

DOCTORS FLEEING EAST GERMANY

Frankfurt FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE in German 29 Oct 76

[Article: "Why Doctors Flee GDR--Government Responsible--Appeal to Honecker"]

[Text] A group of male and female doctors, who in recent months were discharged from prison in the GDR and who were allowed to go to West Germany, according to a report from the Berlin "13 August Study Group" approached SED [Socialist Unity Party of Germany] Secretary Honecker. As they write, the members of the group expect that their "experiences as prisoners of the National Socialist regime in the Brandenburg Penitentiary"--today the biggest penitentiary in the GDR--will help underscore their report. Attached to the report--in which the doctors tell Honecker about their personal experiences--is an appeal intended for the public also in the name of the colleagues active in the GDR; it deals with the causes of the doctor flight.

It says that only the GDR Government is "responsible for the fact that over the past 3 years about 500 doctors escaped, including at least 20 from the Halle University Clinic and at least 30 from the East Berlin Charite [Hospital]." Apart from a few exceptions, all managed to reach the West because even those who were arrested and sentenced insisted that they be discharged into West Germany--something which was granted thanks to Inner-German agreements. The GDR allegedly believed that it could counteract the doctor flight if it were to raise salaries and increase vacations and improve medical-technical equipment. This progress may be quite pleasing but could not eliminate the main reasons for the flight and the numerous emigration applications which are now pending. The important thing is to eliminate the privileges enjoyed in terms of work and living conditions by those doctors who have the confidence of the party and the State Security Service. It would also be necessary to abolish the disadvantages to which many children of doctors are subjected when it comes to admission to college study. Independently of political conflicts between the State and many doctors, it would be necessary "for care and concern for individuals to create a basis for mutual confidence which would make the severe surveillance of doctors superfluous." Earning the qualification of specialist-physician must "not be made dependent on five-year attendance at Marxism-Leninism courses." It is necessary to take

into account the latest status of medical science and it is necessary to facilitate "guest lecture tours and visits to congresses in the West." If these trouble spots were to be corrected and if all doctors who escaped and who were discharged from prison were to be given the right to visit their family members, "then many doctors will resume their practice in the GDR and will thus also show that they do not want to shirk their responsibility toward their patients."

Among the approximately 170 male and female physicians, who during the past 3 years were sentenced mostly for attempts at escape, there are presently about 45 under arrest, including about 30 in the Cottbus Penitentiary. Apart from quite a few exceptions, all must serve at least half of their sentences and some even their full sentences. On the average, it is necessary to serve two-thirds of the sentence before the Inner-German agreements (buying freedom) take effect.

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