

August 19, 1954

Report from the Romanian Embassy in Pyongyang to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2509/1954

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Summary:

A report on the performance of the Romanian Embassy in the DPRK in liaison, construction, and medical work.

Credits:

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Contents:

Translation - English

Please find attached two copies of the report of our activity during the second term of this year.

Signed
Chargé d'affaires
Alexeenco Simion

[...]

Report on the performance of the Embassy during the second term of 1954

During this period, based on the work plan, the Embassy had to complete the following important tasks:

- Liaise [with various North Korean organizations;
- . Promote Romania;
- . Write a report about the main events in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea;
- . Coordinate the work of the medical team and other important tasks included in the work plan.

□□

With respect to our liaison with various ministries and institutions in North Korea and with the diplomatic corps [in Pyongyang], these relations have recently become more lively. This was the result, on the one hand, of the recall of Comrade Nichifor Stere, of the replacement of the medical team; also we had to talk to various Korean bodies about the future building of the Embassy.

On the occasion of his departure to Romania Comrade Ambassador paid visits to all the representatives of the diplomatic corps, to the Foreign Ministry, the Health Ministry, the Culture and Propaganda Ministry; also, he was received by comrade Kim Du-bong, the President of the DPRK Presidium. In these discussions, both comrade Kim Du-bong as well as the other governmental representatives sought to express their gratitude to the [Romanian Workers'] Party and the [Romanian] Government for the brotherly assistance the Romanian people is offering to the Korean people.

In general our visits, meeting, and discussions referred to intelligence [gathering] on certain matters. For instance, on the occasion of the meeting with the Hungarian and Czechoslovak representatives, we found out that they received everything they needed from their countries for the maintenance of the hospital [they are managing], and for less important expenses they were reimbursed from the diplomatic fund of the Embassy, which they collected every month from the Korean State Bank. They said that the Korean comrades insisted that they [the Hungarians and Czechoslovaks] cover their own expenses incurred for the maintenance of the hospital. We also talked about various aspects related to their specialists in Korea.

In one of the discussions we had with Ri Dong-yeong [sic], the Deputy Foreign Minister, he informed us that following the understanding between the North Korean and the Chinese governments, starting in July, we would not be able to exchange Chinese currency into Korean currency like we did so far (like our medical team did so far) and because our Embassy is the only one which has not taken any money from the Bank so far, from now on we will have to take Korean money from the Bank for the expenses of the Embassy.

With respect to the discussions we had about the location and construction of the new embassy, as we have informed you before, we have been allocated a space, although while we repeatedly raised the issue of evicting the Korean citizens [who

live there], no measures in this respect have been taken so far. The Korean comrades are reassuring us that there will not be any problems. We believe they did not take any measures also because we have been repeatedly asked for the construction plan of the Embassy and for the date when we want the construction work to start, but we could not give any other response to these questions than 'wait for the construction plan.'

In our liaison work, one of our shortcomings is the fact that we do not discuss ahead of time which issues we will raise, to find out more information about them. Another shortcoming is the fact that Comrade Alexeenco did not immediately return the visit of the Czechoslovak representative, as he believed that it was not necessary to return the visit the next day, and that such a visit ought to be made a while after [the meeting with the Czechoslovak representative].

We are facing difficulties in our liaison work. For example, we were asked on various occasions how we were faring in terms of helping the DPRK; we could not give a precise answer to that question, although the Korean comrades received the 10 passenger carriages, the bulldozers, etc., which were sent from Romania. We learned about this from a brief article published in the informative bulletin published in the DPRK. Also the Korean comrades informed us that they reached an agreement with the Romanian authorities about receiving a folk group in Korea, and we said we did not know about it. This has happened in several other cases.

To make our work easier, we would like to ask the Protocol Directorate if it could please send us guidance regarding protocol procedures, which we need because we are not clear about all matters.

With respect to promoting our country, as it can be seen in our press and cultural report for this term, we had more satisfactory results this term. Our relations with the press and cultural agencies in North Korea were better organized, in the sense that on the occasion of these visits we talked to the Korean comrades a bit more about the promotion materials we are giving them, about their opinion regarding our [intention] to arrange photograph exhibits, about [screening Romanian] movies, etc. On the occasion of these discussions the [Korean] comrades insisted that we do not submit the promotion materials, especially the articles, directly to the news rooms, but through the Ministry of Culture and Propaganda, which, in accordance with its work plan, would redistribute the articles to the news rooms. Indeed, after we had started transmitting articles through the Ministry, the DPRK press published more [materials] about our country compared to before.

As far as the dissemination of materials like magazines, newspapers and other such publications, we have expanded their distribution by increasing the number of such publications as well as by increasing the number of institutions and newspapers where we send these materials.

We believe that once we have the Hell machine up and running, we will have yet another means of disseminating [our] news to the Korean press. We are facing difficulties because we cannot find a radio [transmitter] yet, since there are few such machines here, and their signal is weak. If we can't get this radio through our Embassy in Beijing, we will ask for the support of the Ministry in this respect.

The movies you had sent us are used very efficiently. After having showed them to the workers in Pyongyang, they are now being screened in various provincial cities. We would like to add that the Korean workers are very eager to see movies, especially those about brotherly countries. Of course, the movies we have received so far are few; we are seen as one of the brotherly countries which have sent the fewest movies [to North Korea]. With a view to organizing the people's democracies movie week, the Korean comrades asked us to give them a Romanian movie. Since we had

no new movies, we had to give them the movie about the Youth Festival in Bucharest, once again, although it had been already showed in Pyongyang.

With the continuously expanding reconstruction of cities, factories, institutions etc., the possibilities for promoting [our country] will be increasingly bigger; this will make us expand our work, in the future. This is why we had spent such a small part of our propaganda budget.

It is true that we had not used all our capacities. For instance, we did not stress more on establishing relations with provincial newspapers. Currently, we have relations only with two newspapers which have published certain articles we had given them, which proves that we can promote [Romania] in this way too.

We have certain difficulties because we receive little propaganda material from Romania. For instance, because we lacked photographs, we changed the three photo panels in Pyongyang and Nampo only once. Moreover, this term half of the articles we have received [from Bucharest] were not translated into Russian, which is why we could not use them.

With a view to learning about the problems in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in addition to the visits we paid to Pyongyang and Nampo where our medical team works, this term, three comrades in our Embassy visited Sariwon, the textile factory in Guson [sic], and two factories in Huicheon. These visits, with the exception of the visit to Sariwon, were organized by the Foreign Ministry for the entire diplomatic corps. Based on the information we obtained from these field [trips] and the material we gathered from newspapers and other publications, we started working on putting together the documentary files. Thus we put together the files about the industry, commerce, internal politics in the DPRK, etc. We would like to mention, however, that because we lacked enough materials in this respect, the material we put together is still poor; with the publication of the new data, we will continue to add to [these] files.

To keep the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed, we put together a report about certain events in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

As we have already pointed out in other reports, we have difficulties finding materials [about North Korea] to learn from. In addition to the fact that there are few publications in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the materials that get published contain very few of the data we need. Another difficulty is the fact that we cannot read and understand Korean, and the materials published in other languages are totally insignificant. The translation provided by our translator does not always manage to accurately convey all the issues.

One of our shortcomings in this respect is the fact that we did not insist on field trips enough.

On consular matters, we made sure to give visas asked by the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs on time; also, we extended the visas for the passports of the medical team, and the passports of some comrades in the Embassy.

The questionnaires we received on consular matters were taken to the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and we provided the necessary explanations regarding how to obtain transit visas according to the new instructions we received from the Consular Directorate.

The assistance provided by the Embassy collective to the medical team was greater

than in previous months, also because this term the team [members] were replaced [by new people]. A form of concrete assistance we provided them with was the regular [visits] to the hospital, where, together with the leadership of the team, we discussed the existing problems, coming up with proposals and directions. When certain demarches were necessary, we put in a good word with the Korean state authorities to solve the hospital's problems.

We helped both the old and the new teams, so that the transition was smooth.

The Embassy also took care to send a representative to Mukden so as to ensure the transportation of the new team from Mukden (in People's Republic of China) to Pyongyang.

The new team started getting accustomed to the conditions in Korea and until now, it is carrying out its activity normally. In our discussions with the current team leadership, the [members] of the team are raising the issue of the problems they are facing now and the problems they will be facing in the future. First, once the new barracks are installed and furnished, the capacity of the hospital will increase by 300 patients, but the doctors of our team can barely deal with 150 patients. In addition to this, medicine is also insufficient. If in the future the number of doctors and the quantity of medicine are not increased, the comrades believe that they will not be able to cope with their tasks.

Until now, the Korean leadership of the hospital hinted to us that we must take the necessary measures to insure the efficient functioning of the hospital and it avoids taking responsibility.

Hardships Given the superficiality with which the Red Cross has selected the members of the new team, only after 2-3 weeks they started manifesting their dissatisfaction, [saying] that they want to go back [to Romania]. Until now, there have been around 5 cases of such manifestations, some of them were lower key, others were rather vocal. For example, the accountant of the team, [comrade] Hamzia, has been on strike for the past three weeks, and he insists that he is sent home, claiming that he is sick and that he cannot be treated here. Following a check-up, a committee formed of 5 doctors concluded that he has an upset stomach which can be easily treated here. Despite the persistence [of the doctors] he refuses any sort of clarifications and he demands to be sent home, he sits in bed the whole time, and he only eats liquid food. This state of affairs creates an unhealthy atmosphere within the team. We urged the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to recall him immediately but the answer is delayed.

The shortcomings of our work in relation to the hospital were that because of the lack of depth in knowing the problems [with which the medical team is confronted], we did not take the necessary measures to timely eliminate the misunderstandings which have occurred in recent months. Comrade Ambassador, who was responsible for guiding the [sanitary] team, did not find the best ways to collaborate with comrade Marin, the head of the [sanitary] team. This resulted in the fact that comrade Marin, instead of believing he was receiving help, thought that comrade Ambassador sought to persecute him with every step taken. Moreover, this situation affected the rest of the members of the team, who sometimes did not welcome the presence of Embassy comrades in the hospital.

In the future, we will take into account these shortcomings.

Secretariat: Following the introduction of a register, this term we managed to get a clearer picture of the documents which enter and leave the Embassy, especially concerning their time resolution; also, compared to what happened before, we made

sure to reply on time to various memos and other communications.

In order to get the [diplomatic pouch] ready, we managed to prepare the reports, memoranda, and other papers addressed to the Ministry ahead of time, managing to avoid the piling up of papers [we had to write].

To keep the paperwork in the best of conditions, we bought yet another iron cabinet. In the same respect, we took measures to ensure that all the doors and drawers can be locked. We must mention, however, comrade Ileana Florescu's superficiality who repeatedly left the filing cabinet open, although she was told about the importance of being vigilant.

Another shortcoming we experienced was the lack of attention paid to putting together the [diplomatic pouch], when we forgot about sending the Ministry of Foreign Affairs our work plan for the third term.

With respect to accounting matters, although because of comrade Enache's negligence we were lagging behind, having to catch up with work from December 1953 to May 1954, after we took over from comrade Enache, in June we managed to send by diplomatic pouch all the work we were lagging behind with and to be up-to-date with our work.

With respect to keeping our budget and expenses in check, we create a special register to track our expenses on budgetary matters, to be able to check at any given moment how much money we have for a specific matter.

This term, the main shortcoming in this respect was the fact that we did not keep comrade Enache's work under sufficient control and we took over accounting tasks too quickly, so that when we checked the paperwork, we found mistakes so we had to correct the balance which we inherited from comrade Enache and for which we signed the form.

[...]

We propose that the new Pobeda sent by the Red Cross to the medical team be given to the Embassy. These are the reasons why should be done: the comrades in the medical team can only use the Pobeda on rural roads and they will destroy it very quickly, because roads are very bad. Another reason is that at the time being, the medical team already have 4 cars (two trucks, 1 Vilis and an ambulance) and they are coping very well with the demand. We would like to add that the medical team could travel by train, as trains can go anywhere, at regular intervals and they can spare the use of cars, which entail a series of expenses.

We must mention that no other friendly country has sent a Pobeda for their medical teams.

[...]

Signed
Chargé d'affaires
Alexeenco Simion