose between reliable colleagues and other persons was established, and was not revealed any time during the war.

The main part of Norwegian practitioners thus had to continue to work with their patients isolated from any professional association, and only with secret contacts from time to time with the illegal self-appointed leaders. The former legal council of the Medical association did not play any role in these illegal activities.

A special situation took place in Norway, however, as the governmental General Director of Health, dr. Karl Evang, went in exile in London in June 1940 together with the King and the government. The majority of civil servants in the Public departments in Oslo and the local administration elsewhere in the country stayed, however, in their posts during the rest of the war, in spite of the new political system. Only a limited number of left- radical doctor in the central administration were dismissed. Generally it was not considered unlawful or illojal to work in that kind of services under the occupant according to the International law. None of these officials were under the later purging processes charged for colaboration unless they had committed other treasure crimes.

Investigation processes started already during the war

The doctor's illegal management started very early to register the NS members and those who revealed to be failing in patriotic attitudes and stands in relation to illegal paroles, e.g. payed fee to the commissarial medical organization.

The general Director of Health in London also started soon to build up an exile medical administration. A division of this had the task to register names of health personel in Norway, considered to be members of NS, unthrustworthy or collaborators. The informations to London came partly through Norwegian Secret Service, partly from the illegal management in Oslo through Stockholm legation, partly through reports in interviews with refugees coming directly from Norway. The number of registered persons was considerable but many of the names were unreliable, compared with the final lists in May 1945.

The purging process after the war had a high priority at the health authorities, especially at the General Director of Health personally. Already in 1943 his London office decided to appoint an Investigation Committee in order to accomplish the purging process of collaborators in the health professions. The doctors were in the main searchlight.

In the spring 1944 the doctor's illegal management in Oslo was asked by GDH in London to nominate its own local investigation committee to prepare the purging process for

their illojal members. It should propose penalties, but also compensation to those who had suffered in German prisons and camps.

The Medical Association's illegal investigation committee and its proposal to penalties

The Committee consisted of 6-8 doctor's of different specialities, most of them from Oslo district. The recommendations of this secret investigation committee in Oslo were mostly sent to London through cipher-codes. They were lastly presented to the Norwegian Minister of Justice in London, who approved the recommendations. It was, however, emphasized that the professional investigation committee should not substitute a legal prosecuting committee, only supply such one. No one should be sentenced for treason unless he had got the opportunity to defend himself and account for extenuating circumstances.

The Committee divided the "failing colleagues" into 7 categories ranking after severity:

1. Active members of NS. 2 Passive members of NS The proposal for these was loss of license for ever, in milder cases for a limited time. They should never be appointed in public or civil services or in the future be members of the Medical Association. This penalties were to be considered as additional sanctions to the legal penalties by court: imprisonment, fines etc.. The next category was collaborators not being members of NS and the last categories were those who had revealed different degrees of "weak attitudes", paid fee to the NS lead Association, subscriptions to the Ministry or neglected paroles and instructions from the illegal management without being members of the NS. These should also be suspended as members of the Medical Association and deprived of their license to practice for a shorter or longer time.

The GDH's combined post-war official investigation committee

The first meeting of the Central Committee of the Norw. Medical Association took place a few weeks after the liberation in May 1945, and a few weeks later The General Director of Health returned from London. An extended and official public investigation committee was then immediately appointed. This committee consisted, however, also of some of the members of the Association's earlier illegal, now openly approved internal investigation committee. Thus the official and the Medical Associations investigation committees were united to one.

This extended committee worked fast and efficient with collecting prosecuting material. Most cases were clear for trial already in September, and in February 1946 the Committee finished its work. The recommendations were then approved by the general management of the Association.

The material was transferred to the official judicial authorities who started to carry out the trials. 133 of 2700 members had then been registered in NS, another 243 had paid fees or in other ways been loyal to the NS authorities.

The Association's committee should originally in principle

only take over cases not being dealt with by the Administration of Justice. But as the two committees consisted of partly the same members, the Medical Association's committee immediately got a more complicated function. As it collected material for the prosecuting authorities and was authorized to propose means of punishment such as loss of license, the Association's committee got an unpretended half-official status, rather unique in the purging processes-. This authority was, however, given the committee by the Director General of Health without any legal or formal consent of the juridical authorities. Thus the Committee got an impact as a kind of Administrative Court, not only a jury within the professional association of doctors. We have no knowledge about any similar procedures anywhere else in the purging process.

The exceptionally hard line of the health authorities.

Immediately after his return and independent of the Committee and any judicial authorities, the General Director of Health had also deprived 109 doctors and 79 dentists their license to practice. This took place without any possibilities for them to defend themselves, and this measure was taken many months or even years before anyone was put to trial. He also declared with immediate effect that salaries no longer should be paid to the suspended through the National Sick Insurance. This hard and to a certain degree self-constituted line by the GDH was to a certain degree alleviated by the courts as the cases after some months gradually started the trials. The rather relentless attitude of the health authorities seemed, however, unaltered. The GDH thus continued to suspend the practice licenses even after the sentenced had served their penalties. At last The Director of Public Prosecutions intervened and imposed the GDH to cancel the suspensions. To this GDH replied that he accepted the principle as such, but he took the reservation not to withdraw the suspensions in cases he evaluated as unsuitable for medical service on personal reasons, such as those doctors he considered as immoral, alcohol abusers or psychopats. On these premises he proposed permanent deprivation of the working licenses of another 31 doctors. The Courts of Justice rejected however, all these cases.

The court sentences for the NS members were, as usual at that time, loss of citizenship rights for up to 10 years and a fine up to one to three years salary. Individual serious cases received imprisonment, mainly persons who had been joining the German military forces or served the German police.

It was however the intention that everyone who had served their sentences should be accepted in society again and get proper chances to work in their profession. None of those doctors who also had served in civil NS led administration were accused or got an harder sentence, even if they were members of NS. Such service was not considered at variance with the International War Laws.

As else in the purging process, it was the registered membership in NS or paid fee to NS organizations that was taken most serious.

Milder climate and attenuating circumstances as time went on.

The public sentences for the NS doctors were generally at last not harder than for other categories in the purging process. The imprisoned usually were released after half time and were immediately allowed to take up their work. The GDH complained, however, strongly over the mild verdicts and tried for a time to prevent former NS doctors to be appointed in public service posts. It was not until the Protocol Committee of the Storting in 1951 stated that everyone who had finished their punishment also could be accepted in civil servants posts, that the Health service authorities finished its own purging process.

After the combined public-professional investigation committee had finished its work, the Medical Association continued its own internal evaluation process of members with a questionable past. This local investigation process was concentrated to those members who were not put to trial, but who had paid their fee to the NS lead Medical association or license duty to the Ministry. In addition to the 133 NS members who had had a public trial, another 37 members were excluded. 20 members were reprimanded and 152 members were acquitted. The sentences of the Association were thus considerable milder than originally proposed.

To be excluded from the Association had, however, at that time some serious consequences: Lack of rights to practice for the National Sick Insurance and to qualify for a medical speciality came in addition to the general stigmatization. However, the wounds seemed to heal rapidly, - in a course of 8-10 years nearly all were accepted as ordinary members of the Medical Association again. It did not either seem as if the general public and patients took their doctor's preceding NS membership serious at all. As far as we know, few if any had problems to carry out general practice.

The dentists, pharmasists and midwives purging process

Also the dentists established its own investigation committee in 1945. The Association decided to exclude all members of NS - altogether 83 of 1593. As usual were these as all the NS members sentenced by public trial. In addition were 23% of the members object for investigation and 10% were imposed sanctions from the Association, mainly fines and/or exclusions. The Association published, however, both the names of the excluded ones and reports of the trials, a measure not carried out by the Medical Associations without in separate cases. The exclusions were, however, only limited to 1-2 years in most cases. The dentist's investigation committee was not coordinated with the formal public investigation procedures by the Health authorities. Every sentenced dentist also received back their license to practice immediately after fulfillment of penalties.

The Association of pharmasists was on different reason not put under Commissarian rule or forced NS leadership. 32 of 270 dispensing pharmasists were members of NS and were prosecuted in the ordinary way. They had to leave their retail pharmacies and were suspended as members of the Ass. The Ass. was after the war hit by a serious cleavage- one fraction being accused for weak attitudes and kneeling for the occupants, the other

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representing an hard and so called patriotic line. The antagonisms seemed, however, to weaken rapidly, and no specific consequences of the diversion were marked after some years.

Midwives and nurses were investigated as separate categories by the GDH and his representatives. Of 1458 midwives 47 were members of NS and another 11 accused for "unnational behaviour". A few of them were sentenced to prison, but most of them got only a fine of some months' salaries size and loss of citizen rights for a limited time.

The nurses purging process. The unhappy situation for the "front-sisters"

The nurses were at that time organized in a number of humanitarian and professional organization. The main organization of nurses had in 1941 3700 members. At least half of them quitted their organization as the commissarial leader arrived. During the rest of the war around 1500-2000 persons still were members, included a number of new recruited. Only 38 were known registered as NS members and another 46 were accused for NS sympathy. Thus only 111 nurses were put to trial, and most of them were sentenced to rather mild sanctions. The internal purging process within the Association seems to have been very short with limited consequences for the implied, except for the NS leaders.

A marked exception was the fate of those nurses and auxiliary nurses that during the occupation time voluntarily had gone into the service of German sanitary organizations, first and foremost the German Red Cross. Around 500- mostly young women of those around 1000 enlisted were accepted for service. Not a few were authorized Red-Cross sisters, both members and not-members of NS. Most of them did not consider or even think on service in the German Red Cross as assistance to the enemy. Many of them came to serve in German military and civilian hospitals in Germany, and at least half of them served a shorter or longer time at the Russian front. 15 of them were killed, either at the front or by accidents. A number were taken as war-prisoners, and were later submitted to Norwegian authorities and brought to Norway. Here these unhappy and unfortunate young women got serious sentences up to 4 years imprisonment in addition to the preceding war-imprisonment. Even prominent persons in the resistance movement at that time protested on behalf of these women against this hard and in a wide opinion unfair treatment. But the Norwegian Red Cross with its post-war renewed militant leadership also presented a relentless and hard attitude, considering voluntary work in the enemies' Red Cross organizations as treachery. The organization also voted against the revision of new International Red Cross regulations in 1951 against the Norwegian Stortings accept of the new rules. As far as it is known, the Norw. Red Cross was the only Red Cross organization at that time who would not accept Red-Cross service as neutral and equivalent to enemy and friend. The organization would either not abandon prosecution of the sanitary staff who in their opinion also had served the enemy during the war.. In the years after the war the pursuit of the "front-sisters"

has steadily been considered highly unfair, and twht which could be considered as a revenging role of the Norw. Red Cross as reprehensible. From time to time the question has been taken up in the mass-media, and in 1991 the Norwegian Red Cross for the first time in public regretted the standpoints and accusations of the "front-sisteres" in 1945. The occasion was a sensational book written by a prominent member of the National Assembly, who herself had served in German Red Cross and received unproportionally hard penalties in those years. The "front-sister" cases must be considered among the darkest spots of the purging process in Norway.

The purging process doctors in Denmark was limited to suspencion of the membership of a number of members of the Danish Medical Association for a limited time. The public trials were there as in Norway consentrated to those who had committeed war-crimes or other unnational crimes. During the period frm 16. december 1945 to 10. september 1949 34 exclusion trials of doctors were decided in the Assciations own public court in Odense (Overvoldgiftsretten). Only 11 resulted in exclusion because of unnational behaviour and characer-defects. Among those earlier suspended was the leader of the Danish national-socialistic part - Fritz Clausen, who himself was a doctor.

The purging process in Denmark is however not possible to compare with the similar process in Norway because of te total different political situation in the two countries.