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Report of the Romanian Dispensary No. 2, Hospital No. 39 in Korea, to the Central Committee of the Red Cross, Bucharest

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Summary:

A Romanian delegation of doctors and nurses describe their journey from Bucharest to Korea, where they provided medical care for the Korean people. The report also includes a telegram from Kim Il Sung, who thanks the medical team for their efforts.

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Report of the Romanian Dispensary No. 2
Hospital No. 39 in Korea
January 5, 1952
To the Central Committee of the Red Cross
Bucharest

In our first report we described [our] trip to Moscow and the time we had spent there. We took care of the morale of [our] team and, at the same time, we [illuminated] the reasons for which Comrade Buburuț had been sent home. [...] The only shortcoming of our stay in Moscow was the fact that we did not have the opportunity to visit any medical institutions. Our embassy in Moscow showed us that such visits must be organized in advance by our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We did not have the opportunity to buy any medical instruments.

Right before our departure from Moscow, we met the Romanian scientific delegation, led by Comrade Minister Mârza, at the Metropol Hotel. Comrade Minister Mârza addressed a few words to us in the hotel lobby, wishing us good luck with our work. He underlined the importance of our mission and pointed our attention to the fact that every member of our team is in essence a little ambassador of our country and therefore our work and our behavior must [reflect this status].

We left Moscow on December 9, 1951. We were seen off at the railway station by Comrade Ambassador Bughici, Comrade Frunză and by other comrades from the Embassy. Three members of the Korean Embassy also came to the railway station. Before departing, we checked to see if our crates were loaded on board. On December 16, 1951 we reached Otport at the Sino-Soviet border. After going through the customs formalities, that same evening we reached the town of Mandjuria [Manzhouli] in China. A member of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was waiting for us there. We were taken to the hotel on a bus. At the hotel in Mandjuria, they organized a dinner party for us. We were greeted by the representatives of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by local authorities. Short speeches were given. A Chinese meal was served, which stirred everybody's curiosity. We left Mandjuria on December 17, 1951. We traveled in sleeping carriages. We ate in the restaurant carriage. On December 19, 1951, at 1:45, we arrived in Mukden [Shenyang] after an incident-free journey. Comrade Kaliniuk, from our Embassy in Pyeongyang [Pyongyang], waited for us at the railway station. We were taken to the hotel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We met with comrade Ambassador Babuci, who provided us with priceless advice on [how] to set up our equipment and who has been constantly taking care of us ever since. [...] On December 20, 1951, in the evening, we left Mukden, heading for Andong [Dandong], where we arrived on the morning of December 21. In Andong a Korean officer and a Korean translator who speaks German [picked us up] in their trucks to take us to our destination. We left Andong on December 23, 1951, in the morning, divided among the three trucks and a jeep [...] On December 24, 1951, in the morning, we continued our journey. At about 100km away from our destination, close to a railway, the engine of the car broke down. There was an air battle above us. The situation [was] very critical, there were not many places where we could hide. Over 30 planes fought fiercely for over 45 minutes. [...]

We live in 7 houses which are to a great extent [built] underground. We are protected from machine-gun attacks in these houses, but not from bombings. Most houses are cramped and poorly heated. We suffer from the cold, smoke, and in some of the houses there are lots of rats (they eat the pillows from under our heads, as these pillows are stuffed with rice straws; they eat the leather bands of our backpacks). Lighting is intermittent, but most of the time, we have no light...

We found the kitchen in a poor state of orderliness and in very bad hygiene. Our food was prepared according to Korean customs, and we left the table hungry, although

the food ration we are officially allotted is the following (per person and per day): 40 grams of macaroni, 200 grams of flour, 50 grams of canned meat, 20 grams of sugar, 50 grams of salami, 500 grams of bread, 40 grams of butter, 200 grams of fresh meat, 300 grams of apples, 100 grams of rice, 30 grams of fat. We also asked for potatoes, onions, carrots and parsley [...].

On December 28th, 1951, we took over the kitchen. We pick up the allotted rations twice a month and we cook whatever we want. We have three Korean kitchen aides. On December 31, 1951, the Region's Party Organization brought us cigarettes, a sort of moonshine, Korean wine, apples, eggs and some towels. The Embassy gave us some cognac as a gift, which we sometimes use when it is too cold or when the Korean [comrades] visit us. On December 21, we drank a glass for the health of the dear leader of the peoples in the entire world, comrade Stalin [...].

On January 3, 1952, our group met in a plenary session to analyze our work. Please find attached the entire report presented by Comrade Csizer and provided for the general discussion: [...]

Organizational Principles:

- a) We are a group of doctors and nurses, which came to help the Korean people. We are not an independent hospital.
- b) We are under Korean military command and under the control of our embassy.
- c) We must attain perfect collaboration with medical personnel of the Korean military.

The Current Profile of Hospital No. 39

The hospital has a commander, a political deputy, and an administrative officer. We have a translator who can speak English and a translator who speaks German. The hospital has seven sections, amounting to 1,500 beds. We are only in charge of Section No. 1 (serious injuries of the thorax, abdomen, upper limbs), no.2 (internal diseases, surgery) and No. 4 (ENT-ear, nose, and throat).

Resolutions

No important decision, be it of administrative nature, be it political, can be taken by someone else but the head of the team.

The head of the team will consult with certain members of the team, on important issues, as he sees fit.

Orders are executed accordingly.

On work-related issues, the organizational hierarchy will be strictly respected.

Criticism is permitted, but it is to be made during meetings among Party members or during work-analysis meetings. Destructive criticism, gossiping, and small-group critical chit-chats will be resolutely fought against.

The local conditions require a lot of tact, understanding, good-will, as well as patience, on our behalf, towards the locals [...].

Explanations

We will intervene in the private life [of our team's members] every time we notice a kind of behavior or a deed which damages the reputation [of the country] or just of the team. Observations of this nature can be made only to the team leader and not in public [...].

Any suspicion of a [potential] manifestation of informality or provincialism will be raised with the team leader.

The Situation of the Patients

Most of the patients are treated in very harsh conditions. They are undernourished. They only eat rice broth and a handful of rice. The ration that we are given is the ration of a Korean soldier. However, the injured do not get this ration. For the time being, we do not know the reasons for this situation. The majority of the rooms in which the patients are treated are very poorly heated. They suffer from the cold. We come across patients, whose wounds had not been bound up for 5, 6, 7 days, they lie around in dirty clothes, on mattresses soaked in puss and with only one cover. It is awfully dirty. There are only four or five types of drugs. The bandage room is utterly poorly heated and camouflaged. Despite our persistence, we managed to ameliorate the situation only to a small extent. The operating room is partially [built] underground, just like our living quarters. It is cramped and poorly heated as well. The [surgery] instruments are few and the materials are scarce. As we already mentioned, there is no electricity most of the time. The voltage is 100 V. This is not a spelling mistake. It is 100 V and not 110 V. There are permanent fluctuations, so in reality it is far below 100 V. The equipment using electricity is not yet working. Surgeries are carried out at candle light or our flash lights. Today we installed a Petromax lantern in the operating room, which we bought in Andong. There are neither rubber gloves, nor [surgical] thread. They operate with their bare hands on both septic and aseptic [patients].

The Security of the Team

Vaccines must be given in Bucharest. We kept postponing these vaccines (like in the case of the smallpox vaccine, which was administered only yesterday). We will also get the exanthematic vaccine, the TAB [typhoid-paratyphoid A and B vaccine], the anti-cholera vaccine, and the anti-dysentery vaccine. We will also get the tetanus toxoid vaccine. We were told about the existence of amoebic dysentery. Today, they discovered 12 cases of pulmonary distoma [...].

The roads are very dangerous. [It is] not only [dangerous] on the road, but also between sections (each section is located in a different village), or even between houses. Planes harass us at least three times a day and attack us with their machine guns. Groups of five to six planes (they are called 'crosses', because of the shape of their formation) fly over before meals. They descend to lower altitudes and machine-gun as soon as they notice some sort of movement. Any such 'visit' lasts between 10 and 45 minutes. After the meal, they repeat [the attack] in the same manner. From dusk to late at night planes are circulating. They machine-gun or bomb wherever they notice light. Until now, our village was not intensely bombarded. Only two hand-made bombs were launched [on us]. These planes frequently come without us hearing them, and we suddenly hear the machine-gun salvos. It is very hard to be vigilant in these conditions [...].

We are rather impressed with the wretched terrorist acts of the Americans. Every day, we have palpitations for our lives and health and for that of our comrades. Our toilets are [poorly built] and unhygienic (we discovered a toilet right on top of the

main water-well). Everything is very dirty. We find clothes soaked in blood and puss around the operating room. Used cotton [and] bandages are discarded everywhere. [There are so many] outbreaks of infections, the fight against which we could not even start yet. For the time being, because of winter, we did not come across any infectious diseases, except for distoma, but later on, there will be a serious danger. We have not come across yet of any case of exanthematic typhoid fever.

The Telegram of Comrade Kim Il Sung

On January 1, 1952, we received the following telegram:

Dear Comrades,

On behalf of our Korean people, our Government and myself, I would like to send a warm greeting on the occasion of the [new] year, 1952, to all your comrades. You came from far away, from your motherland, to [join] our war for the liberation of the Fatherland from the American imperialist invaders, and you treated many of our wounded soldiers and officers, showing devotion and the spirit of the true internationalist friendship.

We, the Korean people, will never forget your glorious deeds and in the future the friendship between our two people will increasingly strengthen.

I wish you [with all my heart] that you always be healthy in this coming year, 1952, and that you achieve as many accomplishments as possible in your sacred mission to help the people of the fighting Korea.

Kim Il Sung,

The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Korea Cabinet

The telegram was read in our work-analysis meeting and received with enthusiasm by all the members of our team. We formulated an answer which we passed to our Embassy to send [to the Korean authorities].

Additions made after the formulation and reading of the report at the meeting

Since getting here, on Korean territory, our team experienced six deaths and fourteen injuries. The morale of the team is not shaken, but none of us expected such an intense air activity which puts our life in danger and prevents us from carrying out the intense activity we hoped for. Relatively quiet moments are rare and not really at suitable times of the day [...].

Dr. Csizer Zoltan

Team Leader

Signatures of the twenty two members of the Romanian Medical Mission to Korea
February 12, 1952