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ALBANIAN MEDICAL INSTITUTES, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND SOCIAL SECURITY MEASURES

[Summary: The following report presents information on Albanian medical institutions, including schools, a laboratory, and hospitals and dispensaries; the League of Albanian Doctors; medical conferences; measures for control of disease; and social welfare.

The new Higher Medical Institute and the recently organized League of Albanian Doctors are expected to increase the number of trained personnel and improve the means of combating disease. The Pharmaceutical Laboratory is producing a number of drugs, previously imported, from domestic herbs. Progress is noted in combating malaria, especially in Berat and Shkoder parts, and vaccination is in use for typhus and diphtheria. Larger funds are allotted to welfare, especially for mothers of large families and for workers' rest homes. Rest homes are highly praised, but administration of funds for workers' pensions and mothers' bonuses is termed bureaucratic.

Numbers in parentheses refer to appended sources.]

I. MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS

Schools

The Higher Medical Institute of Tirana (Institut te larte te mjeksise) opened on 1 October 1952. The director is A. Bozo, and the assistant director is Professor Anikin, former dean of the First Moscow Medical Institute. Professor Anikin was in charge of installing modern equipment supplied by the USSR for the biology, histology, chemistry, and anatomy laboratories. Laboratory students are divided into groups of 12, so that they may have practical as well as theoretical training.



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The anatomy laboratory is equipped with skeletons and casts to illustrate the lectures. Before examinations, small groups work in the anatomy laboratory under a professor. As a result of this system, more than half the students' papers have been marked excellent.

Students of histology are provided with microscopes. They also have casts showing the development of the embryo. Anikin himself is the lecturer.

The same system is employed in the other laboratories. Marxist-Leninist ideology is taught in seminars, where students take part in discussions. Preparation for examinations is given by Prof Anastasi Papa to groups of three or four students. Division of students into these small groups facilitates criticism and self-criticism.(1)

Students at the Medical Polytechnic School (Politeknikum Mjekesor), the Higher Medical Institute, and the Midwives School (Shkollë e Mëmirë) are taking their June examinations. Examinations at the Medical Polytechnic School are being given to 274 students, 40 of whom are taking examinations for the degree of assistant doctor. In 1953-1954, the school will train dentists and pharmacists as well as assistant doctors. About 160 students are already registered.

Examinations in the 2-year course at the Midwives School show excellent results. The school expects 40 more students in the coming year.

The Higher Medical Institute plans to graduate doctors in 5 years. This June, 54 students are taking examinations.

In addition, a nursing school is training 240 nurses, and expects 200 more in 1953-1954.(2)

Laboratory

In 1948, the State Pharmaceutical Laboratory (Laboratori Farmaceutik i Shtetit) produced 30 preparations in limited amounts. In October 1953, it is producing 160 preparations, and 42 times the previous quantity. More than 20 of these products were previously imported. They are now manufactured from domestic produce, thus saving more than one million leks in foreign exchange. Among the most important products are the following: Simalus Skolyms, an extract of artichokes (Cybara skolyms) used for liver trouble; Urtika, an extract of nettles (urtica), used for hemorrhage and labor pains; liver extract from calves' liver for anemia; gentian extract, used to aid digestion; and many tinctures for dyspepsia, heart disease, and debility.

New apparatus from the USSR and the People's Democracies is stimulating the growth of the laboratory and the improvement of technical personnel. In 1946, the total staff of the laboratory consisted of seven more or less qualified technicians. Now it consists of seven highly qualified technicians, trained in the USSR and the People's Democracies, and dozens of laboratory workers with one year's special training at the laboratory. The government is investing a million leks in the laboratory. A special building with all necessary equipment is to be built soon in Tirana.(3)

Hospitals, Dispensaries

The 1953 budget allocates 607 million leks, or 40 percent more than in 1938, for public health. Much of this sum is to be invested in new health institutions. A 10-million-lek, 220-bed hospital in Durres and a 5-million-lek, 75-bed hospital in Peshkopi are under construction. The capacity of the Fuke and Erseke hospitals is to be increased. At the end of 1953, there will be 49 hospitals in Albania -- six times the number in 1938.

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Two new 40-bed hospitals will be built, one at the Cerrik Refinery and one at the Stalin Textile Combine. A surgical department will be added to the Kukës Hospital. By the end of 1953, construction work will be finished on 11 dental clinics, 2 antituberculosis clinics, 4 infirmaries, and 43 mobile clinics for medical treatment and control of venereal disease. During the same period, 9 day nurseries with a total of 510 beds, and 17 maternity homes with [a total of?] 121 beds are to be built. At present, there are 115 maternity homes where 40 percent of the pregnant women in Albania lie in.(4)

In Elbasan Qark, three new dispensaries are to be opened, and additional dispensaries will soon be in operation in Hotolishte and Selite te Mollasit. By the end of 1953, Elbasan Qark will have 45 dispensaries, 3 hospitals, and 4 maternity homes. Gostime Rreth already has a hospital, a maternity home, and nine dispensaries. By the end of the Five-Year Plan, there will be health institutes in four villages. In addition, public health units often make rounds in villages to oversee the health and hygiene of the peasants and to educate them in sanitation. One such unit left Elbasan on 20 October to visit all villages and institutes in Gramsh Rreth.(5)

In early August, 14 units comprising doctors, nurses, dentists, and pharmacists, with medical supplies, traveled around Gjinokaster Rreth, Gjinokaster Qark, to aid the peasants. The doctors made more than 700 visits and gave advice on prevention of disease in the villages.(6)

Peshkopi Rreth, Diber Qark, has 21 dispensaries, 3 maternity homes, 2 hospitals, and a dental clinic. A new hospital is to be built in the city of Peshkopi during 1953. A number of young people of Peshkopi Rreth are studying at Albanian medical schools; others are attending schools in the USSR and the People's Democracies.(7)

Mjete Lokalitet, Shkoder Qark, has three dispensaries. In addition, the village of Mazrek recently installed a new dispensary. A four-bed maternity home has been in operation in the lokalitet since 1952. Nurses in the lokalitet give talks on hygiene to the peasants.(8) The village of Barbullush, Shkoder Qark, has a maternity home.(9)

Criticism

In July 1953, an inspection of the Gjinokaster Maternity Home showed that it set an example in cleanliness and care of patients. During an interview, a patient of the extrapulmonary [tuberculosis] hospital in Vlore highly praised the hospital for its care of the sick.

Recent inspections disclosed many defects in some hospitals. In one hospital in Durres, for example, the inspectors found that the walls had not been painted for a long time. Moreover, as there were no screens in the windows, flies and mosquitoes were numerous.

In a hospital in Peshkopi Rreth, ten patients received no treatment after they were X-rayed. Nurses were found to be negligent in sterilizing needles.

On 2 July, a woman diagnosed as a paratyphoid case was sent to the Tirana Civilian Hospital. Her room had no windows. The bed had no sheets. There was no organized care for patients. The woman was examined five times in 11 days, because records were not properly kept.

Criticisms of hospital treatment often appear in workers' letters to the newspapers, but the Ministry of Public Health is too bureaucratic to heed the voice of the people or to take measures, in the proper spirit of self-criticism, to redress these faults.(10)

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The most serious forms of tuberculosis are treated at the Sarande Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Sarande. Much good work is done there, but many defects have been noted.

Proper care is not taken of patients. The doctors do not provide necessary services. For example, Vasil Kosta, the head intern, dresses wounds irregularly and disregards all regulations of hygiene and medicine. When he makes the rounds with the doctor, he boils the instruments, but when the doctor is absent, he may use the same unsterilized instruments on two or three patients. He is arrogant with the patients and mistreats those who criticize him. His treatment of the sick forces them to try to leave before they are cured.

Nurses and orderlies lack any sense of responsibility. They do not follow the prescribed therapy regularly. For example, they may give patients six aspirins within a short time instead of the prescribed dose of sulfaguandine. Dishes are washed in laundry tubs without disinfection.

There are also cases of misuse of state funds. During a brief inspection, the inspection committee of the rrreth executive committee discovered that the sanatorium had on hand 50 kilograms of bread more than the required amount. The administration of the sanatorium is negligent and does not attempt to remedy defects. Mitat Murati, the administration head, does not require strict accounting. Moreover, his orders are often countermanded by the head intern's assistant.

Responsibility for this alarming state of affairs rests on the party executive committee of the rrreth and its public health sections. The committee claims that it is not responsible because the sanatorium is directly subordinate to the Ministry of Public Health, but the sanatorium is actually under rrreth jurisdiction. Some of the personnel blame the situation on a lack of technical directors, but the real cause is the lack of personal responsibility, discipline, accountancy, and healthy criticism and self-criticism.(11)

Improvements in the General Military Hospital at Tirana

[The following article by Lt Col Dr S. Laman appeared in the 30 September 1953 issue of Zeri i Popullit.]

With Soviet aid, Albanian laboratories of health institutes, hospitals, sanatoriums, and polyclinics have been well supplied with modern equipment. Soviet doctors are working with Albanian doctors in medicine, surgery, and prophylaxis in these institutions.

Soviet methods, based on Pavlov's doctrines, permit surgical intervention which was previously impossible. These methods make it possible, also, to cure skin diseases previously considered difficult or impossible to cure.

Since 1948, the General Military Hospital has used the Filatov method with good results in such diseases as psoriasis, chronic eczema, trophic ulcer, bronchial asthma, and duodenal ulcer.

In 1950, the hospital adopted the Soviet method of a single operation for pulmonary echinococcosis. This method makes surgical operations on the chest possible without danger of complications, such as empyema, and reduces hospitalization time. The patient leaves the hospital in 15-20 days. The operation is used in many types of cases; for example, in the removal of bits of metal from wounds.

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Vishnevskiy's blockade is successfully used in trauma and sthenic ileus. Acute peritonitis is now cured by the Petrov method of "suspended" ileostomy (ileostomise te suspendume) [sic].

Blood transfusion is now widely used, and the staff has learned how to preserve blood.(12)

Soviet Methods in the Tirana Civilian Hospital

Soviet doctors began working in Albania in 1947. The USSR has supplied and continues to supply material aid, including high-quality Soviet medicines. Many departments in the Tirana Civilian Hospital, including those of pediatrics, surgery, contagious diseases, and psychiatry, are organized on the Soviet plan.

Among the Soviet methods in use is the treatment of acute peritonitis and "leus" [ileus] by suspended enterostomy (e suspenduar) [sic]. The treatment is 90 percent successful.

Until 1951, cases of pulmonary and hepatic echinococcosis required two operations. Now such cases require only one thoracotomy. About 40 such operations have been successfully performed. In the past, prostatectomy also required two operations, but now requires only one.

Vishnevskiy's novocain block is now successfully used in cases of arthritis and endarteritis obliterans. Since 1952, the Khaneticha treatment for burns has given excellent results.

The hospital now has a blood bank, organized by Soviet doctors. Soviet doctors Gamov, Boreko, and Regova aid in the surgical department. Professor Nikulchin performed the first brain operation in Albania.

The Filatov method is used in treating certain eye troubles, stomach ulcer, and some skin diseases. Tubercular conditions are treated with bismuth carbonate; pulmonary abscesses, with penicillin in the trachea; dysentery, with garlic. The Danyanevich treatment cures scabies in one day.

The excellent bacteriological and clinical laboratory at the hospital was organized by doctors Brazhnik and Boyko. Many improvements have been introduced by doctors Denisova and Fadyachava.(13)

II. LEAGUE OF ALBANIAN DOCTORS

A League of Albanian Doctors was organized, as suggested by Dr Medar Shtylla, soon after the 17 September Conference of Albanian Doctors. The following officers were elected: president, Dr Khavit Gjata; vice-president, Dr Fejzi Hoxha; and secretary, Dr Bajram Froza.

The league will aid in scientific solutions of Albanian health problems. It will study various diseases, application of Soviet methods, and personnel training, and will seek to raise the scientific level of physicians. In the past, Albanian institutes did not study all types of diseases. Doctors often diagnosed and treated a patient correctly, but kept no detailed records from which he and others might benefit in treating similar cases. The league intends to publish studies, monographs, and other communications of a practical nature, and to organize conferences on current problems.

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The league, whose work will be based on Pavlov's materialistic doctrines, will keep in touch with medical societies in the USSR and the People's Democracies. With the aid of the Higher Medical Institute, it will encourage development of new methods and will aid students to select the branches of medicine most suitable for them.(14)

III. MEDICAL CONFERENCES

Conference on Soviet Medicine

A conference on Soviet medicine, under the auspices of the Albanian-Soviet Friendship Society and the Albanian Ministry of Health, was held on 17 September in the Kelmendi Palace of Culture at Tirana. It was attended by workers in the Tirana Health Department, doctors from various regions, and students of the Higher Medical Institute and the Polytechnic Medical School. The presiding committee included Josif Pashko, secretary of the Party Central Committee; Bedri Spahiu, Minister of Education and Culture; Dr Medar Shtylla, Minister of Public Health; Feodor Feodorovich Tallizin, member of the Soviet Cultural Delegation, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences USSR, and director of the First Moscow Medical Institute; and Soviet Dr Brazhnik.

The conference was opened by Vera Pojani, Deputy Minister of Public Health. (15) Dr Medar Shtylla, Professor Tallizin, and Dr Horosavin spoke on Soviet methods and successes in various fields. Dr Fejzi Haxha reported on Albanian successes in treating tubercular meningitis. Dr Bajram Preza discussed Pavlov's doctrines. Dr Medar Shtylla proposed the organization of a League of Albanian Doctors.(16)

Conference on Tuberculosis

The first conference of Albanian doctors on tuberculosis is being held from 25 to 29 August. Topics under discussion include present conditions in Albania, necessary prophylactic and curative measures and wider application of Soviet measures, existing deficiencies in the treatment of tuberculosis by doctors and health institutions, and corrective measures.

In the past, there was only one hospital in Tirana; it had 50 beds and employed one doctor. The first sanatorium was opened there in 1945. In 1946, another was opened in Korce, and later a third in Vlora. These three sanatoriums now have a total of 975 beds, and are equipped with modern instruments and supplies for any type of operation. Eleven new clinics for the diagnosis, isolation, and treatment of tuberculosis are now open in large cities.

Soviet doctors, such as Romanov, Lebedev, and Filimanov, are aiding in the control of tuberculosis. Professor Stoyko's method of thoracoplasty is widely applied. Small doses of streptomycin compounds are used.

Pediatric wards, based on the importance of sun and air for children, are in operation in Tirana, Korce, and Shkoder. All children in families in which there is or has been a case of tuberculosis are sent to one of four preventoria in Durres, Sarande, Shkoder, and Fogradec, which have a total of 525 beds. Two sanatoriums, with a total of 325 beds, treat nonpulmonary tuberculosis.(17)

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IV. MEASURES FOR CONTROL OF DISEASE

Medicinal Herbs

The hilly areas of Kruje are rich in medicinal herbs, such as camomile, marsh mallow, thistles, and bay. The 1952 plan for gathering such herbs was fulfilled 208 percent. Picking is done mainly by women and Pioneers [Communist youth under 12 years of age]. In July, one woman, who picked 100 kilograms of bay leaves, was paid 20 kilograms of sugar, 20 meters of cloth, and 2 kilograms of coffee.(18)

Measures Against Malaria, Typhus, and Diphtheria

The spread of malaria is under control in Berat Qark. Any village in which malaria occurs is sprayed with a residual solution. In 47 villages in Ura-Vajgurore Lokalitet and in the central part of Berat Rreth, an area of 505,944 square meters has been sprayed. An area of 330,967 square meters in Stalin Town and two wards in the city of Berat have been sprayed, with good results. Peasants from Gorican-Xhall, Gorican-Pashaj, and Vokopol are aiding the public health squads in the second spraying. Houses and stables are also to be sprayed. (19)

V. SOCIAL WELFARE

Social Insurance

The State Insurance Agency for property and personal insurance insures the houses, furniture, livestock, and crops of city and agricultural workers against natural disasters and other accidents. As of October 1953, the number of policy holders is 10 percent greater than in 1952. The agency paid out 4,716,000 leks during the first 9 months of 1953.(20)

Social Security

Workers are benefiting from millions of leks in social security. In the first 6 months of 1953, they received more than 84 million leks. Of this sum, 21.5 million leks was spent for maternity care, and food and clothing for infants. Workers' food in the first half of 1953 cost about 17 million leks, and will amount to 51 million leks before the end of the year.

The 1953 budget allots 210.5 million leks to social security. The 1952 allotment was 202 million leks.(21)

Aid to Mothers and Children

The number of health institutions for mothers and children is expected to be 16 percent greater at the end of 1953 than in 1952. The number of maternity homes and consultation offices in 1955 is to be 3.5 times the number in operation in 1950. As of August 1953, there are five times as many health institutions for mothers and children as in 1938.

A pediatric hospital and 80 public nurseries are to be built in Tirana.

State allowances for mothers of large families and for unmarried mothers have amounted to 532,542,000 leks in the past 2 1/2 years, or about 30 percent more than the total sum allotted in 1948 for both social security and public health.

Many schools for mothers are teaching improved child care. Mothers who rear their children well are decorated with the Order of Glory of Motherhood (Lavdi nenes) and the Mother's Medal (Medalje e nenes).(17)

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Some members of the Vlore Rreth Executive Committee are not giving proper attention to applications for such awards as bonuses for mothers of large families, and workers' pensions. For example, the office which distributes bonuses to mothers with large families is dilatory in replying to applications. Of 3,315 applications received, only 743 have been settled within the term set by law, while the rest have been delayed 2-8 months. The office does not examine applications in the order of arrival, but waits until a number accumulate from one locality before investigating. For example, in Brataj Lokalitet, it was a year before the applications were granted. The central areas were granted no bonuses from November 1952 to August 1953.

In the agricultural sector, many applications are not processed on time. For example, examination of applications received in 1952 began only recently. The Ministry of Agriculture is likewise remiss; some 300 applications directed to it are still unanswered.

The Vlore People's Council is aware of these shortcomings in awarding bonuses and decorations to mothers of large families. The welfare office has on file 148 applications and many suggestions which arrived over 2 months ago. But Safu Veshi, assistant head of this office, postpones action from day to day. The executive committee is also negligent in registering applications; this causes losses to the applicants.

The office which receives applications is also remiss in handling other types of requests. For example, a miner at the Selenica Mines applied for a disability pension. He sent 20 memoranda, and had to submit three sets of forms before receiving a reply. Such negligence shows a bureaucratic attitude and a lack of personal responsibility.

The blame for all these shortcomings must be attributed to the Vlore Rreth Executive Committee, and especially to its secretary, Bame Mersuri.(22)

Workers' Welfare

The government and the party give workers an 8-hour working day, free medical treatment, education, pay for occupational injuries, pensions, and an annual 2-week holiday. Outstanding workers and Pioneers spend their vacations in special rest homes, for which the government allotment in 1953 is 50 million leks. These homes are in picturesque spots with healthful climates, such as Bjeshk' e Verint and Liqen i Shkodres in Shkoder Rreth, Flazhi i Durresit in Durres Rreth, Qaf Shtame [elsewhere spelled Qafzhiamë and Qaf Shtanë] and Uji i Ftohte in Vlore Rreth, Pogradec, and Voskopoje. These homes have a capacity of 500 guests each. Good food at low prices and various forms of recreation are supplied.(23)

The fourth group to vacation at the Niko Bellojani Rest Home in Durres Rreth, in 1953 included more than 200 workers and white-collar workers.(17)

The new rest home in Starove, on the shore of Lake Pogradec, Pogradec Rreth, was occupied on 26 July by 113 workers and white-collar workers from the "8 Nendori" Sugar Factory at Maliq.(24)

The Ali Demi Rest Home for Pioneers is located on the Adriatic Sea, near Vlore. The first group entertained there in 1953 consisted of 433 Pioneers; the second, 491; and the third, 450. They came from Berat, Stalin Town, Fier, and Vlore. The children receive 4,200 calories per day. Experienced teachers organize their recreation.(25)

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October ends the season of summer holidays for workers. In 1953, more than 14,100 manual and white-collar workers spent their summer vacations in labor union rest homes. In addition to established rest homes in Durres, Pogradec, Vlore, Dajt, and Qafzhiame, three new rest homes for pioneers were opened in the summer of 1953 at Ibe, Libohove, and Boboshtice, and a resort was set up in Voskopoje.

The number of workers and Pioneers who spent their vacations in rest homes in 1952 was 11 percent higher than in 1946, and in 1953 the number was 14 percent higher than in 1952. It is estimated that 26,400 persons will have vacationed in rest homes by the end of 1955.

Korce, Vlore, and Durres have winter vacation camps. By the end of 1953, about 480 persons will have spent their holidays there.(26)

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