



August 19, 1954
Verbatim from the Romanian Embassy in Pyongyang to
the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10.041/954,
August 19, 1954

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Summary:

A report on the cultural and institutional interchanges between North Korea and Romania.

Credits:

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Original Language:

Romanian

Contents:

- English Translation

To the Second Directorate – Liaison,

We would like to send you two copies of the minutes of the work analysis meeting for the second term of 1954.

Signed

Chargé d'affaires

Alexeenco Simion

Minutes of the work analysis meeting for the second term of 1954

20 June 1954

Participants to the meeting: comrade Stere Nichifor, Alexeenco Simion, Florescu Victor, Ciocan Nicolae, Neamu Gheorghe and Nicu Sandu.

Agenda

Analysing the performance of the embassy and the activity of comrade Stere on the occasion of his departure for Romania. Comrade Stere asks the other comrades attending to keep their cool and try to raise issues in such a way as to be as principled as possible. But do not avoid tackling issues just for the sake of not offending a comrade.

Comrade Alexeenco pointed out that his tasks, according to the work plan, were the following:

- Protocol: he pointed out how he took care of liaising between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [various] embassies as well as other institutions;

Comrade [Alexeenco] showed that he was responsible for replying to memoranda as well as to for a variety of work-related visits. [He said] he paid a visit to the Chargé d'affaires of the Soviet Embassy in the DPRK, asking for certain clarifications about the way [the Soviet diplomats] dealt with the materials they received for building prefabricated houses, because [the Romanian Embassy] has also received its own barracks.

[He also visited] the first secretary of the Soviet Embassy with whom he discussed both the matter of the barracks, as well as the issue of cooperatives in the agriculture of the DPRK. [He asked] for advice on whether the wife of comrade Stere should go to a reception in the absence of her husband.

[He] also paid a visit to comrade Ri Dong-geun, whose support he asked for transporting more expediently the barracks sent from Romania for the hospital [in Nampo], with the help of Korean freight carriages, because as far as [the Romanian Embassy was informed] transporting and dismounting them in the People's Republic of China would cost over 1 billion renminbi.

[He also] paid several visits to the Office for the Support of the Diplomatic Corps, about [the supply] of coal, gasoline, etc.

[He was summoned] by the Third Directorate and [he] was told that [the Third Directorate] would like to know what the coat of arms and the flag of Workers' Youth Union look like, as well as certain issues like which movie could be presented during the week [celebrating] the Film Festival of People's Democracies and whether we had received the approval to translate Korean Fairy-tales.

[He also] paid a visit to the Protocol Division about the visits scheduled on the occasion of comrade Stere's departure.

[Comrade Alexeenco] also pointed out that he, as well as other comrades, was not clear about certain protocol rules.

When Comrade Stere went to Romania, [comrade Alexeenco] asked that the Foreign Ministry sent certain indications in this respect through comrade Stere, but he did not bring anything.

[He] believed we were too keen on some matters so as to strengthen ties with other Embassies which were not replying to [our invitations] and he gave as an example the Chargé d'affaires of the People's Republic of China Embassy; [he] also believed we showed too much eagerness in relation to the Chargé d'affaires of the Polish Embassy.

[He admitted] to having some shortcomings which were caused either by ignorance or even by shortcomings [sic]; one of them was that we went to the Office for the Support of the Diplomatic Corps and told them that [the Romanian Embassy] would probably start building the fence of the site this year, without having previously reached a definite understanding with comrade Stere; it would have been better not to bring up that matter [with the Korean comrades].

Another mistake was that [he] received the Chargés d'affaires of the Soviet Union and of Czechoslovakia, but did not return these visits because he did not think it was necessary to do so immediately.

With respect to consular matters, we have few visa requests and when these were requested, he took care of expediently dealing with them.

Comrade [Alexeenco] showed that he studied the instructions he received from home. [He] requested an approval to extend the passports of the medical team.

We received questionnaires for those who require transit visas for passing through Romanian territory. While he did not know what the practice was in other people's democracies, these questionnaires contain certain indiscrete questions, such as the weight of the person in question, how many wives he had, etc.

Shortcomings:

There are cases when we request a visa from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and we do not receive a timely response and we are forced to repeat the request several times.

One of [his] shortcomings was that he sent a telegram without including his date of birth or his passport number.

[He] contributed to other tasks, such as reporting, planning, etc.

With respect to secretarial tasks:

The arrival of comrade Ileana Florescu, who takes case of secretary work, has greatly eased our work, we managed to put some order into secretarial matters.

With respect to accounting, although [he] was not in charge of this work, [he] made a series of suggestions to comrade Florescu.

[...]

With respect to the preparation for the arrival [of the new medical team] and the departure of the old medical team: we worked approximately 15 days for this. Together with comrade Florescu, [comrade Alexeenco] paid a visit to the old hospital where our medical team used to work.

[Comrade Alexeenco] paid another visit, together with other comrades to Sariwon; the purpose of

this trip was to visit certain historical monuments, [but] because the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not organize this visit too well, we only visited the Hungarian hospital there.

We also took part in the celebrations for the opening of the textile factory in Gaesong and we visited two other factories.

Together with comrade Florescu and comrade Neamu, we visited the exhibit of the Chinese volunteers where we stayed for two days. We sent a special report on this issue.

[...]

We must establish who and on what matters liaises with the Romanian hospital in Nampo.

We must go through the documentary materials so as to learn about the problems the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is confronted with.

[...]

If he had taken care of press, cultural, and political matters we would have had good results.

Comrade Stere, who was responsible for the activity of the hospital [in Nampo] did not find the most just approach, especially in relation with comrade Marin.

[...]

Comrade Stere has been in Korea for two years and he still does not know the problems of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In his discussions with the Bulgarian Ambassador he did not know how workers were remunerated and he did not know about other issues which he should have learned about a long time ago.

[...]

Comrade Sandu: What do you think about your liaison work with other embassies?

Answer: I already mentioned this, and I can say that we are still unclear about certain matters. We were too keen to have relations with the other embassies. I think our best relations are with the Hungarian Embassy and the Embassy of the Soviet Union.

Still, I think we have more than friendly relations with the Hungarian comrades; for example, we sometimes borrow their car. We have relations with Korean organizations as well.

We did not organize a dinner for the press, because of the conditions we are in.

The comrades pointed out a series of shortcomings, [and I asked him] whether he could explain what the root of all these problems is.

Answer: One of the causes is that he does not go into sufficient depth on matters of relations between comrades, he did not see and was not preoccupied with them. Another cause was the fact that we did not have a party life.

[...]

Comrade Florescu: This term, I took care of the press and cultural liaison.

Press liaison:

This term, we received 82 articles accompanied by photographs from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

and we provided the [North Korean] Ministry of Culture and Propaganda with 45 articles and 28 photographs. The [quality] of the articles is better but the [remaining] difficulty is that most articles are not translated into Russian.

Until now, [the North Korean press] published 43 articles, while last term they published only 32 articles in total. Therefore, our approach with respect press liaison is much better and the reason is that we took more interest in it. Two big articles were published, together with photographs.

At the work analysis meeting, we reached the conclusion that certain articles must be translated in their entirety but the translator told us he could not do that in the current circumstances. Now, the translators are working diligently.

We disseminated the bulletins we got from the Embassies in Moscow and Beijing, but because the bulletin from Moscow is no longer issued, we must revise the list and see where we should send the Agerpress bulletin. For the time being, we receive 20 copies of the Agerpress Bulletin and we came up with a dissemination plan.

We followed a few articles published in the Romanian press about the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and we saw that more and more of them are now being published.

We made a plan for [celebrating] the 23rd of August.

On matters related to our cultural work, which we took over from comrade Neamu on May 20:

With respect to the photo exhibits, we arranged fewer of them because we lacked photographs.

The [North Korean] Ministry of Culture and Propaganda organized an exhibit at Moranbong and on the occasion of the exhibit they displayed for May 1, the North Korean comrades included a few photographs of Romania.

We provided the Ministry of Culture and Propaganda with the film 'The Grandsons of the Bugler' which they showed at a gala on May 25.

We paid 6 visits, 2 of them at the Ministry of Culture and Propaganda, where we discussed press-related and cultural issues, as well as the issue of whether a folk group from Romania could visit North Korea.

We obtained a list from the North Korean Communist Youth Union with the activity of the Youth delegation after their return from the festival.

We will receive [a similar list] from the Central Committee of the Trade Unions.

We found out from the Writers' Union that the [North Koreans] published two poetry volumes and an edited volume in which they included a few Romanian poems.

According to the work plan, I am responsible for reporting on how the Geneva Conference is reflected in the North Korean press, but because the materials were poor, I gave up on it, and instead, I will report on the activity of the Soviet artists group [in North Korea].

[...]

He [comrade Alexeenco] started taking care of the documentary, and he wrote two files, and he completed the report on South Korea.

When comrade Alexeenco was in Andun, he took care of some consular matters and of the departure of the medical team.

The translated material gave him trouble.

He took care of the news digest and of listening to [the] radio show.

He paid several visits together with comrade Stere.

In one month and a half, he prepared 8 lessons for the Institute, and he was up-to-date with the newspapers. On cultural affairs, he distributes the newspapers to the comrades.

[...]

Comrade Ciocan: With respect to the milk and butter we receive from the cafeteria of the Soviet Embassy, it is not true what they say, that we go ask for [milk and butter], but the problem is we do not receive [milk and butter] regularly.

[...]

Proposals: We ought to be more careful in the future to organize trips and distractions because comrade Florescu Ileana rightly pointed out that we did not organize any trip and that the comrades are getting bored, here in the woods.

[...]

Comrade Alexeenco was the one who laughed when I proposed a report about the 'methods used by the enemy.' The news digest of the North Korean press is a political matter. However, when he was away, comrade Alexeenco did not take care of it. There were few translations available for putting together documentaries. The visit we paid to the Chinese was made at the [recommendation] of the Soviet comrades.

Comrade Alexeenco believes we were too pushy. We should have gotten closer to the Poles and the Czechoslovaks, because they were members of the Repatriation Commission and we [could] have found out many things.

He organized a dinner for comrade Nam Il so as to strengthen relations, another dinner for the group of [North Korean] workers which spent their holidays in Romania.

We undertook a multilateral activity.

[...]

Comrade Sandu sought to report on a few issues [such as]:

1. [Our] embassy in Moscow will regularly send us those publications about our country which are published in Romanian;
2. [The Romanian] government approved the [enrollment] of 40 [Romanian] students and 30 [Romanian] pupils in [North Korean] technical schools.
3. [We must] look into the possibility for 3 [Romanian] students to come to North Korean to learn Korean.
4. The propaganda materials and the exhibit about youth life [in Romania] will be sent to us later on.

[...]

Comrade Sandu then raised a few issues which need more attention, especially now that we will be left alone for a while.

One must not look only at our shortcomings, but also at our team's achievements, which managed

to represent our country; this is evidenced in our liaison [work with the North Korean authorities], in our cultural [work], and in the guidance [we offered] to the Red Cross staff.

Our comrades' [work efficiency levels] have increased; comrades Alexeenco and Florescu said that they did not manage to learn about their work in [much] depth. But they made [significant] progress, and here I am referring to comrade Florescu who used to work in the press division [when he was] in Romania, but now he managed to get involved into his work [here]. The same applies to comrade Neamu, who, while working in a team [created and] reinforced in Moscow, managed to learn about his tasks [here as well].

Comrade Stere managed to lead the activity [of the staff].

We also made advances in the field of [intelligence and] reporting.

Organizational work:

We must understand that the methods we use to organize our work cannot remain immovable, so that our work reaches a standstill. The war is over. This is why we must change our work methods.

Tasks were not allocated properly; some comrades had too much to do, while some were detached from others' work, although they shared [the same tasks].

[...]

The [failure] to return the visit of the Czechoslovak chargé d'affaires was not a mere shortcoming, but a serious problem. Moreover, the problem we had with the medical team, which turned things on their head, is not solved.

[...]

Also, translators are not used efficiently, they waste a lot of their time, we must give them more work to do so that we are better informed.

[...]

As far as meetings [with foreign diplomats] are concerned, I think it would be good to think ahead of time about the matters we want to discuss and the goals we want to achieve. And it will not be permitted to agree on one thing before the meeting and then, during the meeting, to change plans, as comrade Alexeenco did. We must examine the directions we are given and carry them out.

[...]

As far as [reporting and] gathering information are concerned, this activity can also be improved; of course, there are difficulties but we must improve [our] reporting work.

We need more information about building materials, about the market.

[...]

As far as learning the language is concerned, there wasn't that much progress made and in this respect he [comrade Sandu] referred to comrade Stere, who did not do much in this respect.

Comrade Stere must summon comrade Florescu Ileana and set up a very rigorous schedule so as to learn Korean as soon as possible.

As far as the medical team is concerned, the criticisms made at our last meeting had a point. The [work of the] medical team must be coordinated by the Embassy; the comrade who will be in

charge of this must organize meetings ahead of time to discuss [various] problems.

We must avoid going to the hospital too frequently, and when we go, we must avoid noticing their shortcomings, and then we must summon the team and discuss the existing problems with them [in private].

We must seek to introduce a press review among the tasks of the Embassy.

[...]

Comrade Stere:

With the help of comrade Sandu we managed to cover and understand our shortcomings better.

Our tasks are to expand our relations with the Korean comrades, with scientists and journalists, to inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when we plan on undertaking substantial measures.

We must expand our reporting to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and intensify it. We must now think about what we want to do next (in the third quarter).

We must not end our examination of the class struggle [in North Korea], or of the rapports with South Korea. And we must start looking into the issue of education.

[...]

[As far as our liaison with other embassies are concerned], we must maintain our relations with the other embassies, especially with the Soviet comrades, with whom we must have permanent contacts.

We sought to avoid phone calls to explain some of the issues [we are confronted with], and instead, we sought to visit them.

[...]

Response of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

No. 4264/1954

[...]

Liaison Work

As we could see from your reports, during this period, liaison with Korean institutions and brotherly diplomatic missions has been livelier compared to the last quarter, especially given comrade Stere's departure and the replacement of the medical team. This [progress] is evidence of the preoccupation of the embassy staff to improve and expand this liaison work. It is remarkable that you have followed a just path in the discussions [they had] with [other diplomats], carried out on the occasion of various visits, and they did not allow to be dragged into useless discussions (for instance, comrade Stere, when he visited the Polish Chargé d'affaires on June 21st). This preoccupation is also evidence that you gathered interesting findings from these discussions, which you relayed to us (for instance, the gradual replacement of the medical teams sent by some brotherly countries to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea).

In your work there have been a few improper actions, which we will discuss as follows.

Regarding visits, we believe it was a serious gaffe that comrade Alexeenco did not immediately return the visit of the Czechoslovak representative, trying to find excuses, although unconvincing,

that this [slip] was a result of the fact that he did not find the protocol rules clear enough. If comrade Alexeenco had any questions about these rules, he could have asked the Soviet comrades for their opinion, who would have provided him with valuable advice. As a matter of fact, this did not occur randomly, as it does not ensue from the reports you sent us that you have close enough relations with the Soviet comrades, who could share their experience with you in any circumstances. Instead, it can be gathered that you have very close, even intimate, relations with the Hungarian comrades, going as far as borrowing their car on several occasions. While we agree to you having close relations with brotherly countries in principle, we cannot agree with these relations leading to such intimacies.

We do not think you found the best solution when you postponed your presentation visits because of the preparations you had to make for celebrating August 23rd and for getting the diplomatic pouch ready for [our courier]. These presentation visits could have been made without neglecting your liaison tasks, especially since you had recently arrived in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Judging from your reports, we gathered that during the second quarter, with a view to strengthening ties [with the People's Republic of China and Poland], you took initiative to invite the Chargés d'affaires of the People's Republic of China and Poland to visit the hospital in Nampo where our medical team is operating. Your initiative was a good one, but [the visits] were not responsibly organized, as the visit (of the Chinese Chargé d'affaires) coincided with the festivities in which the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea decorated some members of our medical team. Regarding this initiative, we must add that you insisted too much that the comrades you invited give you [their assessment] when they visited the hospital.

[...]

With respect to the construction of a new building for our embassy, we believe it was not proper for the comrades [in the Romanian Embassy in Pyongyang] to make this issue into the main topic of discussion during their visits [to the North Korean authorities], going as far as requesting the North Korean authorities to evict the North Korean citizens living on the plot of land allocated to the construction of our embassy. It would have been much better to have done so when the preparations for beginning the construction work were over and when the actual building could be erected.

Judging from your reports, we noticed a very improper method, counterproductive for your work, which is used by the comrades [in the Romanian Embassy in Pyongyang], namely that you do not set an agenda ahead of your discussions, spelling out how [to discuss], which questions could be asked by the Korean officials and what answers should be given to these questions. This [lack of prior planning] is evidence of superficiality in your work and lack of responsibility towards the tasks given [by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs]. We believe it is time to stop such practices right away.

[...]

We must point out another improper method you use in your liaison work, namely that out of your wish to eliminate some of the shortcomings at our hospital in Nampo, on the occasion of his visit to the North Korean Health Ministry, comrade Jianu said that the Korean leadership of the hospital was not doing its job, and that the Ministry ought to take charge of the hospital directly, because things got out of the hands of the local management team. In other words, comrade ambassador gave orders to a Korean authority about what to do, which is not proper. Shortcomings must be noted, but in a way that is more appropriate for liaison work.

[...]

Comrade Alexeenco was on several occasions the acting head of our office, when our ambassador

was away, and when the ambassador was present, he was first secretary of the head of our office. In this position, he was responsible for liaising with the [North] Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with brotherly [diplomatic] missions, and with [North] Korean institutions. In this respect, comrade Alexeenco achieved some positive results, among which we would like to note the close collaboration with both Korean institutions and with brotherly [diplomatic] missions.

The results he achieved could have been much better, he could have been more efficient if he had striven to cover and understand the entire work [of the embassy]. In this respect, however, comrade Alexeenco displayed serious shortcomings which were reflected not only in his work but also in the activity of the entire embassy.

His insufficient preoccupation for improving the political and professional level [of the embassy] resulted in rather important shortcomings, and in situations in which comrade Alexeenco did not know what to do on certain problems. For example, the [failure to] return the visits of the Soviet and Czechoslovak chiefs of mission is not only a protocol mistake, but can also have political implications. This slip also shows insufficient liaison with the comrades of brotherly [diplomatic] missions, because if comrade Alexeenco did not know what to do, he could have asked [our] comrades in brotherly [diplomatic] missions, and he would have certainly receive good advice.

Comrade Alexeenco also neglected the issue of learning about the situation in Korea, although he himself pointed out that in this respect, the results of the embassy had been very poor. Not having precise information and poorly documenting the space in which [our] embassy is operating inevitably led to providing insufficient information to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the complex problems the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is currently facing. In this respect, comrade Alexeenco neglected the issue of preparing a daily press review for the staff of our embassy, thus contributing to keeping our staff at an inferior level of knowledge regarding the space they are operating in.

Instead of taking care of more important issues, comrade Alexeenco was preoccupied in his liaison work with housekeeping issues (the building of our embassy, [the arrival of] barracks, transportation, etc.). In his discussions about these issues, comrade Alexeenco did not take the proper actions, by raising issues prematurely (for example, building a fence around the embassy), without consulting the head of mission, and sometimes by making improper requests (such as evicting Korean citizens). The fact that comrade Alexeenco, the first secretary of our mission, and on several occasions, the acting head of mission, could act in such a way in his meetings with the Korean comrades led to other comrades (Florescu, Neamu) raising matters in their discussions with the Korean comrades, which went beyond the instructions they received from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (for instance, the matter of a folk music orchestra), and put the embassy in a bad light.

In his work, comrade Alexeenco occasionally displayed superficiality (for instance, in the case of the telegram sent to the consular section without the necessary information), as well as idleness, as he failed to fulfill the tasks he had been given.

[...]