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BULGARIA

HEALTH (1600)
Hospitals, Medicines (1602)
Physicians (1605)

HYGIENE AND MEDICAL CARE.

SOURCE ISTANBUL : A 20-year-old girl from USTREM who spent four years in deportation in KUNINO.

DATE OF OBSERVATION : Until August 1954.

EVALUATION COMMENT : This report supplies valuable data about the organization of present day health services, particularly in villages. It adds to ROME RFE Item No. 10237/54; ISTANBUL RFE Item No. 5652/54; and ATHENS RFE Item No. 12084/53, which also dealt with public health service in Bulgaria today.

Attention: Health Editors..

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Every Bulgarian town which is the seat of a county administration has its own hospital. Some of the larger towns have more than one hospital as well as sanatoria, dispensaries and maternity hospitals. Source stated that she believes by 1954 even the borough administrative centers had their own hospitals. In almost all villages there is a resident doctor and the larger villages have their own maternity wards. Small villages which do not have a resident doctor must have a "sanitaren post" (sanitary post) which is manned by a medical orderly belonging to the Red Cross. The orderlies treat minor injuries and have the authority to summon skilled medical aid whenever necessary.

After September 1944 all Bulgarian hospitals were nationalized and doctors in all fields were forced to work for the state during the fore-noons for only nominal remuneration. This has brought about a complete lack of interest in their work on the part of the doctors. Source claims that she read in the official Communist Party organ "Rabotnichesko Delo" that in 1954 the control of state hospitals has been strengthened and that

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doctors are now more disciplined. Because they are state employees, doctors must answer any calls at all hours of the day. A doctor may not refuse to visit a patient even though the latter may be living in a village far from the doctor's home, unless of course there is a doctor living nearer to the patient.

The resident doctors in the villages are more careful in handling their patients than their colleagues in the town hospitals. This is true because the village doctors are directly responsible for the healths of their patients while doctors in hospitals carry no such responsibilities. Dr. Spasin Tsolov DIMCHOVSKI, resident doctor in KUNINO often said that the physicians in the VRATSA county hospital made their patients more sick instead of curing them. Resident doctors are also held responsible for hygienic conditions in their districts. At regular periods they visit every house under their care and make careful inspections as to the cleanliness of the inhabitants.

Since the hospitals are now state-owned, anyone has free access to medical care. Patients have to pay for certain medicines and special treatments only, otherwise medical care is given free of charge. Source is of the opinion that the number of hospitals, sanatoria and other health centers is sufficient in Bulgaria and that patients do not have to wait before being admitted to a hospital. She claimed that the main trouble, besides the fact that doctors are not very careful, was that there was an acute medicine shortage in Bulgaria ever since the Communists took over. Such basic drugs as used in the curing of rheumatic fever and tuberculosis are not to be found, vitamin tablets are also hard to get. The authorities make no secret of the fact that the country lacks medicines. In the autumn of 1953 a doctor from the VRATSA county hospital came to KUNINO to give a lecture on medical affairs and in speaking about tuberculosis he mentioned that new drugs, namely penicilline and streptomycine, had been discovered which ensured an almost complete cure. He then said that these drugs were not yet available in Bulgaria but added that the government had taken steps to supply the needs of the population.

In March 1954 a friend of source was under treatment in the VRATSA hospital and reported that penicillines and sulpha-diazinol were available in the hospital although these drugs were not yet sold in pharmacies. Streptomycine was also available in the hospital but was used only in critical cases. A truck-driver whose leg was crushed in an accident was a roommate of source's friend. He developed a serious infection but the doctors refused to give him streptomycine, although they

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confessed having the drug, and told the truck-driver that he would have to be patient until his wound closed with the aid of less effective drugs.

End.

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