

Salk Vaccine Secured

A Ministry of Health announcement said that Hungary's foreign trade organs had procured supplies of 250,000 c.c. of Salk vaccine. This was enough to immunise all children under two. It was hoped that further deliveries would make it possible to vaccinate older children as well. (WFI 9.7.57)

In an interview with 'Esti Hirlap', Jence Bacsoni, a Deputy Ministry of Foreign Trade, said that enough Salk vaccine to meet present requirements had been obtained. A quantity sufficient to vaccinate 400,000 children would arrive from Canada on 11th July "or even sooner". Further talks would be held to buy vaccine from other sources. The health authorities were planning a continuous process of protective vaccination. According to the medical experts, the Danish and Canadian-made Salk vaccines were the most effective. The foreign trade organs wished to buy this important drug from the countries which supplied

it in the best quality. It would not be easy to make further purchases because the manufacture of the Salk serum was a slow process. It was therefore advisable to register requirements early. Nevertheless, foreign trade experts thought that continued market research and purchasing attempts would "very probably" be successful. (Budapest 14.00 and Hungarian information service 9.7.57)

Red Cross Official Speaks of "Epidemic"

'Nepszabadsag' carried a statement by Jozsef Karpati, Secretary-General of the Hungarian Red Cross, who said that the distribution of aid supplies would be completed shortly, and Red Cross work in the field of health service work begin in earnest. The Red Cross was currently playing its part, together with health and Government organs, in "the struggle to overcome the poliomyelitis epidemic". In collaboration with the International Red Cross Committee, the Hungarian Red Cross was making efforts to secure the return of children who had gone abroad without their parents. This was one of the most important duties of the Red Cross at the moment. (Note: For a Government denial that there was a polio epidemic, see Summary Part IIB, No.843, p.3)

A further Ministry of Health communique on the polio situation showed no major change from earlier reports. County Borsod as a whole, and parts of Counties Heves, Bihar, Szolnok and Szabolcs remain out of bounds to visiting children. (Budapest 22.00, 10.7.57)

Alleged Western Refusal to Supply Vaccine

An unnamed commentator, addressing Hungarians in Western Europe, remarked that the current Geneva conference on poliomyelitis had "assumed a sad topicality through the fact that the incidence of polio cases in Hungary has become very great this year." About 500 children, mainly infants under three, were now ill with infantile paralysis in Hungary. In Counties Hajdu, Szabolcs, Borsod and Heves, the incidence of the disease was greater than in 1956. Transdanubia was immune from the epidemic, and in Budapest the number of cases was smaller than last year. Everything was being done to prevent the spreading of the disease.

"Grave concern has been caused by the fact that no Salk vaccine ... has been obtainable in Hungary. The Government would have acquired the material needed for the protective vaccination long ago but the Western countries which make the vaccine have refused deliveries. The necessary material funds are already available and, as already reported, the vaccine will shortly arrive in Hungary. Meanwhile the Government has granted many concessions for those who have succeeded in getting Salk vaccine from abroad through their relatives and acquaintances." The conscientious work and knowledge of Hungarian physicians, the great material aid on the part of the Government and the joining of forces by society as a whole were combating the incidence of infantile paralysis. Hungarian parents and pediatricists expected "fresh assistance from the international poliomyelitis conference of Geneva and from science in the great fight against this terrible disease". (Budapest for Hungarians in W Europe 9.7.57)

The Polio Situation

Vaccine Arrives

An aircraft carrying Salk vaccine arrived at Ferihegy airport in Budapest on 13th July. According to the Ministry of Health, this vaccine will be used for the immunisation of children born between 1st January 1955 and 31st December 1956. The immunisation will take place on 18th and 19th July in the areas most threatened by the disease, in County Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, in the town of Miskolc, in County Hajdu-Bihar, in the town of Debrecen, in County Szabolcs-Szatmar, and in Budapest. The population will be informed through the Press and on posters of the places where immunisation is to take place. In other parts of the country the immunisation will take place on 25th and 26th July. The immunisation is not compulsory. To prevent the disease from spreading, those belonging to the most threatened age groups should as far as possible all be vaccinated. Immunisation is free. If Hungary secures a further supply of vaccine, the immunisation will be extended to other age groups this year. (Budapest 20.00, 13.7.57)

Extent of Epidemic Exaggerated

The broadcast for Hungarians in Western Europe, thanking two Hungarians in Scandinavia for offers to send Salk vaccine, said: "There is in fact an infantile paralysis epidemic in Hungary (Summary Part IIB No.845, p.2). But the extent of the epidemic is not as great as certain exaggerated reports say. We have succeeded in securing enough vaccine to vaccinate all children under the age of seven. Further consignments are expected in the near future." The Salk vaccine should be sent to: Dr. Dezsoe Panczel, Deputy Director, Laszlo Isolation Hospital, 5-7 Gylai Road, Budapest IX. (Budapest for Hungarians in Western Europe, 12.7.57)

The GDR Government's gift of four iron lungs was handed to the Laszlo hospital on 15th July. (Budapest 15.7.57)