

June 30, 1951

Report from the Embassy of the Polish Republic in Korea

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Summary:

Deperasinski reports on the war's impact on the North Korean military and on the civilians.

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Translation - English

Independent Eastern Department [stamp] Warsaw, 5 September 1951

SECRET [stamp]

Comr[ade] Min[ister] St. Skrzyszewski

In the building

The Independent Eastern Department is sending a report from the Embassy of the RP [Polish Republic] from Korea dated 30 June 1951.

1) In connection with the recommendations made by Comr. Deperasi?ski SWW [Independent Eastern Department], I propose:

a- that the funds of the Committee of the Defenders of Peace be devoted not only to buy medicines, but also to buy other objects, which are discussed in the recommendations,

b- to ask the authorities who make political decisions to order the organization of an action to collect money with the goal of fortifying the funds of the Committee of the Defenders of Peace.

2) The SWW is making a request about the dispatch copies of this report to the following persons: President of the RP, Premier, Minister of National Defense, Comr. Berman, Comr. Mazur, Comr. Zambrowski, Comr. D?uski, Comr. Mencil.

HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT

[signature]

E. S?uczanski

Korea, Pyongyang, 30 June 1951

REPORT

1.- A year of time has passed since the moment when war broke out in Korea. The front is being maintained around the 38th parallel. And thus, while every average Korean talks about how they must press, push the Americans [sic] all the way to the sea and further, the American [sic] prisoners are stubbornly claiming that the war will end soon at the 38th parallel. The prisoners do not have the conviction to the least degree that the Americans [sic] will win the war. They claim that they have come to Korea because they were sent without being asked because they wanted to earn dollars. I will not write about the war situation because this is the task of the Military Attaché, who goes to the General Staff and to the front. In the period of his absence, i.e., in the month of June, there were no major changes at the front. Only on the eastern front, the people's army won certain victories. What is new is that night bombers entered the action on the side of the people's army, and they are bombarding ports and the massed American troops. On the other hand, small air fights have begun over the territory of People's Korea. Chinese sappers have rebuilt all the rail bridges on the Nampo-Pyongyang line and the rail line is operational. It is worth stressing, for example, such a fact that the border rail bridge to Tsyang [sic] has not only been rebuilt, but the Chinese sappers have at the same time built 4 other wooden bridges, very low ones, 2 of them are rail bridges and the remaining ones are for vehicular traffic. They are practicing more or less in the same way also in other rail hubs, which I was able to see personally. Talking about bombardments, I must add that in comparison to May, the area around Pyongyang is being bombed much more by the American air force during the day and at night. Driving to Pyongyang by night (I have driven 3 times), I saw unending columns of Chinese troops headed in the direction of Pyongyang, and back from Pyongyang hundreds of American prisoners were being led. The whole traffic on the big and little roads takes place only at night.

In the daytime one is inevitably threatened by an air raid. And so, during the move of the Czech mission, on 22 June at 20:00, a car column of the armies of the Chinese volunteers left the town of Chi Chen [sic] and it was assaulted by 7 airplanes, and as a result there were 3 killed, 16 grievously wounded and many lightly wounded. In all the cities and towns, the recruitment of volunteers for the army is taking place. The volunteers are leaving for military schools. The balance of the year-long fighting on the Korean front presents itself thus:

a. killed and taken prisoner.....598,567 people
of this number, taken prisoner...108,157

b. captured:
pistols.....980 pieces
guns.....119,412 "
automatic.....20,156 "
light automatic rifles.....3,683 "
heavy machine guns.....1,629 "
anti-tank weapons.....58 "
anti-aircraft machine guns439 "

c. captured or destroyed various higher-calibre weapons
3,900 "
captured or destroyed various smaller-caliber weapons
2,938 "

d. captured or destroyed cars.....9,145 "

e. captured or destroyed tanks and armored vehicles
1,797 "

f. captured telephones and radio-telephones.....2,963 "

g. airplanes:
shot down.....1,632 "
captured.....98 "

h. warships:
sunk larger ones, such as torpedo boat.....75 "
sunk smaller ones, like torpedo boat.....47 "

i. captured various ammunition.....120 rail cars.

The Korean press has also written about the outcome of the operations of partisan units not indicating for which period.

a. Killed Americans [sic] and Syngman Rhee-ites..3,300

b. Taken prisoner.....500

c. Captured:
light machine guns.....480 pieces

light automatic rifles.....73 "
 anti-tank guns..... ..21 "
 mine-throwers..... ..17 "
 various ammunition.....251,000

d. Destroyed various military buildings or stations.....40

2.- The main issues that the rear of the front is living by are: a. sowing, b. transportation, c. help for the families from which the men have gone to the front, d. help for the soldiers at the front, e. organizing the population to recruit volunteers and dig shelters, f. immediate construction of the earth shelters for the people who remain without a roof over their heads after bombardments. It is clear from the conversations I have conducted with employees of ministries, leading Party members, workers, craftsmen and peasants, and also on the basis of the daily press, that the sowing was completed 20 days earlier than had been foreseen in the plan. And qualitatively and quantitatively, the rice crop depends on early sowing. No wonder then that the peasants say proudly that if the Americans [sic] don't burn the crops, the population will manage somehow with food. They speak with fear about frost, because of a complete lack of clothing. One can hear everywhere: "we are counting on our friends, they will help us." The early completion of the plan for sowing was an effort of the whole Korean nation. Groups were formed in villages, which went from house to house and together tilled the soil. People were released from ministries and offices to help the peasants, and especially those families in which there are no male hands because the men are at the front. And now the employees of ministries are being released to work in the countryside, to weed. As an illustration, I am enclosing a translation into Russian of one of the communiqués regarding the above-mentioned issue. It can thus be said clearly that the fight for early sowing was fully won. Transportation is perhaps the hardest and most difficult task to achieve. Putting transportation on a good level required the reconstruction of hundreds of big and little bridges, with which mountainous Korea is covered. Thousands of men's hands and tons of materials are needed for this. I can state from my own observations, as well as on the basis of statements from Korean comrades, that it was the Chinese volunteers who rebuilt the bridges. Korea has only 2 main railway lines in the direction of China, one from Pyongyang through Sinuiju to Andong and the other from Pyongyang through Manpo to Jian. The second line was started in the month of June. Currently both are working, but as always they work only at night. The enemy's air force does not permit starting transportation during the day. Vehicular traffic is also completely not working during the day. I was in a machine hall, where about 40 machine tools (this is a part of the huge railway workshops transferred from Pyongyang). The factory was built high up in the mountains. A huge piece of the mountain was cut out, the wooden hall is again covered up with soil, and the slope of the mountain is the roof. The work always takes place there with electric light. The machines are Soviet, Japanese and American. Naturally such a factory is dark, stuffy and without ventilation. The workers are working there with great eagerness, fully understanding the importance of their effort to the victory. I asked a few workers what they needed the most. The answers were: blades for the lathes and scraping machines, and also clothing, and we will manage with our other needs. The rail depot is working both day and night. This depot has been bombed several times, but after every bombardment the railway men take off the rubble and resume work. Recently, the railway workers built a field depot at the Yalu River. A barracks was built between the river and the slopes of the mountains, it is well camouflaged and 4 locomotives can be restored there at one time. A few machines for metal processing were also placed there. During the day, all the steam locomotives and cars stand in the tunnels, of which there are as many in Korea as there are bridges. The railway workers in Korea are the pride of the working class, everywhere they are shown as models and examples, and they are not spared praise, awards and assistance. Also, all sorts of appeals to the nation flow from the railway workers. Work in transportation in Korea is the most difficult and demands the greatest sacrifices. There are few roads, and the ones that are there are in the mountains, bad and dangerous. Practically the whole population is engaged in assisting the families whose men have gone to the

front. First, the Party, and together with its various organizations, such as, for example, the National Councils, the Union of Democratic Women and so on. The assistance looks as follows: if a city is bombed, then the families whose men are at the front receive the earth shelters built by the workers' brigades, as well as clothing and food. I have talked to several district secretaries of the Party, they explained to me that one of the Party's important duties in the rear that is being developed is help for the families, and that this help makes the mobilization for the front, to recruit volunteers seriously easier, and that it helps to cement the country in its resistance and effort. The next task by which the rear lives is help to the soldiers on the front. Women in the rear collect edible grasses and hand them in to the National Committees, which send them to the army. They start by organizing mass and individual exchanges of letters with the soldiers, they organize houses of help for the soldiers who are on leave or passing through especially closer to the front, such as in Pyongyang. They produce socks or handkerchiefs and send them as gifts. I am enclosing one of the notes from the press in Russian translation. The organization of the population by the party to recruit volunteers for the army, to dig shelters, for the quick unloading of transports, bringing wood to hospitals and performing a range of other work of a purely military character continues to be an important and still relevant task for the Party. The recruitment of volunteers takes place like this: after many appeals and rallies, pioneers (usually) march for a few days with flags and banners calling for volunteering for the army. The newly recruited volunteers are usually very young people. Their departure is very ceremonious. Speeches, bestowing of gifts and letters. They all leave for military schools. Shelters are being dug in Korea incessantly and in many different ways. Miners blow up rocks with dynamite, peasants dig shelters in the ground. The population, most often women, builds shelters for hospitals, and for state and social institutions the shelters are built by the employees of those institutions with the assistance of society. The transportation of wounded soldiers takes place on stretchers for lack of ambulances. The director of a military hospital, in which there are 1,000 wounded, told me that people carry the wounded on stretchers from the front to Pyongyang, from village to village, where ambulatory stations have been created, and from Pyongyang on by train at night. From the station to the hospital, again they carry the wounded on stretchers. For this reason, the transportation of the wounded from the front to the hospital in Manpo takes about 6 weeks. From this, it can be seen how great is the shortage of means of transportation, and especially ambulances. To have wood for heating, the hospital in Manpo is forced to organize brigades which walk a dozen kilometers into the mountains and pull down the timber or, at best, carry it by bull. He suggests that the hospital in Manpo be sent a gift from Poland: 1 ambulance and 1 truck. The director of this hospital informed me that they are also forced to use bulls to carry the seriously wounded for serious operations to the Chinese border. The bombing of cities, towns and villages by the American aviation has created the issue of lodging people deprived of roofs over their heads. This is one of the important questions for the rear with which the Party is preoccupied first of all, and with it the whole society. In this case, as in the previous ones, the Party created groups of people who, immediately after the bombings, dig earth shelters, others pull down timber from the mountains and in this way quickly deliver lodging that can be used.

3.- I arrived at the RP [Polish Republic] embassy in Korea, Manpo, in the night of 22 April. The director of diplomatic protocol was waiting for me at the station with his car. Next evening instead of a reception they organized a concert. I learned later that they did not organize a reception because they had nothing to put on the table. After the concert, I invited the whole group of artists together with the director of protocol to the embassy for dinner. The reception was very warm. Already then I found out that the Koreans are afraid of mass deaths from hypothermia because of the freezing temperatures and shortage of clothing. [Trans. note: omit diplomatic receptions.] The meeting at Kim Il Sung's was very friendly, he said that in response to our gifts, the Korean army will give a present to all the democrats and strike the death blow to the enemies at the front. [...] The Embassy's move from Manpo to Pyongyang took place on 16 June in the evening. [...] I learned that the city of Chin Chen, with a population of 60 thousand has no civilian hospital and it was bombarded more powerfully than Warsaw in 1945. The hospital consists of rooms reserved in different places, in which

the ill are, and the doctor goes from room to room. Recently typhus was widespread in this town. Many women are still ill. After familiarizing myself with the situation, I deposited 3 million JWP [sic] for assistance to the sick. In the town of [Chi Chen] everyone agrees that the nearest winter will be a difficult period for us to live through. The shortage of clothing makes them fearful that, like typhus today, the cold will take people away forever. They are counting on help from their friends. [Trans. note: description of embassy and embassy district, where they arrive, horrible conditions.] The number of air raids and bombardments around us takes place a dozen times a day and, despite this, diplomatic life goes on, there are meetings, receptions, conversations and visits. The mood among all the employees of the missions of the countries of people's democracy is full of optimism and certainty that the army of People's Korea will be victorious. [...]

4.- My suggestions on the issue of Korea are as follows: [Trans. note: this information continues to repeat itself.]

[signature]

R. Deperasinski

2nd secretary of the Embassy of the RP in Korea

(Charge d'Affaires ad in.)

Pyongyang, 30-VI-1951