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# China's False Allegations of the Use of Biological Weapons by the United States during the Korean War

By Milton Leitenberg, March 2016





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# China's False Allegations of the Use of Biological Weapons by the United States during the Korean War<sup>1</sup>

Milton Leitenberg

## Introduction

On the early morning of June 25, 1950, North Korean military units, using Soviet supplied tanks and heavy artillery, invaded South Korea all along the 38th parallel.

Kim Il Sung, North Korea's leader, had been asking Stalin for permission to invade the South since March 1949, but his initial proposals were turned down. After the Chinese Communists achieved victory in October 1949, a second appeal by Kim in April 1950 was approved. In the months leading up to June 1950, Soviet supply trains full of arms and munitions began to flow to North Korea, while divisions composed of ethnic Koreans who had fought with Mao Zedong's forces in China were transferred to North Korea's armies. At the same time, senior Soviet military officers devised the North Korean invasion plan and trained North Korea's armies.

After June 25, the United States and United Nations forces entered the war on behalf of the south; Chinese armies and the Soviet Air Force fought on behalf of the north. The war lasted until July 1953, and ended only with an armistice, not a peace treaty. Both Koreas—north and south—were totally devastated, and as many as 4.5 million people died during the war. The Korean Peninsula remains destabilized to the present day. With North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and intermediate range ballistic missiles since 2009, it promises to remain so for the foreseeable future.

A little remembered aspect of the Korean War is an issue of great importance to those concerned with arms control and allegations of the *use* of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), namely nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. During and after the war, North Korea, China, and the Soviet Union alleged that the United States used biological weapons (BW) on an enormous scale in areas of both China and North Korea. Despite the public disclosure of Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> A shorter version of this Working Paper appears as [Milton Leitenberg, "A Chinese Admission of False Korean War Allegations of Biological Weapon Use by the United States," \*Asian Perspective\* 40, no. 1 \(January-March 2016\): 131-146.](#)

The author is extremely grateful for the assistance of Drew Casey, Jiehong Lou, Torbjorn Loden, Melvin Gurtov, and Charles Kraus for translations of the recent Chinese language publications. Svetlana Savranskaya and Mark Kramer both brought the new Russian sources to the attention of the author, with Mark Kramer graciously providing the translations of documents from the Soviet Russian State Archives of Social and Political History (RGASPI). This paper could not have been prepared without their assistance.

Central Committee documents in 1998—eighteen years ago—which revealed that the allegations were fraudulent, China and, much more noisily, North Korea still maintain the charges.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this Working Paper is to describe recent publications in Chinese journals of an unprecedented nature on the subject. A memoir by Wu Zhili, Director of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army Health Division during the Korean War, describes the allegations as a “false alarm” and reveals that there was no use of biological weapons by the Americans in the war. Although he does not go as far as to admit that the allegations were really active fraud and disinformation, much of his narrative makes that evident. Two other publications by Qu Aiguo, a Senior Colonel affiliated with the PLA Academy of Military Science History, evaluate, for the first time, the Soviet documents released in 1998. Qu moves away from the standard-line that “the US used BW against China and North Korea” and concludes that “we cannot deny that that the Americans used BW.” Although only a change of a few words, it is a significant shift in the Chinese presentation of the issue. Nevertheless, it remains dishonest.

In addition to discussing these new Chinese writings about the BW allegations, the Working Paper reproduces a number of newly declassified documents which demonstrate the extent of communications between Mao, Stalin, and Zhou Enlai, as well as two documents which authenticate the 1998 Soviet documents which disproved the allegations. Based on what we know about the US BW program in 1952 as well as the proof contained in the Soviet Central Committee documents released in 1998, the Working Paper concludes that the Korean War BW allegations against the US, an accusation of the use of a weapon of mass destruction, were false, a grand piece of political theater.

### **A Chronology of BW Allegations**

The grounds for these charges were laid two years before the Korean War began. In 1949 and 1950, Soviet propaganda charged that the US was testing biological weapons (plague) against the native Inuit peoples of Alaska. In Soviet reporting of the 1949 Khabarovsk's trials for members of Japan's World War II-era BW program, *Pravda* stated that the United States was “preparing for new crimes against humanity” (i.e., biological warfare). Chinese broadcasts

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<sup>2</sup> These and other details are provided in [Milton Leitenberg, “New Russian Evidence on the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations: Background and Analysis,” \*Cold War International History Project Bulletin 11\* \(Winter 1998\): 180-199](#). The early portion of this paper is drawn largely from that publication. As the 1998 publication contains very detailed references, these are not repeated again here. Readers are directed to the earlier publication for sources. See also [Kathryn Weathersby, “Deceiving the Deceivers: Moscow, Beijing, Pyongyang and the Allegations of Bacteriological Weapons Use in Korea,” \*Cold War International History Project Bulletin 11\*: 176-180](#).

amplified these claims, reporting that the US government was collaborating with Lt. General Shiro Ishii, one of the major figures responsible for the Japanese biological weapons program in China during World War II, ostensibly in preparation for subsequent use of biological weapons by the US against China. In the late spring and early summer of 1950, just before the start of the Korean War, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland also began a campaign of allegations that the US was dropping Colorado beetles over their fields to destroy their potato crops. Finally, on January 21, 1951, Pytr Pospelov, Director of the USSR's Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute and a member of the Soviet Central Committee, promulgated a "hate America campaign" in a speech to the full Soviet Politburo. Pospelov claimed that "the hands of the American imperialists are steeped in the blood of the Russian people."

The actual allegations of BW use during the Korean War began on May 8, 1951. North Korea's Foreign Minister, Pak Heon-yeong (Pak Hon-yong), claimed that the United States had used biological weapons between December 1950 and January 1951, and was spreading smallpox in North Korea. Chinese statements also charging the use of BW by the United States were made on March 14, May 19, 24 and 25, and a final one for 1951 on June 22. The Chinese government also charged that the US used chemical weapons in the Korean War on ten occasions between March 5 and May 13, 1951. North Korean statements continued into July, before stopping for the remainder of 1951.<sup>3</sup>

The major campaign alleging US BW use began on February 22, 1952, and was of quite a different character than the earlier claims described above. On that day, the North Korean Foreign Minister again issued an official statement addressed to the United Nations Secretariat, charging that in January and February the US had made multiple air drops over North Korea, littering the earth with insects infected with the microorganisms that caused plague, cholera, and other diseases. On the very same day, February 22, the front page of China's major newspaper, *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily), carried a story repeating the North Korean charges, accompanied by photographs of objects allegedly dropped by US aircraft and microscope slides of bacteria. Two days later, on February 24, China's Foreign Minister, Zhou Enlai, supported the North Korean charges in a public statement, and on March 8, Zhou expanded the charges to claim that, between February 29 and March 5, the US had sent 448 aircraft on no fewer than 68 occasions to

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<sup>3</sup> [Leitenberg, "New Russian Evidence on the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations."](#) The reference will not be repeated for the details provided on the pages which follow.

drop germ-carrying insects over Northeast China. From there the charges exploded for months to come, with Chinese news agencies reporting many thousands of US aircraft sorties dropping biological agents over China. The alleged pathogens also included the causes of animal diseases, as well as four different plant diseases. China claimed that 955 sorties by 175 groups of US aircraft flew over Northeast China, dropping BW between the dates of February 29 and March 31, 1952. China also claimed that US aircraft spread BW over “70 cities and counties of North Korea...on 804 occasions, according to incomplete reports.” Nevertheless, on no occasion did the Chinese or North Koreans claim to have shot down a US aircraft carrying biological weapons or the delivery systems for them.

### **Communist Investigations of the Allegations**

Soviet representatives in the United Nations took up the charges of BW use on behalf of the Chinese and North Koreans. In addition to raising the issue at international forums, between mid-March and mid-April 1952, one-quarter of Soviet media coverage was devoted to the BW allegations against the US. Mass public demonstrations of protest were held all over the USSR and its Eastern European satellites, as well as in virtually all Western European capitals. In total, millions of people marched in condemnation of the alleged US use of BW.<sup>4</sup>

The Chinese and North Koreans rejected repeated offers of on-site investigations by the World Health Organization and the International Committee of the Red Cross on various dubious and propagandistic pretexts. Instead, the two governments hosted their own “investigations” carried out by Soviet proxy organizations. The first was carried out by a team sent by the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, a group belonging to the World Peace Council, an organization subordinated to a department of the Soviet Central Committee. It visited North Korea from March 5-19, 1952, within days after the 1952 allegations began. The group released two reports in Beijing on March 31 and April 2, 1952. These repeated the North Korean and Chinese charges verbatim, describing the alleged BW “as an act of genocide and a particularly odious crime against humanity.”<sup>5</sup> The Chinese government also established its own

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<sup>4</sup> Milton Leitenberg, “False Allegations of US Biological Weapons Use during the Korean War,” in Anne L. Clunan et al, eds., *Terrorism, War or Disease, Unravelling the Use of Biological Weapons* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008): 120-143.

<sup>5</sup> [United Nations Security Council, “Letter from the Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, President of the Security Council, Dated 30 June 1952. Annex I: International Association of Democratic Lawyers Appeal to the Security Council,” S/2684/Add. 1, 30 June 1952.](#)

investigating body, the Commission of the Medical Headquarters of the Korean People's Army on the Use of Bacteriological Weapons, which reportedly began its work in the very first days of March 1952.<sup>6</sup> This extensively staffed organization gathered the evidence for the more significant "International Scientific Commission for the Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China," again organized by the Soviet proxy World Peace Council. It is commonly referred to as the ISC, or "the Needham Commission," as it was chaired by the eminent British scientist, Marxist, and sinophile, Dr. Joseph Needham. The most instrumental member of the ten members of the ISC was Dr. Nikolay Zhukov-Verezhnikov, a Soviet microbiologist and also a KGB general. He was in fact the only bacteriologist in the group, but the role that he played was significant for reasons other than his professional training. He had served as the chief medical expert for the Soviet trial in Khabarovsk of the Japanese BW scientists. This provided him with information about the air-dropped devices and materials that Japan had used to disperse BW agents in China. The ISC report alleged that the US used the same or very similar mechanisms.

The ISC was present in China and North Korea between June 25 and August 31, 1952, and their massive 669-page report was published in Beijing in 1952.<sup>7</sup> The ISC report documents fewer incidents and fewer types of incidents than were reported by the lawyers' group, which in turn were fewer than reported by Chinese media sources. The most significant aspect of both the jurists' and ISC "investigations" is that neither group did any field investigating of their own. They were presented with "evidence" by the Chinese and North Koreans, which they accepted, on faith, as fact. They attempted to corroborate nothing, and Needham, the group's chair, plainly acknowledged this in press interviews following the release of the ISC report.

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The ADL report stated that, "proceeding in a vein which surpasses the savagery of Hitler Germany and Hirohito Japan in the last war, the American invaders, by a systematic spreading of smallpox, cholera and plague germs over North Korea, have shocked and horrified the entire world."

Claims by Western supporters of the Chinese allegations were even more extravagant. The Rev. James Endicott, head of the Canadian Peace Council, "claimed use of radioactive dust, wiped out several villages." Notes by Joseph Needham of a meeting held in the UK on April 25, 1952, to hear the results of the ADL report. See [Tom Buchanan, "The Courage of Galileo: Joseph Needham and the 'Germ Warfare' Allegations in the Korean War," \*History\* 86, no. 284 \(October 2001\): 509, doi: 10.1111/1468-229X.00203.](#)

<sup>6</sup> "Qin Chao Mei jun jinxing xijun zhan ji wo caiqu cuoshi qingkuang de baogao" ("Report on American Invaders Using Bacteria Weapons and Our Responsive Action"), February 28, 1952, *Nie Rongzhen junshi wenxuan* (Selected Military Papers of Nie Rongzhen) (Beijing: People's Liberation Army Press, 1992), 365-366. Most of the memorandum deals with other issues, such as pre-planned vaccines and gas defense for Chinese troops and anticipation of nuclear weapons use by the United States.

<sup>7</sup> *Report of the International Scientific Commission for the Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1952).

## Rejecting the Allegations

The charges were immediately and repeatedly denied by US delegates at the UN, by US Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and by the senior US military commanders in Korea. The ISC report was also strongly criticized by individual bacteriologists, entomologists, epidemiologists, and virologists in the UK, US, and Australia for pairing types of insects with pathogens that were not carried naturally by such insects; for claiming the use of insect vectors in seasons when such insects would not be present and would freeze in moments after exposure to sub-zero freezing conditions; and on other technical grounds.<sup>8</sup>

In subsequent years, other criticisms and admissions were even more telling. [Tibor Meray](#), a Hungarian journalist who had spent the Korean War inside North Korea, reported that North Korean peasants told doctors at a Hungarian field hospital that paper packets of insects had been placed in the snow by Chinese soldiers. The North Korean Deputy Minister of Health also told Meray that North Korea had been informed of germ attacks by “reports from Chinese Volunteers.”<sup>9</sup> Meray also reported that during party-to-party discussions in Beijing between Chinese officials and those of Poland and Yugoslavia in 1956, the Chinese participants stated that “they considered the whole Korean War to have been a mistake into which they had been pushed by Stalin. *And that they believed the accusations about germ warfare to have been without foundation.*”<sup>10</sup> In the 1990s, one of the Chinese cease-fire negotiators in 1953 told an historian in reference to the BW allegations, that “it was all bullshit.”<sup>11</sup>

## American BW Policy

In the years since the Korean War, a “pro- and con” literature has appeared regarding the BW allegations. Those that supported the old Chinese and North Korean charges were without exception of pronounced left-wing political persuasion of one kind or another. More than a dozen different analysts who did not believe the accusations against the US tried to deduce *why* the Chinese, North Koreans, and Soviets had made the false allegations, and what benefits they

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<sup>8</sup> [Leitenberg, “False Allegations of US Biological Weapons Use during the Korean War.”](#)

<sup>9</sup> Tibor Meray, “The Truth About Germ Warfare,” a series comprised of twelve articles published in the Parisian daily paper, *Franc-Tireur*, between May 6 and May 19, 1957, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.org/document/123153>. See also [Milton Leitenberg, “The Korean War Biological Weapon Allegations: Additional Information and Disclosures, Asian Perspective 24, no. 3 \(2000\): 159-172.](#)

<sup>10</sup> Meray, “The Truth About Germ Warfare” (emphasis added).

<sup>11</sup> Personal communication to Milton Leitenberg. Appraisals of equivalent substantive meaning were also obtained from two retired Soviet generals, independently, by two colleagues, one of them a Soviet-era arms control expert.

sought from them. There were nearly as many postulated reasons as there were authors.<sup>12</sup> Within the US government, such analyses began almost immediately after the charges were made: the first Special National Intelligence Estimate on the subject was produced as early as March 25, 1952.<sup>13</sup>

As regards US BW policies and capabilities at the time of the Korean War, policy on BW had been promulgated in NSC-62 on February 1, 1950, months before the war began. It states that “chemical, biological and radiological weapons will not be used by the United States except in retaliation.”<sup>14</sup> This policy remained in force throughout the Korean War and was confirmed, word for word, in NSC-147, on April 2, 1953, which stated that it “appl[ie]d to UN operations, 1952-1953.”<sup>15</sup> These US national policy determinations were, however, not publicly disclosed. US policy was not changed until March 15, 1956, when NSC-5062/1 permitted first use of chemical or biological weapons by US military forces, but only with presidential approval.

There is considerable American evidence that there was no violation of these NSC policies during the Korean War, including [President Harry Truman's reply to a letter by Congressman Robert Kastenmeier](#) dated July 25, 1969 in which he wrote, “I wish to state categorically that I did not amend any Presidential order in force regarding biological weapons nor did I at any time give my approval to its use.”<sup>16</sup> Supporting this conclusion is an affidavit that Brigadier General H. Hillyard, Secretary to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, provided as evidence during a US court trial in April 1959, stating that “after a diligent search no record or entry has been found to exist in the records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which discloses that the President or any authority superior to the Secretary of Defense, acting at the discretion of the President, did therein at any time, either expressly or impliedly, authorize, consent to, or permit any Armed

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<sup>12</sup> These papers and the various arguments that they made, at least those published up to 1998, were summarized in [Leitenberg, “New Russian Evidence on the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations.”](#)

<sup>13</sup> “Special Estimate: Communist Charges of US Use of Biological Warfare,” SE-24, March 25, 1952; Declassified in 2000. Preparation of the study began on March 7, 1952.

<sup>14</sup> “NSC-62: Chemical Warfare Policy,” A Report to the National Security Council by the Secretary of Defense, February 1, 1950, Record Group 273, National Archives and Records Administration. The section on US BW policies and capabilities is taken from Milton Leitenberg, “False Allegations of US Biological Weapons Use during the Korean War.”

<sup>15</sup> “NSC-147: Analysis of Possible Courses of Action in Korea,” December 28, 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, Volume XV, Korea, Part 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1984), accessible at <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v15p1/d446>.

<sup>16</sup> Copy of President Truman's letter, July 25, 1969, supplied to the author by Representative Robert Kastenmeier in 1969, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123088>.

Force, or any element thereof, to use or employ any form of toxic chemical warfare or biological warfare during the period stated above.”<sup>17</sup>

During World War II, the US BW program was engaged solely in research, and it had produced no stockpile of BW agents. After 1945, the United States neither produced nor procured any biological munitions until the end of 1951. That first agent was wheat rust, an anti-plant agent meant for use against the wheat crops of the USSR.<sup>18</sup> It cannot produce any human disease, and neither China nor North Korea ever alleged that the US had dispersed this agent. The second BW agent that the US produced was a human pathogen, but it was not ready until the end of 1954, about 16 months after the Korean War was over. It was for the organism *Brucella suis*, which produces the incapacitating disease Brucellosis.<sup>19</sup> Brucellosis was not one of the diseases that China or North Korea ever charged the US with spreading.

Thus the only BW agent that the US possessed during the Korean War was for selective use against Soviet food grain crops, and the Chinese and North Koreans never alleged that it had been used. When the first US anti-personnel BW agent became available, the Korean War was already over and the US was never accused of having dispersed this pathogen over China or North Korea.

### **Declassified Soviet-Era Documents**

In January 1998, twelve Soviet-era documents were obtained through an intermediary from the Archive of the CPSU Central Committee (now presumably housed at the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History [RGASPI], or the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History [RGANI]). [One of the files, dated February 21, 1952](#)—one day before the North Korean Foreign Minister’s public statement on February 22, 1952—was from Mao to Stalin, reporting that the US has used BW, “delivered by aircraft and artillery.”<sup>20</sup> (As indicated below, the version obtained in 1998 of that particular document was only a fragment, and the full document was

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<sup>17</sup> Certificate, Brigadier General H.L. Hillyard, US Army, Secretary of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 21, 1959, CCS 3260: Chemical, Biological etc. 1959, Record Group 218: Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Central Decimal File, Box 032, US National Archives. This information was kindly supplied by the historian, John van Courtland Moon, in a personal communication in 1998.

<sup>18</sup> For a useful guide to available declassified papers as of that date, see [Conrad C. Crane, “‘No Practical Capabilities’: American Biological and Chemical Warfare Programs during the Korean War,” \*Perspectives in Biology and Medicine\* 45, no. 2 \(Spring 2002\): 241-249, doi: 0.1353/pbm.2002.0024.](#)

<sup>19</sup> *US Department of the Army, US Army Activity in the US Biological Warfare Program*, vol. 2, February 24, 1977.

<sup>20</sup> “Telegram from Mao Zedong to I.V. Stalin (Filippov) about the Use by the Americans of bacteriological weapons in North Korea (Excerpt),” February 21, 1952, Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, translated by Kathryn Weathersby, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113747>.



published by a Russian archive in 2010.) The remaining eleven documents released in 1998 all date from between April 13 and June 2, 1953, the months immediately following the death of Stalin. They include four types of documents: messages from the CPSU Central Committee to Mao or Kim Il Sung; messages to the Soviet Ambassador or senior military officers in Beijing or Pyongyang; replies from them reporting on their conversations with Mao or Kim; or internal memoranda within the CPSU Central Committee. Although the provenance of the documents was initially contested, in 1990 three former Soviet military and civilian officials in Moscow confirmed the authenticity of the files.

The 1953 documents originated within the CPSU Central Committee as a part of the post-Stalin struggle for leadership between Beria and Khrushchev. That battle took place through an ostensible dispute over three policy issues: the Moscow “Doctors Plot,” which was to have initiated a new purge directed at Stalin’s closest subordinates, Beria’s ideas concerning East Germany and the potential for a European agreement on the unification of the two divided parts of Germany, and the Korean War BW allegations. The first and third of these subjects were fought over by attacks on officials who were protégés of either Beria or Khrushchev. As Beria initiated the process that led to the Korean War BW documents, this was apparently a means by which he attacked Khrushchev, as was the renunciation of the Doctors Plot.

One of the most important documents in the collection—[dated May 2, 1953, a Resolution of the Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers](#), addressed to Mao, brusquely states:

The Soviet government and the Central Committee of the CPSU were misled. The spread in the press of information about the use by the Americans of bacteriological weapons in Korea was based on false information. The accusations against the Americans were fictitious...

Soviet workers responsible for participation in the fabrication of the so-called “proof” of the use of bacteriological weapons will receive severe punishment.<sup>21</sup>

The other documents detailed exactly how Soviet military personnel serving with the Soviet military mission in North Korea assisted in that fabrication of “evidence.” One file, for example, is a telegram from the Soviet ambassador in Beijing to Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov

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<sup>21</sup> “Resolution of the Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers about Letters to the Ambassador of the USSR in the PRC, V.V. Kuznetsov and to the Charge d’Affaires for the USSR in the DPRK, S.P. Suzdalev,” May 2, 1953, Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, translated by Kathryn Weathersby, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112030>.

reporting on his conversations with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai on May 12, 1953, during which Mao (falsely) blamed the allegations on reports from Chinese frontline commanders in North Korea.<sup>22</sup> One [telegram from Lt. General Razuvayev](#), the Soviet ambassador to the DPRK and Chief Soviet Military Advisor to the KPA, reported on his discussions held with Pak Jang-ok (Pak Chang-ok), Secretary of the DPRK Central Committee, who:

expressed great surprise at the actions and positions of V.N. Razuvayev...We were convinced that everything was known in Moscow. We thought that setting off this campaign would give great assistance to the cause of the struggle against American imperialism. In his turn, Pak Chang-ok did not exclude the possibility that the bombs and containers were thrown from Chinese planes, and [that] there were no infections.<sup>23</sup>

These Soviet Central Committee documents provided incontrovertible evidence that the Korean War BW allegations made against the United States were contrived and fraudulent.

### **A Chinese Admission from Wu Zhili**

Despite America's public denials, the United States' inability in 1952 to deliver the claimed bacteriological agents, and the Soviet documentation made available in 1998, Chinese and North Korean official sources still maintain the old allegations and repeat them in books and statements and through the publications of proxy groups.<sup>24</sup> However there is now, finally, an [enormously significant posthumous publication from a former senior Chinese military officer](#) who was critically involved in the Korean War BW allegations: Wu Zhili, Director of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army Health Division during the Korean War. He wrote a brief memoir in September 1997, and it was found among his papers after he died in 2008. It was published in a Chinese journal only in November 2013, and an English language translation, arranged by this author, first became available in April 2015.<sup>25</sup> Wu Zhili's own testimonial contains a second one as well, by Huang Kecheng, Chief of Staff of the Chinese Army during the

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<sup>22</sup> "Telegram to V.M. Molotov from Beijing from the USSR Ambassador to the PRC, V.V. Kuznetsov," May 11, 1953, Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, translated by Kathryn Weathersby, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112031>.

<sup>23</sup> "Telegram from the USSR Charge d'Affaires in the DPRK, S.P. Suzdalev to V.M. Molotov," June 1, 1953, Archive of the President of the Russian Federation, translated by Kathryn Weathersby, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112032>.

<sup>24</sup> Since the 1998 publication of the Soviet Central Committee documents, there have been at least eight North Korean or proxy publications and at least eight Chinese or proxy publications that maintain the validity of the old Korean War charges of biological weapon use by the US during the war.

<sup>25</sup> Wu Zhili, "1952nian de xijun zhan shi yi chang xujing" ("The Bacteriological War of 1952 is a False Alarm") *Yanhuang Chunqiu* no. 11 (2013): 36-39, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123080>.

Korean War and later secretary general of the Central Military Commission. Wu Zhili's testimonial overturns everything previously presented in Chinese sources (and even what has been published up to the present day). His opening lines are:

It has already been 44 years [in 1997] since the armistice of the Korean War, but as for the worldwide sensation of 1952: how indisputable is the bacteriological war of the American imperialists?

The case is one of false alarm.

Wu begins his narrative on January 29, 1952. There is no mention of the North Korean and Chinese allegations of 1951. On that day in 1952, a telegram arrived from one of the Chinese divisions in North Korea reporting that some 80 insects, ticks, and fleas had been found in the snow among the Chinese trenches. A telegram reporting the same information was sent later that day to CPV Commander Peng Dehuai, to the Party Central Committee, and to "every unit to alert them and require timely reports of any similar situations." However, Wu's laboratory was unable to isolate any pathogenic bacteria on these insects and ticks. In addition, Wu and his assistants could "not discover people who had died suddenly or suspiciously fallen ill." Wu also considered the facts that severe winter was not the time to carry out BW; that US military trenches were "not more than ten meters away" from Chinese and North Korean ones;" that Korea "already had an epidemic of lice-borne contagious diseases;" and that every North Korean house contained fleas. He came to the conclusion that one could not prove that the US was carrying out BW. One of his colleagues agreed, saying "I think it is a *false alarm*." Paradoxically, at that same moment, a telegram arrived from the CCP Central Committee stating that "the enemy had not carried out biological warfare, but that we could still take advantage of this to reinforce health work."

Wu reported his views to one of the deputy commanders of the Chinese forces. He was advised to inform Peng Dehuai. He dispatched a telegram to Peng, who then requested him to come to headquarters. Wu's North Korean counterpart, the Chief of the Korean People's Army Disease Prevention Bureau, had also been unable to produce evidence of BW, and he accompanied Wu to Peng's headquarters. Wu briefed Peng and twelve members of his staff. Peng's response was shocking, and an ostensible death sentence: "Our Health Director is an American imperialist operative and speaks on behalf of the enemy." Wu's North Korean colleague told him afterwards that he thought Wu would be beheaded. However, after an

intermission to consult with his staff, Peng returned to say that Wu should keep his job, and that one of Peng's deputy commanders would be his superior officer. "Do a proper job. Set up a general disease prevention office and be the Deputy Director." The same night Wu received a telephone call from the Soviet Chief of Staff at Peng's headquarters with a question: "Stalin has asked whether bacteriological warfare is really occurring." Wu replied "Go ask Commander Peng." It is not clear if Stalin's phone call was before or after Mao's cable to Stalin on February, 21, but it would appear to have been before that date.

The remaining portions of Wu's memoir are divided amongst explanations of his work to protect the health of the Chinese military forces in North Korea and the tasks carried out to make it appear that the US was using biological weapons. One of those tasks involved hosting the three visiting Commissions: China's own, the Jurists, and Needham's ISC. Regarding the ISC, Wu remarked that "although they believed that the American imperialists conducted biological warfare, we could not produce proof of the issue. Soviet Academician Zhukov was entrusted [with the task] by Stalin." That is, Zhukov-Verezhnikov would produce the "proof" that Wu's field investigations could not provide. The ISC returned to Beijing and presented their report to Mao. According to Wu, Mao replied, "I see that the American imperialists are experimentally engaged in bacteriological warfare."<sup>26</sup> Wu euphemistically remarks of the government's own Chinese Commission that "of course it fully cooperated" with the fraud. The Chinese Commission was co-headed by Li Dequan, the First Minister of Health of the PRC in 1949 and the President of the Chinese Red Cross in 1950. Perhaps what Stalin was really asking in his phone call was whether the Americans were doing anything *in addition to* what Soviet personnel in North Korea were doing to assist the fraud.

In contrast to all three Commission reports, Wu's own staff could find no bacteria and no sick people due to BW in all of 1952. Only Salmonella-type organisms were discovered; no cholera, no plague. One Chinese army lieutenant refused to lie to the ISC about where he had found fleas, telling Wu: "Chairman Mao taught him not to lie. He was unable to move. What to do? Only to persuade him to submit to the current needs of the struggle against the enemy...As

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<sup>26</sup> The 1988 book by Halliday and Cumings provides a somewhat different description of Mao's remark to the ISC members, reporting that Mao said "Don't make too much of all this. They've tried using biochemical warfare, but it hasn't been too successful. What are all these uninfected insects they are dropping?" The authors presumably obtained their version of Mao's comment from one of the ISC members, most likely the Italian member, Franco Graziosi. It should probably be considered less reliable. In addition, if Mao had really said "uninfected insects, the ISC should simply have ended its work directly. See Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, *Korea: The Unknown War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 185.

for the plague, that was easy, we [could] cause it to appear.” However, it required a trip of five days in order for one of Wu’s assistants to bring back two tubes of plague cultures from Shenyang in Northeast China. In regard to the “confessions” by US airmen that they had dropped BW, a key part of Chinese propaganda and of the ISC report, as well as the argumentation used by subsequent defenders of the Chinese allegations. Wu commented sarcastically: “I really admire the persuasion work of our personnel in the prisoner-of-war camps.”

Wu reported personally to Zhou Enlai three times in Beijing. He reports that when the cable from the Soviet Central Committee arrived in May 1953, Premier Zhou immediately sought out Chief of Staff Huang Kecheng and Deputy Commander Hong Zuezhi and asked, “Have you been up to tricks?” Hong answered “Yes, otherwise we wouldn’t have had anything to report.” Zhou’s question is puzzling, or duplicitous: he must have known that since February 1952. Wu erroneously describes the Soviet cable as using his own phrase “false alarm,” whereas it refers to “false” and “fictitious” information. Wu then claimed that “Premier Zhou promptly ordered a retraction. Afterwards China did not raise the matter again.” That, however, is not true. An official history of the Korean War written by Chinese military historians, published by the Military Science Press in Beijing in 1988, continues to repeat the Chinese Korean War BW allegations.<sup>27</sup> So do two significant papers published in 2008 and 2010 (discussed below), as well as a Chinese museum exhibit in Harbin. The author of this Working Paper has no knowledge of any public Chinese “retraction” to this date.

Wu then describes a real retraction, by Huang Kecheng, former PLA Chief of Staff during the Korean War, but made only to Wu in private:

When he was sick, Huang Kecheng asked me to pass his opinion to the comrades at the Academy of Military Sciences who were editing an encyclopedia: ‘The American imperialists did not engage in bacteriological warfare in Korea. Right now the two countries’ relationship is not bad, and it would be inappropriate to keep talking about this issue.’ When they heard this, they sent someone to ask if there had been bacteriological warfare after all. I only said that we do not have enough evidence. This has been my silent regret for decades. There has been no other.

Huang died on December 28, 1986, and so his request to Wu presumably was made some time in the middle or late 1986. Unfortunately, when the Chinese military historians came to talk to Wu,

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<sup>27</sup> Shen Zonhhong et al, eds., *Zhongguo renmin zhiyuanjun kang Mei yuan Chao zhan shi* (The History of the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea) (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, 1988).

he lost his nerve and provided an ambiguous reply. Although suggestive, it was certainly not one that clearly and explicitly reinforced Huang's recantation, which would have been a clear and simple statement that there was no US BW during the Korean War against China or Chinese military forces. Both the aforementioned Chinese military histories were published after Wu's interaction with the military historians who came to see him. Whether the military historians would have been allowed by higher Chinese political and military authorities to write anything differently, we will never know. When Wu apologized to Huang, Huang replied, "You don't need to feel this way; this was political struggle! Furthermore you had expressed your views on bacteriological warfare from the beginning. It was not an easy situation, and you were given responsibility too late." Nevertheless, Wu regretted his failure for the rest of his life.

Wu wrote his memoir eleven years after his exchange with Huang, apparently only in the last years of his own life, and he never sought to publish it while still alive. Wu ends his memoir on a note of belated remorse: "I think that there will be a day in history to speak clearly about this incident. Now that I am an 83-year-old man who knows the facts and is no longer on duty, it is fitting to speak out; the bacteriological war of 1952 was a false alarm." However although Wu put pen to paper, which was brave and highly commendable, he still hesitated to truly "speak out." And if there was any "false alarm" at all, it can only have lasted for the week or so between January 29 and Wu's report to Peng Dehuai. From that point on, it was active fraud and disinformation. Although Huang Kecheng did not leave the detailed record that Wu did, his wording of "the bottom line" was simpler and more straightforward: there had been no US BW during the Korean War.

### **New or Old Interpretation? Reading Qu Aiguo**

Two additional papers of importance were published in China in 2008 and 2010. The author of both papers, Qu Aiguo, was at the time of writing a Senior Colonel affiliated with the PLA Academy of Military Science History. Although the conclusions of these papers are quite different from Wu's, they mesh with his memoir and provide some additional surprising information.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Qu Aiguo, "Shi Mei jun de zuixing haishi Zhong Chao fangmian de 'huangyan': Guanyu kang Mei yuan Chao zhanzheng fan xijun zhan douzheng de lishi kaocha" ("Is it the US Military's Crimes or the 'Lies' of the China-North Korea Side?: A Historical Investigation of the Anti-Germ Warfare Struggle during the Korean War"), *Junshi lishi* no. 2 (2008: 1-8, as well as the revised version of this essay published in *Wenshi cankao* no. 12 (2010): 74-81.

Qu begins both papers by referring specifically to the papers by Leitenberg and Weathersby which were published in the *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* in 1998 and provides an extremely brief rendering of their contents. To this author's knowledge, this is the first time such information has appeared in the open in China.<sup>29</sup>

Qu goes on to state that "some scholars in China made a new interpretation" of the entire Korean War BW allegations and that "they believe that the decision of the CCP Central Committee is based on the false judgment from the Volunteer Army." They further believe that "The anti-germ war is a kind of 'political propaganda' launched by China, North Korea, and the Soviet Union." Qu never identifies who these "scholars in China," are, and whether he is referring to Wu Zhili or others remains unknown. He then states that he disagrees with this "new interpretation."

Qu also mentions that "the Soviet Union sent nine senior experts" to aid China in regard to the purported US BW. This has never before been mentioned by any source, and presumably he is not conflating the "nine senior experts" with the members of the Needham-led ISC. It is conceivable that these nine Soviet experts were the individuals that produced the fabricated "evidence" that Zhukov-Verzhnikov provided to the ISC, unless the experts on the Chinese Commission and/or Wu Zhili's staff (or some combination of the two) did not themselves do it. This detail still remains unclarified. Qu then goes on to narrate the messages exchanged within China by Marshall Nie Rongzhen and others, information that has been available at least in part since the 1990's and was included in the 1998 CWIHP publication.

Qu then actually paraphrases three of the Soviet Central Committee documents, amazingly even the one accusing Mao of misleading the USSR. He does not include Mao's reply to the Soviet ambassador, but by and large he does not alter the contents of the Soviet documents that he selected to discuss. This is apparently the first publication in China that has made

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<sup>29</sup> In 2002, Zou Yunhua, then a "senior research fellow on arms control at the General Armaments Department of China" wrote a chapter titled "China: Balancing Disarmament and Development" in the book Susan Wright, ed., *Biological Warfare and Disarmament, New Problems/New Perspectives* (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2002).

Zou felt obliged to include a section in her paper titled "U.S. Biological Warfare against China and North Korea" and stated that it drew on "several restricted (*neibu*) publications, in particular a history written by members of the Chinese Academy of Military Science and published in 1988." According to Zou, the authors of this *neibu* study "had access to the China State Central Archives and the Archives of the Peoples Liberation Army." Zou not only repeated all the by then discredited BW allegations against the US, but also in one of her endnotes tucked away a reference to a critique of the "Milton Leitenberg" paper published in the *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, but could not manage to reference that paper directly or explain what it contained. The editor of the book permitted that to stand.

reference to those documents (a third “first”), though Qu then presents three arguments against the substantive content of the cables (actually five, but he combines several of them):

-- *They are not original copies*; which is correct. The 1998 CWIHP publication explains how they came to be copied.<sup>30</sup>

-- *They were copied by a Japanese journalist*; that is not correct. They were copied by a Russian researcher with access to the Soviet Presidential Archive, where the documents were located.<sup>31</sup>

-- *The Russian government has never validated or published them*. That was correct when Qu wrote his papers, but it was no longer correct by the end of 2010. The full text of Mao’s cable to Stalin of February 21, 1952 and Stalin’s reply of February 23, as well as three additional messages from Zhou Enlai to Stalin were published by the Russian historical archive RGASPI in 2010, the very year of Qu’s second publication. They are discussed below. But it is no great surprise that the documents had previously been unpublished or unvalidated by the Soviet or Russian governments. Czarist-era documents dating from World War I have still never been declassified and released in Russia. However, the documents which were published in the 1998 issue of the CWIHP *Bulletin* were independently and privately validated in 1990 by three former Soviet government officials still residing in Russia at that time, including one of the individuals involved in one of the cables.

-- *The cables were part of a political struggle, making them untrustworthy*. That is correct, they were part of the political struggle between Beria and Khrushchev, but that does not invalidate them in any way. If someone in China, officially or surreptitiously, were to now release documents concerning the Lushan CCP conference in 1959, that would not make the documents unreliable because they concerned an internal struggle in the senior Chinese leadership between Mao and his closest associates.

-- *The Chinese government has never confirmed the documents and they are not available in Chinese archives*. Of course they have never been confirmed, but they unquestionably must exist in Chinese Central Committee archives. If a Russian historical archive can publish cables in full from Mao and Zhou Enlai to Stalin concerning the Korean War BW allegations, they certainly exist in some Chinese archive, just as the messages to and from Nie Rongzhen do.

Qu then makes two statements:

1. For the above reasons one cannot and should not trust the contents of the copied documents.

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<sup>30</sup> [Leitenberg, “New Russian Evidence on the Korean War Biological Warfare Allegations.”](#)

<sup>31</sup> About two-thirds of the documents, some in abbreviated form, were published in the Japanese newspaper *Sankei Shimbun*.



2. Therefore “*We cannot deny that that the Americans used BW.*” The double negative is an enormous change from all previous Chinese phrasing. Heretofore the wording in all Chinese publications without exception has been “The US used BW against China and North Korea.” Now it was an obviously convoluted phrasing, “We cannot deny that they used BW.”

What is additionally interesting is that all this information is deleted in the 2010 version of Qu’s paper, just two years after the initial paper in 2008. Since the author is a military officer and is/was a member of a PLA institute of Military History, it must be assumed that his 2008 paper would have been vetted and approved for publication by his superiors at the institute, up to and including the Institute’s Director, and presumably also a party official at the Institute.

### **New Soviet Documentation**

As noted above, in 2010 the Russian historical archive RGASPI published six documents from Mao, Stalin and Zhou Enlai.<sup>32</sup> The [long message from Mao to “Comrade Filippov,”](#) Stalin’s code-name in correspondence between Mao and Stalin, is printed in full. It demonstrates that we had unfortunately only been able to obtain a small portion of that particular message in 1998. The full text makes clear that the information that Mao supplied to Stalin was full of fabrications. These included the claim that the US had also used “gases” (in other words, *chemical weapons*), that the US had used artillery to distribute biological weapons (a very implausible suggestion for multiple reasons, at least one of which is that the US had no artillery munition to distribute BW at the time of the Korean War), and that the US was using North Korean POWS for BW experiments. The last charge, again presumably modeled on Japanese behavior during World War II in China, became an important element of Chinese propaganda in the subsequent months.<sup>33</sup> [Stalin’s reply](#) was brief:

23 February 1952

To Comrade Mao Zedong

Your telegram of 21 February has been received.

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<sup>32</sup> Китайская Народная Республика в 1950-е годы : сборник документов в двух томах (Памятники исторической мысли, 2010), 132-152 passim.

<sup>33</sup> It is important to note that there is nearly a full month between the beginning of Wu Zhili’s narrative on January 29 and Mao’s message to Stalin on February 21. Other communications that Wu would not have been privy to—and, presuming they do exist—may have been exchanged on the subject between Soviet and Chinese officials at various levels, and not have been published by the Russian archive.

In response to the criminal actions of the American imperialists, who have embarked on bacteriological warfare in Korea, it is essential for the anti-imperialist camp to take serious countermeasures.

We agree with the plan of measures you have proposed for both the [North] Korean and the Chinese governments, as well as for the World Council for the Supporters of Peace.

The Soviet Government, for its part, will actively support these measures.

With greetings,  
FILIPPOV [Stalin]<sup>34</sup>

Two messages then follow from Zhou Enlai to Stalin on [March 7](#) and [March 10](#) stipulating what kinds of assistance China needed to cope with the medical situation of its troops in the field. This included 600 tons of DDT, various vaccines (the numbers of million doses for each required), and expert medical and epidemiological personnel and field laboratory equipment. Stalin's reply on March 14 specified exactly what the USSR would send to China.<sup>35</sup> The quantities were in every instance less than Zhou had requested (for example, the USSR would send only 100 tons of DDT). The last of the documents published by RGASPI, a [message from Mao to Stalin dated June 24, 1952](#), reads:

24 June 1952

Comrade Filippov!

Upon arriving in Beijing [with] the delegation of the International Committee to Investigate the Facts of Bacteriological Warfare, created by the World Peace Council, the Soviet delegate Zhukov, having become familiar with the exhibits and materials organized here by us, proposed to invite the corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Sciences Petrichev, the parasitologist Teplov, the specialist on viral diseases Levkovich, and a specialist on entomology to arrive specially in Beijing by air to provide assistance to us in preparing the report of the International Committee...

I hope that these four specialists will be sent to Beijing as soon as possible...

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<sup>34</sup> RGASPI, F. 558, Op. 11, D. 342, L. 92, translated by Mark Kramer, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123148>.

<sup>35</sup> Stalin's message also indicates that there had been an additional cable from Zhou, on March 8.

Mao Zedong<sup>36</sup>

These documents prove that correspondences between Stalin, Mao and Zhou do exist, contradicting decades of denials by Chinese military historians that there were no such documents. Unless they were all deliberately destroyed by the Chinese government, they must exist in Chinese archives that hold Mao and Zhou's Korean War correspondence with Stalin.

In addition to the RGASPI records, two documents obtained from RGANI in 2016, by authenticating three of the files which were published in *Bulletin* 11, provide further evidence that China's allegations were in fact fraudulent.<sup>37</sup> One of them is a standard cover sheet listing an issue considered by the CPSU Presidium with a notation on the back indicating how the issue got placed on the Presidium's agenda. This particular sheet is for the second issue considered by the CPSU Presidium at its session on April 24, 1953.<sup>38</sup> The cover sheet verifies that the CPSU Presidium discussed the allegations against the United States. The second record lists all of the issues (30 in total) considered by the CPSU Presidium at its six sessions from March 13 through April 24, 1953.<sup>39</sup> According to the register, two of issues considered at the session on April 24 concerned the biological warfare allegations. The listing of the second issue provides further corroboration that Protocol No. 6 of the Meeting of the Presidium of the CC CPSU addressed the MVD Note on the Results of the Investigations into the Reports of Former Advisers to the Ministry of State Security and DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, comrades Glukhov and Smirno.

## Conclusion

What remains to be ascertained about the history of the Korean War BW allegations? In 1998, given what was known about the relationship between Mao, Stalin, and Kim Il Sung and

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<sup>36</sup> RGASPI, F. 558, Op. 11, D. 343, Ll. 51-52, translated by Mark Kramer, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123152>.

<sup>37</sup> See [Weathersby, "Deceiving the Deceivers," 182-183](#). The three files are, respectively, "Memorandum from L.P. Beria to G.M. Malenkov and to the Presidium of the CC CPSU," April 21, 1953, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112027>; "Memorandum from V.M. Molotov to Members of the Presidium of the CC CPSU," April 21, 1953, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112028>; and "Protocol No 6 of the Meeting of the Presidium of the CC CPSU about the MVD Note on the Results of the Investigations into the Reports of Former Advisers to the Ministry of State Security and DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cdes. Glukhov and Smirnov," April 24, 1953, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112035>.

<sup>38</sup> RGANI, F. 3, Op. 8, D. 24, Ll. 2, 2ob, translated by Mark Kramer, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123246>.

<sup>39</sup> RGANI, F. 3, Op. 8, D. 24, Ll. 107-108, translated by Mark Kramer, accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123245>.

the Central Committees of the USSR and China, it seemed inconceivable for most scholars to imagine that it was not the USSR that had been the instigator and central actor in formulating the Korean War BW allegations. Now that conception at least has to be reconsidered. The critical question is: who decided on what day that Chinese and Soviet military personnel assisting them would place packets of various insects in the snow to be found? Mao? The Chinese Generals? Zhou Enlai? Or Stalin? It certainly was not Wu Zhili. The medical and entomological specialists that were members of the Chinese Commission had not yet been recruited and had not yet been sent to the combat zone. And who authorized the astonishing telegram that Wu received in the very first days after January 29, 1952 from the Central Committee saying that “the enemy had not carried out biological warfare, but that we could still take advantage of this to reinforce health work”?

A Chinese historian provides the following chronology for several critical events between February 19 and February 22, 1952:

February 19, the Chinese General Staff sends its report of finding insects to Mao and Mao designates Zhou Enlai to take responsibility for the subject. In what would appear to be a remarkably intense and efficient staff effort, Zhou presents Mao with a six-point plan of what to do on the very same evening, point 6 of which was “Send a report of the event by telegram to the Soviet Union, asking for its instant assistance.”

February 21: Mao sends a telegram to Peng Dehuai, commander of the Chinese military forces in North Korea, the same day that he sends his message to the North Korean government. Mao’s telegram states that China “...must denounce in front of the people in the world and mobilize international opinion to oppose.”

February 22: The North Korean Foreign Minister makes his public statement.<sup>40</sup>

Unfortunately the chronology only begins a full 21 days after January 29, which is an ocean of time in which to decide and organize a conspiracy as a part of the war effort against the US. In fact it may have been planned well before January 29, 1952, given the Chinese and North Korean allegations in the first half of 1951. There was lots of time for someone to think of “a better way” to carry out a campaign of BW allegations against the US a second time. In fact, who thought of the 1951 campaign of BW allegations? Should

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<sup>40</sup> [Shiwei Chen, “History of Three Mobilizations: A Reexamination of the Chinese Biological Warfare Allegations against the United States in the Korean War.” \*The Journal of American-East Asian Relations\* 16, no. 3 \(Fall 2009\): 216-217. doi: 10.1163/187656109793645652.](#)

one assume on the basis of the preceding that it may again have been a Chinese initiative? Or did Soviet disinformation operatives conceive of it? Either way, there must again be high-level correspondence between the three parties concerning the early 1951 BW allegations against the US. Finally, *what* was it that Mao wanted to be “denounced” in his message of February 21, and what was to be “opposed,” was left unnamed. On February 21, we know that Mao had already sent [his first long cable to Stalin](#).

Are there other communications between Beijing and Moscow, and/or between the CCP and the PLA General Staff during these key days that have still not been disclosed? Is it possible that communications and planning had been taking place for weeks before at lower levels, between Soviet and Chinese intelligence agencies, elaborating the plans of a fabricated BW allegations campaign? These are all critical questions to which the answers are still unknown. Nevertheless, on the basis of both new and old sources, the main story is indisputably clear: the Korean War BW allegations against the US, an accusation of the use of a weapon of mass destruction, were false, a grand piece of political theater.

**Milton Leitenberg** was trained as a scientist and began work in the field of arms control in 1966. In 1968, he was the first American recruited to work at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). He was subsequently affiliated with the Swedish Institute of International Affairs and the Center for International Studies Peace Program at Cornell University. He has been at the School of Public Affairs, University of Maryland since 1989, as Senior Research Scholar for the past 20 years.. His research is widely published; in the years since 1966 he has authored or edited a dozen books or book length studies, and published 180 journal papers, monographs, and book chapters. Among these are half of *Tactical Nuclear Weapons, European Perspectives*, SIPRI (Taylor and Francis, 1978); *Great Power Intervention in the Middle East* (edited, Pergamon Press, 1979); *The Structure of Defense Industry: An International Survey* (edited, Croom Helm, 1983); and *The Wars in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, 1945 - 1982: A Bibliographic Guide* (ABC-Clio, 1984), a book of his selected studies on arms control, *Rusting und Sicherheitspolitik* (Nomos Verlag, 1986), and *Soviet Submarine Operations in Swedish Waters 1980-1986* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1987).

Leitenberg's research work is concentrated in three disparate areas of study: biological weapons; actual wars and conflicts of the past two decades, and the issue of international intervention in these; and the history of the nuclear weapons competition between the U.S. and USSR/Russia. Two major monographs are *Biological Weapons Arms Control* (CISSM, Univ. of Maryland, 1996), and *Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century* (PSP, Cornell University, 2006)

With specific reference to biological weapons, Leitenberg's academic training was in Biology and Chemistry and his first paper dealing with biological weapons was published in 1967. At SIPRI, he was a member of the team that produced the six-volume study, *The Problem of Chemical and Biological Warfare*, published between 1971 and 1973. Since 1992, he has published over thirty papers in the area of biological weapons, as well as three books on the subject: *The Problem of Biological Weapons* (National Defense College, Stockholm, 2004), *Assessing the Biological Weapons and Bioterrorism Threat* (US Army War College, December 2005), and the co-authored volume, *The Soviet Biological Weapons Program: A History* (Harvard University Press, 2013).

## Document Appendix

### Document No. 1

[Source: *Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi and Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi kexueyuan*, eds., *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao (Mao Zedong's Military Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC)*, vol. 2 (Beijing: *Junshi kexue chubanshe; Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe*, 2010), 105. Translated by Charles Kraus. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123086>.]

### An Inscription on Smashing the Enemy's Germ Warfare

(1952)

Get mobilized, stress sanitation, reduce disease, improve health, and smash the enemy's bacteriological warfare.

Mao Zedong

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### Document No. 2

[Source: *Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi and Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi kexueyuan*, eds., *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao (Mao Zedong's Military Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC)*, vol. 2 (Beijing: *Junshi kexue chubanshe; Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe*, 2010), 12. Translated by Charles Kraus. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123081>.]

### [Mao Zedong's] Comments on the Report concerning the Discovery and Handing of the Enemy Air Dropping Insects on the Korean Front<sup>41</sup>

(19 February 1952)

Please have Premier Zhou [Enlai] pay attention to this matter and take care of it.<sup>42</sup>

Mao Zedong  
19 February [1952]

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### Document No. 3

<sup>41</sup> This is Mao Zedong's comments on the report from Nie Rongzhen, Acting Chief of Staff of the People's Revolutionary Military Commission of the Central People's Government, dated 18 February 1952.

<sup>42</sup> Nie Rongzhen's report revealed that it had been discovered that insects were air dropped by the enemy on the Korean front. The report said that the insects air dropped by the enemy on the Korean were mainly spiders, flies, and fleas, and that it covered a large area, having been discovered by frontline troops of the 20th, 26th, 39th, and 42nd armies. [Nie's report continued to state that] in addition to dispatching experts to understand the situation, the insects will be sent back to Beijing for testing in order to determine what kinds of bacteria [they are infected with]. According to the predictions by the experts, [the bacteria] cause cholera, typhoid, plague, and relapsing fever.

[Source: RGASPI, F. 558, Op. 11, D. 342, Ll. 87-89. Translated by Mark Kramer. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123147>.]

21 February 1952

Comrade Filippov!

Over the span of twenty days, starting from 28 January to 17 February 1952, the enemy on 8 occasions used aircraft and art[illery] shells to drop three kinds of insects—black flies, fleas, and lice—on the positions of our troops in the central sector of the Korean Front around the Isen-Heiko-Sakunei Triangle, and also intermittently in the eastern sector of the front.

Currently, these three types of insects are found in the fields, on the highways, in the forests and meadows, and on the banks of streams in the areas mentioned above, with the greatest density in some places reaching 10-15 insects per square meter.

Initial analysis of the insects brought from the front has shown that these insects are bacilli carriers of cholera and the plague.

According to reports received from the front, there have already been cases of people becoming ill and infected with cholera, typhus, typhoid fever, and encephalitis. Two of those who became ill have died.

Currently an investigation is being carried out and the reasons for their deaths are being clarified. Thus far, it has not been conclusively determined whether they were infected by the bacillus carriers mentioned above.

To meet the urgent needs of the front, we have already sent sanitation squads to combat these diseases and by air have delivered to the front some 3.4 million doses of vaccine against plague and cholera, as well as 4,000 pounds of powder to kill insects.

Secret information and press reports obtained by us confirm that the American imperialists in Korea have systematically and deliberately disseminated the bacilli carriers.

Three of the five prominent Japanese war criminals involved in bacteriological warfare who were mentioned in the Soviet Government's note of 1 February 1950 — namely, Ishii Shiro, Wakamatsu Yujiro and Kitano Masajo— are currently in Korea. They took with them all the equipment necessary to conduct bacteriological warfare, including bacilli carriers of cholera and plague as well as gases that act to destroy human blood, and also a variety of equipment to disseminate the bacilli carriers.

Under the auspices of the Americans, Japanese war criminals with knowledge of bacteriological warfare are using Chinese and Korean prisoners of war for testing of bacteriological weapons. These war criminals compiled a report on how bacteriological weapons are being used during military operations in winter conditions.



In March 1951 the chief of department of medical welfare under the General Staff of the UN forces, Brigadier-General [Crawford] Sams arrived at the port Genzan on Bacterio-Assault Landing Craft No. 1091, and then he visited Kyoseyto Island, where bacteriological weapons were tested on Chinese and Korean prisoners of war under his guidance and supervision. This was reported on 18 May 18, 1951 by an American correspondent for the Associated Press agency who visited Kyoseyto Island. On this occasion the enemy's actions aimed at disseminating bacilli carriers were similar to the actions and methods used by war criminals with knowledge of bacteriological warfare Ishii Shiro as well as other Japanese war criminals responsible for bacteriological warfare during the Sino-Japanese War.

On behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs first of [North] Korea and then of China, we intend to appeal to the whole world with a protest against the criminal actions of American imperialism, which has embarked on bacteriological warfare in Korea. The All-China Committee of Partisans for Peace will appeal to the World Council of Partisans for Peace with a proposal to launch a campaign against the criminal actions of the American imperialists, who have embarked on bacteriological warfare in Korea.

We are reporting to you about this, and we hope that the Soviet Government will provide us with effective help, and we also hope to receive your instructions about this matter.

With greetings,

MAO ZEDONG

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**Document No. 4**

*[Source: RGASPI, F. 558, Op. 11, D. 342, L. 92. Translated by Mark Kramer. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123148>.]*

23 February 1952

To Comrade Mao Zedong

Your telegram of 21 February has been received.

In response to the criminal actions of the American imperialists, who have embarked on bacteriological warfare in Korea, it is essential for the anti-imperialist camp to take serious countermeasures.

We agree with the plan of measures you have proposed for both the [North] Korean and the Chinese governments, as well as for the World Council for the Supporters of Peace.

The Soviet Government, for its part, will actively support these measures.

With greetings,

FILIPPOV [Stalin]

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**Document No. 5**

[Source: *Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, ed., Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao (Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Founding of the People's Republic of China), vol. 3 (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 1987), 303. Translated by Charles Kraus. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123090>.]*

**Comments on the Discovery of Insects in the Suburbs of Fushun<sup>43</sup>**  
(4 March 1952)

Premier Zhou [Enlai]

Prepare injection vaccines for all soldiers and civilians in Liaodong and Liaoxi Provinces. Eastern and Central Hebei, as well as Beijing-Tianjin, should also make preparations. Please report if there are enough vaccines for this.

Mao Zedong  
4 March [1952]

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**Document No. 6**

[Source: *RGASPI, F. 558, Op. 11, D. 342, Ll. 97-98. Translated by Mark Kramer. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123149>.]*

7 March 1952

Comrade Filippov [Stalin]!

With the aim of conducting an effective struggle against the insect bacilli-carriers dropped by the enemy on the front and on the territory of Manchuria, and also against different epidemiological diseases that might arise in this connection, we urgently need to increase our anti-epidemiological forces.

We request the Soviet Government to send, at the soonest possible time, the following nine specialists on the struggle against epidemics: the head of the anti-epidemiological group – 1 person; a qualified physician and laboratory researcher on medical and bacteriological microbiology – 1 person; an entomologist and parasitologist – 1 person; bacteriologists

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<sup>43</sup> This comment was written on *Information* no. 15 from Shenyang on 3 March. The *Information* said that at 5 p.m. on the afternoon of 2 March the Northeast Military District Health Department received a report from the Division of Public Security that a division station seventy *li* south of Fushun in Beidagou found a large number of insects. [The division] immediately dispatched inspection personnel to collect specimens. According to the investigations, this area had a large number of flies, spiders, and fleas, as well as an unidentified black bug with a group-like distribution. According to the office responsible for epidemic prevention, US forces in Korea spread bacteria two ways, with bombs and in bags. The flies and spiders found in Fushun were probably spread using the latter method. The Northeast Military District Health Department dispatched a 30 person epidemic prevention team to work with the local government organized epidemic prevention committee in carrying out disinfection and quarantine the abovementioned areas south of Fushun.

specializing in the production of vaccines and serums who know how to make virus vaccines – 2 people; laboratory researchers and standardizers of vaccines and serums – 2 people; a specialist on disinfection and eradication – 1 person; and an epidemiologist – 1 person.

In addition, it is necessary that the above-mentioned specialists, especially the bacteriologists, should arrive with the requisite equipment and bacteriological medications to undertake microbiological, bacteriological, and other forms of research.

I request that you let us know your decision about this matter.

With greetings,

ZHOU ENLAI

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**Document No. 7**

*[Source: RGASPI, F. 558, Op. 11, D. 342, L. 104. Translated by Mark Kramer. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123150>.]*

10 March 1952

In view of the fact that the enemy is continuing to drop a large quantity of insect bacilli-carriers in Manchuria, our recalculations indicate that the quantity of the three types of anti-epidemiological means requested in the note sent on 7 March will be insufficient.

We request that, in addition to the quantity envisaged in the note sent on 7 March, the Soviet Government also supply us with the following additional anti-epidemiological means: pure DDT – 600 tons; live anti-plague vaccine – 20 million doses; and tetanus vaccine (typhoid fever, parasitic typhus A, parasitic typhus B, cholera) – 20 million doses.

We request that the Soviet Government urgently send to Beijing some of the above-mentioned means and the items we requested in the note on 7 March by air transport, if that is possible.

I request that this order be included in the account for goods exchanged.

I request that you let us know about the possibility of this supply.

With greetings,

ZHOU ENLAI

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**Document No. 8**

*[Source: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi and Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi kexueyuan, eds., Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao (Mao Zedong's Military Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC), vol. 2 (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe; Zhongyang wenxian*

*chubanshe*, 2010), 17-18. Translated by Charles Kraus.  
[http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123082.](http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123082)]

**Request that the Soviet Union Dispatch an Air Division to Assist in Intercepting the Spreading of Bacteria by Enemy Planes<sup>44</sup>**

(11 March 1952)

Comrade Filippov:<sup>45</sup>

Aside from spreading bacteria in North Korea, the American imperialist planes have recently invaded the territory of China's northeast, spreading bacteria. Every time enemy aircraft have intruded [into our territory] has been during adverse weather conditions or at night. China's Air Force jet propelled forces still have not had enough time to learn how to do combat flights during adverse weather conditions or at night. Additionally, the two Soviet Air Force divisions commanded by General Belov are shielding transportation in North Korea and assisting Chinese Air Force units in combat. Therefore, they cannot also defend against enemy aircraft intrusions.

If [we] don't give an appropriate blow to the enemy aircraft intruding into Northeast China's airspace and spreading bacteria, then it may become even more rampant. Therefore, [I] request that you dispatch Soviet jet forces (two regiments) capable of fighting in adverse weather conditions and at night and station them in Northeast China. Stationed at the two airports in Liaoyang and Dongfeng (Northeast Shenyang), [the regiments] can take on the task of intercepting enemy aircraft. Please consider and respond [to me] about whether or not this can be done.<sup>46</sup> Salutations!

Mao Zedong  
11 March [1952]

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**Document No. 9**

[Source: RGASPI, F. 558, Op. 11, D. 342, L. 190. Translated by Mark Kramer.  
[http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123151.](http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123151)]

14 March 1952

To Comrade Zhou Enlai

Your telegrams of 7, 8, and 10 March have been received.

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<sup>44</sup> This is a telegram from Mao Zedong to Stalin.

<sup>45</sup> Filippov is Stalin.

<sup>46</sup> On 12 March 1952, Stalin replied to Mao Zedong, agreeing to dispatch one jet division to be stationed in the Shenyang area.

1. In accordance with your request, we are sending to China for a period of three months 9 specialists with the profiles indicated in your telegram of 7 March, along with the necessary medications and equipment. The specialists will arrive in China on 25 March.

2. No later than 10 April, the following vaccines will be sent to China: against plague – 5 million doses; against cholera – 3.8 million doses; and against typhoid fever and parasitic typhus A and B – 8.5 million doses. The first consignment of anti-cholera vaccines in the quantity of 1 million doses will be sent to Beijing by plane on 25 March. Moreover, by 1 June the following additional vaccines will be supplied: against plague – 5 million doses; against cholera – 3.2 million doses; and against typhoid fever and parasitic typhus A and B – 4 million doses.

The tetanus vaccine specified in your telegram is not produced in the Soviet Union. In place of it, vaccine medications manufactured in the Soviet Union will be sent.

By 10 April there will also be supplied 100 tons of pure DDT and by 1 May an additional 100 tons of DDT.

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**Document No. 10**

*[Source: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi and Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi kexueyuan, eds., Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao (Mao Zedong's Military Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC), vol. 2 (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe; Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2010), 19. Translated by Charles Kraus. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123083>.]*

**On Copying the Organizational Methods for Preventing Epidemics of the Chinese People's Volunteers<sup>47</sup>**

(16 March 1952)

After Premier Zhou [Enlai] has read this, send to Nie [Rongzhen] and Su [Yu]:<sup>48</sup>

The Northeast Military District, North China Military District, East China Military District, and the South China Military District should copy the organizational methods for preventing epidemics of the Chinese People's Volunteers and carry out hygiene work.

Mao Zedong  
16 March [1952]

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**Document No. 11**

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<sup>47</sup> This is a comment on materials about the epidemic prevention work of the Chinese People's Volunteers (reported by the Xinhua branch of the Chinese People's Volunteers to the Xinhua Head Office) written by Mao Zedong and sent to Zhou Enlai.

<sup>48</sup> Nie Rongzhen, Acting Chief of Staff of the People's Revolutionary Military Commission of the Central People's Government; Su Yu, Deputy Chief of Staff of the People's Revolutionary Military Commission of the Central People's Government.

[Source: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi and Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi kexueyuan, eds., *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao (Mao Zedong's Military Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC)*, vol. 2 (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe; Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2010), 32. Translated by Charles Kraus.  
[http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123084.](http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123084)]

### **Comments on a Report about the Situation of Anti-Germ Warfare Prevention Work<sup>49</sup>**

(14 May 1952)

This document is very good.<sup>50</sup> Circulate across all areas.

Mao Zedong  
14 May [1952]

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### **Document No. 12**

[Source: RGASPI, F. 558, Op. 11, D. 343, Ll. 51-52. Translated by Mark Kramer. Accessible at  
[http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123152.](http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123152)]

24 June 1952

Comrade Filippov [Stalin]!

Upon arriving in Beijing [with] the delegation of the International Committee to Investigate the Facts of Bacteriological Warfare, created by the World Peace Council, the Soviet delegate Zhukov, having become familiar with the exhibits and materials organized here by us, proposed to invite the corresponding member of the USSR Academy of Sciences Petrichev, the parasitologist Teplov, the specialist on viral diseases Levkovich, and a specialist on entomology to arrive specially in Beijing by air to provide assistance to us in preparing the report of the International Committee to Investigate the Facts of Bacteriological Warfare.

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<sup>49</sup> This is Mao Zedong's comments on a report dated 12 May 1952, by Chairman Zhou Enlai and Office Chairman He Cheng of the Central Committee's Epidemic Prevention Committee.

<sup>50</sup> In reference to Zhou Enlai and He Cheng's report (which forwarded a report by He Cheng). [He Cheng's] report said that, first, the main problem in North Korea is still plague, while in the Northeast [China] the main problem is encephalitis. Although plague and encephalitis continue to appear, they are not that common and the epidemic prevention work is succeeding. [The report continued that] because the hot season has not arrived yet and the enemy is still expanding the area in which it is dropping insects, [we] cannot be too optimistic or careless, as it is still possible that infectious diseases will become prevalent. Second, [the report said that] the mass-style hygiene and epidemic prevention campaign is still developing, with the main tasks of catching rats, wiping out pests, and improving environmental sanitation. Third, [the report said that] key research work [undertaken] during the month of April was the encephalitis problem in the northeast; the key propaganda work [undertaken] was preparing the exhibit on the bacteriological warfare crimes of the American imperialists. Fourth, [the report stated that] in April, a meeting of the major administrative areas and the Chairman of the [Chinese People's] Volunteer Army Epidemic Prevention Committee Office was convened, with decisions made on the following issues: continuing this year's epidemic prevention work into the fall; determining the targets of epidemic prevention in different areas; strengthening research on epidemic prevention; completing the exhibition layout work; establishing epidemic prevention teams and new hospital beds for quarantining; establishing sanitation and epidemic prevention stations and disinfecting stations.

I hope that these four specialists will be sent to Beijing as soon as possible. As soon as the work is completed, they will be returned to the USSR.

I request that you consider the possibility of their trip and that you let us know your decision.

MAO ZEDONG

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### Document No. 13

[Source: *Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi and Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi kexueyuan*, eds., *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao (Mao Zedong's Military Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC)*, vol. 2 (Beijing: *Junshi kexue chubanshe; Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe*, 2010), 46. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123085>.]

### Comments on the Sanitation Services of the Volunteer Army<sup>51</sup>

(30 July 1952)

Comrade [Peng] Dehuai:

This report is very good.<sup>52</sup> Please work with various relevant comrades to determine if the seven recommendations at the end are possible.<sup>53</sup>

Mao Zedong  
30 July [1952]

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### Document No. 14

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<sup>51</sup> This is Mao Zedong's comments written for Vice Chairman of the People's Revolutionary Military Commission, Peng Dehuai, on a report dated 28 July 1952 from the General Logistics Department, People's Revolutionary Military Commission, Central People's Government.

<sup>52</sup> A reference to a report on the work situation of a [team] dispatched to North Korea to survey first aid field operations, sanitation and epidemic prevention, and combatting germ warfare, from the from the General Logistics Department, People's Revolutionary Military Commission, Central People's Government. The report outlined the achievements of, as well as the problems still currently existing, the Logistics Department of the [Chinese People's] Volunteer Army in rescuing, treating, and transferring sick and wounded since entering Korea. [It also] put forth proposals to resolve problems.

<sup>53</sup> The seven proposals put forth by the General Logistics Department, People's Revolutionary Military Commission, Central People's Government, in the report were: (1) increasing the number of hygiene workers at the company level; (2) establishing epidemic prevention teams at the army, division, and regiment levels; (3) equipping hospitals and medical detachments with ambulances; (4) expanding the authorized strength of the Volunteer Army's Health Department; (5) have health authorities at the division-level and below directly report to leadership at the same level of the military and government; (6) the number of [soldiers] rest homes at the division-level should be equal to [number] of army medical clinics (detachments); (7) dispatch poison gas experts and chemists to the front to do prevention and control work.

[Source: RGANI, F. 3, Op. 8, D. 24, Ll. 2, 2ob. Translated by Mark Kramer. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123246>.]

P6/II  
Bulganin  
25.IV.53

To Cdes. Beria, Molotov, Khrushchey,

6

24 April 1953

II. Note of the USSR MVD concerning a Review of the Report from the Former [Soviet] Advisers Assigned to the DPRK Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Internal Affairs, Cdes. Glukhov and Smirnov.

Decision – Special Dossier

[Translator's note: On the back of the document is the handwritten notation.]

File: 46. Korea – On the Use by  
the Americans of Biological Weaponry

46% -- USSR Embassy in the DPRK  
46.34% -- Mil. Advisers  
7% -- CC Staff

Note No. 25B of Cde. Beria dated 11 IV 53  
Note No. 37B of Cde. Beria dated 21 IV 53  
Note No. 59ss of Cde. Molotov dated 21 IV 53  
Note No. 59M of Cde. Molotov dated 19 IV 53

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**Document No. 15**

[Source: RGANI, F. 3, Op. 8, D. 24, Ll. 107-108. Translated by Mark Kramer. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123245>.]

Top Secret

Memorandum

about Sessions of the CPSU CC Presidium  
from 13 March to 24 April 1953



Date of the Session	Issues Considered
[...]	
[...]	
24 April 1953 (Prot. No. 6)	1. On the publication in the press of a lead article "Regarding the Speech of President Eisenhower"
	2. Note of the USSR MVD concerning a Review of the Report from the Former [Soviet] Advisers Assigned to the DPRK Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Internal Affairs, Cdes. Glukhov and Smirnov.

[...]

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**Document No. 16**

[Source: Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi and Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun junshi kexueyuan, eds., *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao (Mao Zedong's Military Manuscripts since the Founding of the PRC)*, vol. 2 (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe; Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2010), 185. Translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123087>.]

**Plans to Publicize the Confessions of Americans Prisoners of War on Germ Warfare<sup>54</sup>**

(8 November 1953)

Premier Kim [Il Sung],

Recently the United States is causing waves within the United Nations General Assembly by raising the issue of germ warfare; they have falsely accused us of using torture to force prisoners of war to make false statements about germ warfare. We plan to publicize the statements provided by 19 American prisoners of war [who were] responsible for germ warfare. Prior to publicizing [their statements], we plan to issue a communiqué regarding these 19 statements under the name of the Korean People's Army Political Department and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army Political Department. On 9 November [1953], we will be sending communiqués, statements, audio recordings, and pictures of the prisoners to Pyongyang by air. We plan to broadcast the communiqué on 10 November at 11:00AM, Beijing time; the communiqué will appear in the papers on 11 November. From 11 November on, we will consecutively broadcast the oral statements from the prisoners and [these statements] will appear in the papers the day after their broadcasts. We plan to ask Pyongyang to publicize the aforementioned communiqué and statements according to this schedule. Please telegraph your views on each of these points.

Mao Zedong

<sup>54</sup> This is a telegram given to Kim Il Sung, Premier of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, by Mao Zedong.

8 November [1953]

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**Document No. 17**

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Tibor Méray:

“The Truth about Germ Warfare”

1.

I must rid myself of a burden which for some years has been weighing upon my conscience. No compulsion from the outside, no menace or pleadings, no promises have obliged me to speak. It is my conscience which demands that I write these articles, so as to throw off this burden and thus find peace.

I do not wish to indulge in stylistic effects. I will try to be as matter of fact and as concise as I can. I will try to be as precise and objective as possible. Above all, I do not wish to give way to any passions. On the contrary, it is the calming of passions that I desire and wish to serve. And if anyone thinks that I am acting without indulgence, then I will tell him that my first thought has been not to be lenient towards myself.

In the fight which we have undertaken for the freedom of Hungary, our country, and for true progress, my colleagues and fellow writers and myself, have vowed to serve truth only. And today also I do seek nothing but the truth. No side glances either to the right or to the left. It is the bare truth only that I will consider.

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On the 21st July 1951, at about two o'clock in the afternoon, the telephone rang in my office at the “Szabad Nép,” central newspaper of the Hungarian Workers (Communist) Party. It was Márton Horváth, member of the Political Bureau, director of “Agitprop” of the Central Committee of the party. “What do you make of Gaesong [Kaesong]?” he asked me point-blank.

At first I did not understand what he meant.

“Of what?”

“Gaesong, surely.”

I got the message. For the past few days, some armistice negotiations were taking place in that particular town in Korea.

“IMPORTANT, SURELY,” I mumbled not quite discerning yet the drift of my caller.

“Well then,” said Horvath, “you will take the first available plane to the Far East and you will go to Gaesong... You will send us reports on the armistice negotiations.”

I caught my breath. Until then I had been editing the cultural column of “Szabad Nép.” Why was I chosen rather than anyone else? Márton Horváth explained: “Well, we think you have good eyes and a way with your pen. Keep your eyes open and use your pen with courage...”

A little later on Horváth came to see me at my office. I asked him if he had any instructions for me.

“No,” he replied. “Nothing special.”

He was that brand of intellectual who does not go in for flowery speech, at least not on informal occasions. But he changed his mind. Maybe he thought that he could. Not let me leave without some explanatory words, and so he added: “See to it that the Hungarian people get the feel, the growing hate for the Korean people and the growing hate towards the American invader...”

The days preceding my departure were spent in feverish activity. The excitement of my imminent departure and the honor which I had bestowed upon me (I was the first Hungarian journalist to leave for Korea or even to leave for the Far East) were making me quite dizzy. I must admit that I knew very little of the problems of war in Korea. I had learned, like everyone else in Hungary that **THE AMERICANS HAD ATTACKED NORTH KOREA, THAT THE NOR.TH KOREANS HAD FOUGHT BACK, UPON WHICH THE AMERICANS HAD THROWN IMPORTANT FORCES INTO ACTION AND THEN THE CHINESE VOLUNTARY FORCES HAD REPELLED THIS NEW AGGRESSION...**

On the eve of my departure, at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I paid a visit to the Korean Minister in Budapest. In the course of our conversation the latter confided to me that the First Secretary of the Hungarian Workers Party, Mátyás Rákosi, had informed him personally of my imminent departure. This revelation made me even more aware of the importance of my mission. He then talked to me about the situation in Korea: of the climate, the cuisine and especially of the difficulties which awaited me there.

“In our country,” he said, referring to the sedentary nature of my journalism which was mainly concerned with artistic and literary matters, “it is not sufficient to know however thoroughly the Marxist-Leninist doctrines. You must also be brave. Your mission will most certainly not be a joy-ride.”

He was thinking of American bombings. He was right. I was going to spend fourteen months in Korea without feeling for one single hour any sense of security. That surely was no pleasure trip. My jeep was peppered with bullets some twenty or thirty times. I have had to shelter in corn fields, in waterlogged rice fields, behind little piles of brick and put up with the air raids like everyone else. And yet the thought of shortening my stay had not crossed my mind. I had the feeling that I was serving a just cause and I put all I had into it. I sent back more than one hundred reports and wrote three books on Korea. I wrote about the fighting at the front and I

wrote about the armistice negotiations. I wrote about the suffering of the Korean people, of the terror of air raids, about the heroism of simple people. I wrote about the prisoners of war, about international solidarity and the international conspiracy. And also about the germ warfare.

All this seemed to me quite clear and simple and backed by sufficient proof.

Suddenly, everything became blurred in my mind.

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How did this start? In the autumn of 1953, there had been a great political trial in Pyongyang. During that trial Lion Hao [sic], one of the best known North Korean poets, was condemned to death as an American agent, and so was Hi Kang Kock [sic], administrative director of the Hungarian hospital in Korea and Sol Chang Sik [sic], interpreter of the armistice Commission in Gaesong, a sensitive poet and the first to have translated Shakespeare into Korean.

I did not know the men of politics who were condemned at the same time. But I knew personally these three intellectuals and especially Sol Chang Sik, a gentle man with a sensitive soul, always absorbed by questions of conscience, and in whose company I had spent many long evenings engaged in intellectual discussions. He wrote tender, naive poems. One which had especially moved me was dedicated to Hungarian doctors in Korea. I was absolutely certain that this poet could not possibly be an "American agent."

And yet I read in the newspapers that he himself had ADMITTED HIS TREASON. What was I to think of this? Could I be wrong to such an extent? I simply did not understand. I definitely could not believe it.

A year later, I found myself again in the newspaper offices of "Szabad Nép." Suddenly a man walked into my office. He nearly stumbled. It was a friend for whom I had a very high regard. His face was twisted with emotion. In a strained voice and full of tears, he confided to me that he has not been able to sleep for days. He knew from a reliable source that the whole Rajk trial had been a pack of lies.

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By curious thought association, I thought not so much of Laszlo Rajk as of Sol Chang Sik. His trial also could have been a pack of lies! The train of such thoughts cannot be stopped. If by chance one link in a gold chain is found to be made of common copper, then one is forced to examine carefully every link in the chain.

At the twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev gave out a long list of Stalin's crimes: mass executions, infamous torture, forced labor camps, unscrupulous murders. Was it possible that the crimes of Stalin had never gone beyond the frontiers of the USSR? Had he been lying to his people only? Had he misled his people on internal political problems only? And what about foreign politics? Had he not marked that with

his stamp? And that which was tormenting me most: the war in Korea? And what about the “germ warfare”?

2.

I was literally chocking from the self-imposed silence and the doubt. For fourteen months, in articles and in books and stories, I had been informing the Hungarian public of the events in Korea. Come what may, it had now become necessary to let them know of my doubts if I were not to asphyxiate....

On the 27th June, 1956, during the eventful discussions of the Petofi Circle, the precursors of the revolution, I was one of the speakers. Before the meeting, I had informed my friends of my intention to refer, amongst other things, to the questions of the Korean War. I most certainly did not wish to put forward any definite opinions, because I had paid too dearly to learn that without thorough examination, without sufficient proof and a detailed analysis, one has no right to launch accusations but only to ask questions and, where necessary, request a reply.

My friends begged me to renounce this project:

Rákosi and his cohorts and enough of a concern for us with purely Hungarian matters...By bringing up the Korean question you will just bring the Russians into this and so you will have done Rákosi a favor.

I had understood that my friends from the Petröfi Circle were right. But they, for their part, had understood that total silence had become unbearable for me. I chose a roundabout way. Speaking about truth in journalism and citing the case of our own journalistic crimes against truth inspired by its distorted view, I evoked a war-time episode in Korea. I quote from memory:

“During the winter of 1952, I said, I met at Panmunjom, an area where armistice talks were taking place, a Yugoslav journalist. As a result, in one of my articles I referred to him as an “agent of the imperialist forces” ready to stop at nothing. Today, looking at it in retrospect, I ask myself: what was the truth? This Yugoslav journalist approached us who came from the North and started the conversation in a very cordial, friendly manner. He told us, amongst other things, that Korea was a wonderful country that its landscape resembled that of Serbia, and other generalities of this kind. We, on the other hand, were thinking: “We can read in your kind of game, you imperialist viper, your false friendliness will not deceive us.” We listened to him for a moment, and then we lectured him with hard words. Naturally he did not remain without reacting. And he gave as good as he got. Now, at that time, to our eyes, it seemed to us that our attack was only a just and salutary lesson, whilst his response could be described as the aggression of the shamed ones.”

We certainly did not wish to lie. We were even convinced that we were writing the truth. Not a ‘naturalist’ truth, but something much more important. Truth as seen in a wider sense.

It is not that we were writing the opposite of what we were seeing, that attitude can in no case be that of a self-respecting foreign correspondent. WHAT WAS HAPPENING WAS MUCH MORE TERRIBLE AND FATAL. It's that IN ANTICIPATION, we were already seeing the facts IN THE WAY IN WHICH WE WERE EXPECTED TO SEE THEM. In the way in which it was "JUST" to see them. WE HAD CEASED TO SEE WITH OUR OWN EYES, OR TO THINK WITH OUR OWN MIND.

That is what I said on that day to the Petröfi Circle. At that time, Rákosi and his followers, as well as Khrushchev and his comrades, already approached the Yugoslav question with great restraint. The episode which I had cited could not lend itself to criticism. The general public however, that is the 6,000 people present at the Petröfi Circle, understood only too well the question which I had wanted to raise.

I therefore made up my mind to speak at the very first opportunity with complete frankness of this affair, the affair of the Korean War and of the germ warfare, the memory of which gave me no peace.

When, after the crushing of the Hungarian revolution in 1956, I was fleeing from the danger of immediate arrest, I arrived in Vienna via Belgrade. I was called to the telephone on the very day of my arrival. It was an employee of the "Voice of America" who was asking me from Munich if I would give him an interview on bacteriological warfare. He was determined to make me declare that the whole of this affair had been a lie, that I had been duped and my good faith had been abused.

I replied that I had written from Korea a whole series of articles on the subject of germ warfare, in which I had reported on things which I had in effect seen. Could I now pretend that I had not seen anything? One thing only was possible, and this possibility has been tormenting me for a long time. And that is: that the explanation which I had been given on the spot had not been in line with the truth.

Since I am not a scientist, I did not have at my disposal the indispensable means of verification. But in order to get to the bottom of this question of discovering whether these explanations were valid or not, it was necessary above all for me to communicate that which I had seen to objective scientific experts, who had not been forewarned, and that I should seek their opinion. This involved me in long and careful research.

I had the feeling that the caller on the line was becoming impatient.

"You don't mean to tell me that you still believe in these extravagant stories?"

I replied in more or less these words:

"My dear sir, for many years I have allowed myself to proclaim things which were founded principally on belief. Please allow me not to talk any more about what I believe or do not believe; allow me to renounce all those conjectures. From now on I do not wish to put forward anything which I have not verified and inspected in person."

That day I made no statement. Could I have acted otherwise? In Korea I had not been forced by any threats to add credulity to germ warfare, or to accept the evidence which I was offered and to report these in the papers. My belief had been genuine. To go and say today that all I that had been a lie, without having reexamined the facts, would have been a worthless declaration.

I knew that only those in the know, the scientists, could assuage the doubts by which I was being overcome. Thus, as soon as I arrived in Paris, I set about trying to meet the best specialists in Franca in order to put before them what I had seen and so as to reach through their opinions some sort of idea which could appease my conscience. It was not as a result of the requests made by "Voice of America" that I was searching for an answer; I hoped simply to find the truth.

In the course of my research, I interrogated one after the other, and in that order: Jean Rostand, the eminent biologist; Prof. Fasquelle, Professor of bacteriology at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris; Professor Seguy, director of the Institute of Etymology in Paris; Dr. Gallut, of the Pasteur Institute and one of the greatest world authorities on cholera; Professor Trefouel, Director of the Pasteur Institute and finally, Professor Lepine, Director of the International Institute of Prevention of Epidemics.

It is thanks to their patience and their good-will, that I am able today to put pen to paper. I thank them and am greatly indebted to them.

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3.

The first information bulletin with regard to what is known as germ warfare was the work of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Pak Heon-yeong. This bulletin was dated 22nd February, 1952. If it is to be believed, as from the 28th January last, the American forces of intervention have been regularly dropping in large quantities from the air, germ bearing insects onto our military positions and the hinterland...bacteriological examinations have revealed that these insects are carriers of plague germs, of cholera germs and other infectious diseases."

By a curious and tragic irony, fate would have it that this same Pak Heon-yeong, expelled some months later from his ministerial post, moved progressively down the echelons of power, and finally finished by being condemned to death and executed. It was not, of course, for the above bulletin that he was held responsible. On the contrary, he was condemned for being, "an American imperialist agent."

Forty eight hours after the bulletin of Pak Heon-yeong, Zhou Enlai, Minister of Foreign Affairs in Peking, reinforced this bulletin on behalf of the Chinese People's Republic: "I accuse, before the people of the whole world, the Government of the United States of using, in contravention of all humanitarian principles, and all international conventions, germ warfare in Korea in order to exterminate the peaceful civilians of that country as well as the soldiers."

A few days later, I received a telegram from Szabad Nép in Budapest. I was invited to leave Panmunjom immediately, leaving there my reports on the armistice talks and I was told to go into the hinterland in order to describe “the germ war.”

On 2nd of March, 1952, in the morning, I left Gaesong to go to the capital of Korea, Pyongyang in the company of a Polish journalist and a Korean journalist.

The cold was terrible. We were driving in an open jeep, buried under a heap of coats and blankets. The cold even made our eyes smart. A thick layer of snow covered the mountains and the rivers were frozen. We were progressing slowly and painfully on roads covered with black ice. It was the Korean winter still at its height.

In Pyongyang I had an interview with the Minister of Public Health for North Korea, Ri Byung-nam [Li Pyong Nam], who gave me detailed information on “facts and proof” of the bacterial attack. The gist of what he said is as follows:

“The first manifestations of germ warfare occurred on 28th January. Some Chinese soldiers reported having discovered here and there, insects of unusual appearance. Health squads were sent to these places forthwith. The insects were examined by bacteriologists who concluded that these were carriers of cholera and plague germs. The first attacks took place along the front in the Choson, Tsoson and Kumhwa [sic] areas, and along the Northern bank of the river Han. But later on the American army extended its attacks over the whole territory.”

The minister showed me a map upon which the points attacked were marked by a red circle. There were twenty-two circles in all.

“The insects are dropped from the aeroplane,” continued the Minister, “in containers and paper packages of different shapes. They are usually ejected above rivers and springs. It is a fact that the present temperature is nearly always below zero, and never above five degrees. It is therefore not conducive to the spreading of the insects or the multiplying of the germs. A certain number of insects is therefore, destroyed. Anyhow the cholera germ, for example, can survive on ice even after the insect is death and becomes virulent only later. So that an epidemic could start in spring, in summer or later in the autumn. Several cases of illness had already been notified, and even some deaths. Amongst the germs experts have even discovered some varieties which could contaminate plants.”

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After this statement of a general nature, I was taken to a laboratory. There were a large number of jars and other containers in which I saw numerous insects. On each jar there was a label which indicated the place and date and the person by whom the insects had been discovered. Generally the collectors of these insects were peasants, soldiers and members of village committees.

I was shown under the microscope various preparations. One was an internal sample of a flea; it was explained to me that the insect had been found near Choson, on the snow and that the



microscope had revealed that it was a carrier of plague germs. Another sample, of fish this time, confirmed the presence of cholera microbes. The fish, according to witness, had been dropped from an American plane.

All this sensational evidence, these insects which were rather repulsive to a layman, these shriveled millipedes, these green spiders and other beasties, as well as the hand-written testimonies, made a deep and painful impression on a spectator like me. An impression compounded of revulsion and horror. It was difficult to avoid this impression. Nevertheless, I managed to express my wish to be present at such a germ attack and said that I could not base my reports upon just a visit to laboratories.

I received forthwith authorization for permission and a few days later I was taken to “the places.”

We went to Sono-ri, a small village situated some 28 kms from the capital. The earth on its narrow streets was hard with frost except here and there where the sun rays had softened it.

The village inhabitants told me that a peasant had found on the ice on the river Daedong [Taedong] near the bank, eight stacks of flies. These flies were alive and in no time they spread over an area of several hundred meters. They were moving about slowly, but in the course of the morning as the temperature rose, they became capable of flying over a few meters. For four days the villagers tried to exterminate them by burning branches and sticks of corn.

“How did these flies get to be on the river ice?” I asked.

“Every night, a large number of American airplanes fly over our village. They did so during the night of the 27th to 28th February (the eight piles of flies were discovered on the 28th). Furthermore, on the 27th at dusk, four American planes circled round for about half an hour, just above the place where the insects were found the following morning. The planes did not drop any bombs and did not machine-gun the village. They came down very low without apparently doing anything.”

I went down to the river bank. Right near the edge, some three meters of the river were frozen. Upon this white expanse could be seen, like some funeral bands, traces of the fires which peasants had lit to destroy the insects. I inspected all the charred remnants; not a sign of life. By about the twentieth pile of faggots I suddenly saw black dots moving on the ice. I bent down to look. It was flies. Flies which crawled about on the ice. Their short-winged elongated bodies moved about awkwardly. In a hollow, the sun has melted the ice forming a puddle. On the surface of this dirty water, some six or eight insects could be seen floating. A little further away on the ice, hundreds more flies were moving about.

I had come ten days after the discovery of the first lot of flies which they had promptly set about exterminating. I interrogated some old peasants who confirmed that they had never seen this kind insect before in the village.

I had several of these flies taken to the central laboratory at Pyongyang. After examination, I was informed that they were carriers of cholera germs. After Sono-ri, the river

Daedong flows towards the capital. The municipal water distribution service is located between Sono-ri and Pyongyang. Consequently—it was said, if the water is polluted by cholera germs in Sono-ri then automatically so is the water of the capital.

All this evidence seemed clear, logical and convincing. And in Pyongyang even more striking facts were put before me.

I was taken to No.6 Second Street, in the central quarter Namnun-ri. As a precaution, just before going there, I was vaccinated against cholera. I was clad in a rubber outfit from toe to toe. This consisted of trousers which reached well above the waist and a hooded top with only slits for my eyes, black boots and long gloves. Over this outfit I was covered by a white overall and a mask, destined to filter the air, was put over my mouth.

The cluster of houses towards which we were heading was surrounded by ropes and was guarded by armed sentinels. It was a no-go area: it was strictly forbidden to enter or leave the area without a special permit.

In this place, I was told, three people had died of cholera. An old man aged 68, and two of his grandsons: a little boy aged six and a two year old baby.

Here is how the case was reported to me by a) the parents of the children, b) the doctor of the Pyongyang Municipal Hospital and c) the president of the commission for the prevention of epidemics:

“On 5th March, a Wednesday, at dawn, some American planes circled over the area. In the early morning the old man discovered three heaps of flies in the yard of his house. Near these heaps were found square envelopes and also some leaflets emanating from South Korea. The old man swept away the flies, made a stack of them threw in some fagots and. burned the lot. During that time, the children were playing nearby. The old man tried to make them go away but the children were under the impression that this was a game. Then the grandfather went to wash his hands and ate breakfast with the children.”

“The following evening the disease emerged. It was the old man who was the first to complain. Then the six year old boy and finally the baby. Cholera was diagnosed forthwith, its symptoms developing along classic textbook lines. After the death of the three victims, the post-mortem examination entirely confirmed the diagnosis. The president of the commission for the prevention of epidemics added that the flies discovered in the neighborhood had been sent to the laboratory and had in part been found to be carriers of the cholera microbes. There was no doubt that the old man and the children had caught the disease whilst he was sweeping up and burning the flies. Yes, to be sure, he had washed his hands but maybe not very thoroughly. As for the children, no one knew whether they had washed their hands or not. It was during breakfast that the germs must have entered their bodies.”

This collection of facts was depressing, horrible. Added to this were certain aspects of an emotional nature which influenced the reporter in me at least as much as all the proofs and explanations.

In the village of Sono-ri, a 79 year old man came to find me. He was dressed all in white and his wrinkled face expressed a great bitterness. I can still recall his words:

“I’ve seen some things in my lifetime, but nothing to equal such vileness. If we were nothing but bind logs we would still see these atrocities” said he in his vivid language.”

“If we were stones, still would we see these horrors which would make us shudder.”

And right in the middle of Pyongyang, a young woman, the mother of the two children who had died of cholera exclaimed, her eyes dry from too much crying, her lips cracked:

“Why did they kill them? Punish those guilty of these crimes!”

This is what I had to state in order to convey the atmosphere which prevailed at that time in North Korea. To give some idea of the methods of persuasion used, and to show at the same time the facts which were put before us and the passions which were being let loose all around.

This is what I had to relate before analyzing the facts themselves. By disregarding all the emotional elements before revealing to the reader the answers and explanations which had been given me by Frenchmen of science to whom I imparted my personal experience.

#### 4.

I reported in detail everything I had seen and heard to the scientists whom I consulted. The precision and scientific rigor of their answers was absolutely convincing. I cannot, of course, in most cases give a detailed account of our discussions which sometimes lasted for hours. I must also leave out in most cases the technical details which, though of utmost interest, could distract the unwary reader. Instead of quoting everything word for word, I have made a point of extracting the gist of my conversations with the scientists.

“Is it possible, in theory at least, that one should have wanted to pollute the water of Pyongyang by means of cholera germ bearing flies?”

The answer which M. Jean Rostand gave me may be summarized as follows:

“Is it scientifically possible for the old man and the two children to have caught cholera whilst the grandfather was sweeping the flies?”

“In itself, this cannot be excluded.”

“So therefore,” I continued, “the two samples cases which had been brought to my knowledge are not a complete nonsense in scientific terms?”

“It is not a question of nonsense,” came the reply.

But all the scientists with whom I had this conversation said:

“Nonsense, maybe not. But where are the proofs?”

“I’ve just presented to you the case in detail...”

“And this is where the shoe pinches.”

It was my turn to be showered with questions:

“How can one prove that the flies which you saw on the ice of the river Daedong were, in fact, carriers of cholera microbes?”

“What about the answer from the laboratory in Pyongyang...”

“You say that you yourself arranged for the flies to be taken to the laboratory. Alright. But were you present at the time of the examination under the microscope? Can you say that you have followed from the beginning to end the examination of the insects? Have you any expertise in this matter?...”

“None at all!”

“So, you could have been given any answer whatever. They could have talked to you about the plague as well as about cholera....You had no means of verifying either. Even comments with regard to the flies, which apparently were the origin of the cholera diagnosis in the old man and his grandchildren...it is not absolutely impossible...but they could have caught cholera in some other way. For example, through food which they had after the flies had been exterminated.”

“Obviously, this is just an assumption...All I can say, and this is the crux of the matter, that nowhere has it been proved that the victims actually caught cholera from the flies.”

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...And Dr. Gallut, the eminent specialist on cholera at the Pasteur Institute, asked me:

“Can you confirm with absolute certainty that the cholera germs identified under the microscope had in fact, been obtained from the victims cited above as an example?”

“Of course, I had not been present at the autopsy of the victims nor at the laboratory tests.”

“It's just that cholera germs,” continued Dr. Gallut, “you can find them in quite a few laboratories all over the world. We’ve got some here at the Pasteur Institute. And other

institutes have them too. One day we were asked for some from Bucharest for scientific research and we sent them a batch. They are not difficult to produce or to show. By that I do not mean to say that this is what had been done in the case which is of interest to you. I am only saying that the cholera germs which you were shown under the microscope do not in themselves constitute a proof.”

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The answers which I gleaned during my investigation, call into doubt, of course, the evidence and information which had been given me on the spot in North Korea by physicians and scientists mobilized against the germ warfare. I must stress, that amongst these, there were some high-powered Chinese and North Korean scientists, some of whom had received honorary diplomas from Western Universities, Some of them had, by virtue of their activities in the war against Japan and the campaign in Burma, received distinguished American medals.

Can one suppose that such people would make statements which are not conforming to truth? That they have issued doubtful opinions which cannot be relied upon?

Judging by my experiences during the last few years, I am sorry to have to say that this is in fact quite possibly so.

To help the reader forming an opinion, let me cite just two examples:

The first of these is known to everyone. It is the affair of Soviet doctors, the so-called “assassins in white coats.” A whole collection of brilliant Soviet scientists confirmed that the accusations made against Jewish doctors (assassination of Zhdanov, attempted assassination of Zhukov and other marshals) were well founded. When some time later the Soviet government admitted that these accusations had been unfounded and that the confessions made by the Jewish doctors had been extracted under duress, again eminent scientists were produced to support with their authority these new statements, which in that case by then were true.

The other example is not so well known. In the spring of 1955, when Mátyás Rákosi removed Imre Nagy (representative of the liberal branch of the Communist Party in Hungary) from the government, a medical report was issued to facilitate this removal. According to this report, Imre Nagy was so ill that he had not been able to participate in the meeting of the Central Committee held in March of that year. Altogether, the state of Nagy’s health was such that it was not possible for him to engage in political discussions.

This communique was signed by the President of the Hungarian Academy of Science, a Professor of Medicine, whose scientific achievements cannot be doubted by anyone. A little later—a few days later—two members of the Hungarian Politburo and a Soviet delegate, M.A. Suslov, visited Nagy at his home to ask him to practice self-criticism. This visit had been immediately preceded by a second bulletin, signed by the same professor, which stated that due to a visible improvement in Imre Nagy’s health, the latter was now able to engage in matters of politics.

There followed a dramatic sensation: NAGY REFUSED TO PRACTICE SELF-CRITICISM. It was quickly decided therefore at the “summit” that it was not sufficient to criticize him, but that it was necessary to exclude him from the Central Committee. AND SO, THE SAME PROFESSOR SIGNED A THIRD HEALTH BULLETIN: “THE STATE OF HEALTH OF THE PATIENT WAS SUCH THAT ALL POLITICAL ACTIVITIES WERE FORBIDDEN FOR HIM FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.” All these maneuvers enabled the preparing of accusations against Nagy, who was absent, and his condemnation in the course of the following session of the Central Committee in April 1955.

All this, obviously, does not relate closely to the bacteriological warfare. However, it is this sort of examples which have probed to me that in a Stalinist regime one can break, if not corrupt, a sizeable number of scientists of even the highest integrity. So much so, that they will sign every “scientific” statement presented to them by the government.

Such practices are profoundly tragic for all concerned. They are profoundly tragic too for science, because they demean both the scientists and science itself. Unfortunately such practices did exist. That is why, after -my personal experiences, I cannot accept as irrefutable the proofs offered me by the Chinese and North Korean scientists.

I have had to arrive at the following conclusion: If the things which I saw in Korea do not in themselves constitute nonsense, they do not, nevertheless constitute proof in the strictly scientific sense. From that point of view, it can even be said to be of no value at all.

Yet the opinion of French scientists whom I consulted, did not stop there. In fact it went much further.

5.

Professor Seguy is Director of the Etymological Laboratory in Paris. He has been studying the habits and behavior of flies for forty-five years. Without exaggerating, he can be considered the top specialist in this subject. The very fact that the International Scientific Commission for the “Investigation of Facts concerning Germ Warfare in Korea and China,” which in a lengthy report, tried to justify germ warfare, invoked several times the authority of professor Seguy (pages 75, 140, 146, 152), confirms the importance with which he is regarded in the scientific world.

Now, this same professor Seguy exclaimed before me:

“A bacteriological attack unleashed by means of insects? I repeat, by means of insects! But that is sheer fantasy! You can't order insects about like soldiers! Yes, I know the commission report you are talking about. But I have not kept it in my library. Scientifically all this does not hold water.”

As for the cases which I told him about, Professor Seguy said to me:

“The use of flies in germ warfare seems to me to be quite impossible, for the good reason that they are far from being a good means of transport. Because a fly, contrary to what is generally believed, is one of the cleanest insects in existence. Observe a fly. It is constantly cleaning itself. Its saliva has antiseptic properties. It, rapidly destroys the germs which it picks up; very quickly, in a matter of something like half an hour, for example.”

“So the fly is not capable of spreading the cholera?”

“I did not say that. Where an epidemic is rampant, the flies may alight on victims' excrements and thus propagate the disease. Even then, however, they destroy the germs they carry in an astonishingly short time.”

“So the flies carrying cholera germs which had been dropped from planes...”

“This strikes me as freakish, pure imagination. Whether they be packed in containers or in paper envelopes, it is quite likely that they would be dead already on landing or else die soon after. In the conditions which you have described, they would probably die of boredom more likely!”

“And what do you think of the flies which I saw on the ice, and which, according to what I was told, had been there for some eight to ten days?”

“Very strange, to say the least!” replied Professor Seguy, lifting his arms towards the sky. In the room where we are now, the temperature is about 15° above zero and you don't see any flies. Everyone knows that flies do not like and cannot withstand the cold. All the more reason why they could not survive on ice for any length of time.”

“When I was in Korea, I was told that the Americans were putting to use the “great Soviet scientific discovery” the Mitchourino-Lysenkoist method for obtaining flies able to withstand the cold.”

“Here is another thing which I find surprising! I have never heard anything said about any positive results obtained on flies with the “Lysenko method,” which even in the Soviet Union is unofficially said to be contested more and more.”

“The oldest inhabitants of the Korean village of Sono-ri have anyway unanimously confirmed that it was a question of flies of a particular kind, the like of which had never been seen in the region...”

“What does that prove? In France alone you could count some fifteen thousand different kinds of flies...Quite simply, I repeat, it is not with flies that one can wage bacteriological war.”

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If, so far as flies are concerned, it could be said that all was now clear due to the explanations of one of the greatest etymologists in the world, not all aspects of this question were to my liking.

The theory of accusation still had an emergency door, so to speak. The reader may recall the pronouncement made by the Korean Health Minister, which stated that even though the cholera bearing insects died, the bacteria would survive, even in snow, and would become active so that an epidemic could be unleashed the following summer or autumn.

This final emergency door was barred by the formal statement made to me by Dr. Gallut, the eminent specialist on cholera.

“The cholera microbe is extremely fragile.” He explained. “Let loose in “the open” it dies within a few hours. It fears the cold, and the temperature of ice is lethal to it. Thaw does not create more favorable environment for it either. It has generally been observed that winter puts a stop to the spread of a cholera epidemic. This phenomenon has even occurred in Egypt, a country with a warm climate, at the time of the 1947 epidemic. Naturally, it is possible to preserve cholera microbes in the cold. They are frozen by means of carbon dioxide snow at a temperature of 70° below zero. At that temperature they are dehydrated in a way and can be preserved for years in tubes.”

“Is such preservation not possible in the case which I had seen?”

“To reactivate the microbe, it must stay for twenty four hours in a culture solution at 37° above zero. To throw back into the open deep-frozen microbes would be of no use. Such an idea could not even occur to anyone calling himself a scientist.”

Thus, all the scientific and pseudo-scientific explanations which had been given me with regard to flies which were carriers of cholera germs, were refuted one by one bowed before the facts: **IMPOSSIBLE TO START A BACTERIOLOGICAL ATTACK BY MEANS OF FLIES.** It does not make sense to throw microbes on the ice and to say that they could be reactivated later on. I have also had to admit that you could not drop flies from airplanes, like parachute jumpers, and that it was highly likely that flies placed in containers or envelopes would die either before they dropped, or during the fall, or else immediately after they had been dropped.

One fact remained clear and undisputable: one question remains unanswered. How did these flies get on the ice? And not only there where I had seen them, but in a large number of other places where the local people had stacks of flies—not to mention other insects—where these local people, in a low temperature of between -10 and +10 degrees had found and sent thousands of specimens to the laboratory in Pyongyang. Sample accompanied by hundreds of handwritten statements.

6.

The flies, which I had seen alive, crawling about on the ice of the river Daedong, where did they come from? Let me repeat word for word what I was told in the village of Sono-ri: “Every night, a large number of American aero-planes fly above the village. It was thus on the night of



27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> February.... Furthermore, on the 27<sup>th</sup> at dusk, four American bi-planes circled for about half an hour above the area where the insects were found the following morning. The planes did not drop any bombs and did not machine-gun the village. They came down very low, without apparently doing anything.”

And what was the son of the dead old man and father of the two children who all died of cholera telling me in Pyongyang?

“On the eve of the day the flies were found, American planes were flying very low, flew round in circles over the area.”

In these testimonies we can find a common element:

If one does not doubt the testimony of the people who had heard the planes, then it is also a fact that no one had seen the planes with his own eyes. They are solely auditory testimonies. I am quite willing to admit that the planes were American, but in every case nobody had actually seen them drop any containers, envelopes or flies. Only assumptions are put forward in this respect.

It is necessary however, to go a little further with this. I consulted the notes which I had taken during my stay in Korea. According to these, I had indeed enquired as to the manner in which these microbe attacks occurred: the insects had been dropped from the plane, in containers and paper sacks of varying shape. “We have not yet got a precise idea as to how they were dropped because up to now the raids have nearly always taken place at night or in cloudy weather.”

The conversation which I had with the Korean Health Minister, from which the above quote was extracted, took place fifteen days after the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which he announced the bacterial attack. If today I reflect upon this more carefully, the meaning is clear.

Fifteen days after the accusation against the aggressors had been expressed, the North Korean Health Minister did not yet possess any proof concerning the question: by whom and how were the insects sent? “At night and in cloudy weather.” This means that nobody, absolutely nobody, had seen with his own eyes the attack taking place.

The reader could quite rightly ask, how come I had not noticed this flaw, this enormous flaw in the argument? The minister’s statement which I had noted was published in the Hungarian press as well as in my book. Now, neither the editor, nor the editorial secretary nor the proof reader had brought this up. Why? The answer is simple. Right from the start I believed this entire story. And a believer is insensitive to slight contradictions, or even to the most obvious ones.

But as soon as the critical reason returns, the opinions which had been simply accepted, are put aside and the process of thinking returns to normal. So then a multitude of obvious arguments become open to doubt. For example, the opinion of the old people in the village regarding the unknown kind of fly, or the reference to Lysenko. On the other hand, some details which until now had seemed insignificant, and which my mind had rejected, suddenly takes on considerable

importance. Thus, a certain detail came back to me. There was in Korea a Hungarian country hospital which had been given the name of Mátyás Rákosi. This hospital stayed in different Korean villages. In one of them the peasants found one fine morning flies wrapped in sachets. Immediately it was concluded that this was a germ attack.

A little later in the day, one of the Hungarian doctors who himself believed in the bacteriological war, or at least, he appeared to believe in it firmly, told me indignantly: "Some peasants claim that these sachets have not been dropped from planes, but that they have been brought there by Chinese soldiers." ... We shrugged our shoulders. These stories seemed to us to belong to enemy propaganda, or at best to belong in the realm of the imagination. **BUT TODAY, I AM ASSURED BY THE GREATEST SCIENTISTS IN FRANCE THAT THIS BUSINESS OF PARACHUTING FLIES IS, IN THEIR EYES, PURE FANTASY.**

Now, somehow or other these flies must have been brought there. And since four days had been spent exterminating them on the ice of the river Daedong, where they could only have survived very briefly, new ones must have been brought there every night. In that case, the work must have been carried out by a large network covering the whole of North Korea and must have been present in each of the "22 red circles" whence the thousands or specimens were being sent to the central laboratory.

I did not see with my own eyes, as I had seen the flies, those who dropped or put these flies on the ice. I have no definite proof there.

I must not, however, avoid mentioning one last detail which, at the time, did not strike me as of any importance, but which I now view in a different light. Looking through my notebook I noticed the following entry:

On the 6<sup>th</sup> March, the Korean Deputy Health Minister- in fact a charming man who, I later heard had apparently been executed as an American agent- told me word for word the following: "As already stated in the note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we had in the first instance been notified of the germ attack through **REPORTS FROM CHINESE VOLUNTEERS**, who claimed to have found some insects of unusual form." Three days later, on 9<sup>th</sup> March, I had another conversation with the Minister himself this time. He asked me casually that I should not use the term "Chinese Volunteers" in my future articles but instead to call them "front-line fighter."

He gave me no explanation. Even so, he must have had some reason from making this remark which might have benefited from an explanation.

7.

One can be wrong, especially if one is not an expert. But I am riot the only one to have testified on germ warfare. A certain number of American pilots have "confessed" to having taken part in the dropping of cholera, plague bearing flies, fleas and spiders. And on the other hand, legal and scientific commissions, comprising men and women some of whom of notorious reputation, also testified.

It is unnecessary, I think, to dwell too much on the confessions of the American pilots. Once back in their country they all retracted their statements and denounced the methods by which these confessions had been extracted. Should one believe their retracted statements rather than the confessions? The fact which inclines me to believe the former is the fact that the methods of extortion described by the pilots resemble quite amazingly those which had been obtained from certain political prisoners freed from Rákosi's jails, and solemnly rehabilitated by the Hungarian Communist Party.

To cite and compare the statements made by these two different kinds of witnesses could, I believe, produce a startling if facile effect. I won't attempt to include it in these articles.

And what about the reports of the different international commissions?

Without wishing for one moment to doubt the personal integrity of the investigators, many of whom must have followed the same path as I, I have tried during my present investigation to do that which at the time seemed superfluous, seeing that I myself had been a witness. I thus studied their reports very carefully. Naturally I will not carry the controversy into the technical ground. But since these commissions often saw the same "proofs" as me, I was allowed to confront our respective experiences. Maybe, I wondered, the commissions had had at their disposal more solid proof than I?

Well, as I read the long dissertations of the apparently competent authorities—and no doubt they were competent—more than once I felt myself to be like one of those punching-bags at the fair, put there to absorb the ever stronger punches. Let me just give you two examples:

The commission of Association of Democratic Lawyers visited, amongst other places, the same village of Sono-ri which I had visited. I had seen there with my own eyes: flies. Now, the commission of Lawyers confirmed the presence in that village of Sono-ri, and after the same "attack" on February 28<sup>th</sup>, the presence of ant-like insects.

I am not an etymologist, and especially I do not always trust my senses any more. But even so, I am still able to tell the difference between a fly and an ant! It is true that ants had vaguely been mentioned to me also. Had the members of the commission of Lawyers seen these? Or where their findings based on such vague remarks? And why did the commission not say anything about the flies which I had seen, had described and even picked up? First punch on the chin.

More striking hit coming up. In answer to my consignment of flies, the laboratory in Pyongyang had replied saying that they were infested with cholera germs. Now, the Commission of Lawyers, when talking about the same case, refers to "bacteria which caused a disease of the intestine." Even a simple journalist can see that there is some serious divergence there.

The report made by the International Scientific Commission, which included among its members many doctors, parasitologists, bacteriologists etc., should have carried more weight. It is a work that is 600 pages long, packed with photographs, verbal proceedings, expert appraisals and all kind of documents. Just flicking through it, the layman becomes dizzy. Maybe that was the

purpose of the exercise. Now, it so happens that in some of the cases I had been faced with the same examples as the Commission. Thus, for example, it refers at length (pages 37, 38 and annex 455 and 468 in the English edition) to “the Dai-Dong incident (cholera), in which a Korean peasant woman brought home some shell fish which she and her husband ate. On the following evening, they both died of cholera. The enquiry concluded that the shell-fish had been parachuted from an American plane.

Now from the Commission's detailed report, as indeed from my own notes, the following facts emerge:

1. Nobody saw the planes from which the shell fish had allegedly been dropped.
2. Neither the members of the Commission nor I had seen the said shell fish with our own eyes. Nor were there any others which might have been found in the area. On all this there are only Korean and Chinese reports.
3. Neither the members of the Commission, nor I saw any of the victims, but we nonetheless accepted as an established fact that they had died from cholera.

And so, the most important links in the scientific chain remain missing. Unfortunately this is not an exception but the rule. Besides, the Commission recognizes this as well. Right at the beginning of its report—another punch on the jaw—it says: Naturally this complete chain of proofs (“ideal” series) can only be found very rarely or never. (My underlining.)

8.

It is a fact that at no time has the Scientific Commission been able to follow from beginning to end any case of bacterial attack! No more, in fact, than the Hungarian bacteriologist who was sent to Korea from Budapest in order to participate in the defense against germ warfare. He must have concluded fairly quickly that he was not being shown any more than were the journalists and the lawyers. So, instead of fighting on the “germ front,” he ended up working (he wanted to be useful after all) in the Hungarian hospital pharmacy near Pyongyang.

At the time, we put our host's mistrust down to a need for vigilance in time of war and to the naturally “suspicious” temperament of the Chinese. Today, I wonder whether the truth was not much simpler than that. In these conditions, how can it be that highly qualified scientists should be directed their efforts into proving scientifically the existence of germ warfare? A statement made by one of the European members of the Commission (whose name I will not mention this time) throws some light on this question.

He says: “We were so convinced of the integrity of our hosts, that we believed all the statements they had made to us with regard to the American use of bacteria in the war. The “scientific” work undertaken by the Commission was founded on the implicit belief in the accusations made and evidence produced by the Chinese and North Koreans.”

Implicit beliefs... a bit like me. They believed because they wished to believe. They wanted to prove the accusations in which they believed right from the start.

But belief is not enough to bring about scientific proof. And not one of the French scientists whom I considered the report made by the International Scientific Commission, Professor Trefouel, Director of the Pasteur Institute, told us: "This report proves nothing. These assertions are not substantiated by any (peremptory) arguments. Therefore, I give it no credit. In any case, as far as I know, all the experiments in the world which could have been carried out on germ warfare, have been of a defensive nature. In order to start a bacteriological offensive, one would have to be familiar with the 'spirit of epidemics,' that is, the trigger mechanism of an epidemic. And that is not the case. The state of our knowledge is such that at best one could, without danger to the aggressor, contaminate a restricted community, such as, say, Staff Headquarters. And, even then..."

Thus, so far as the value of the International Scientific Commission is concerned, the opinion of one of the best of France's scientists is absolute. Just as absolute is the opinion of Professor Lepine, whose work is most highly regarded in the whole of Eastern Europe too. Professor Lepine refuses to consider this report as scientific work. It contains so many gaps. The connection between cause and effect are so slight that the work does not hold water.

With regard to the spiders which are so often referred to in the International Scientific Commission's report, Professor Lepine has highlighted a most curious fact. It is something that happened at the beginning of the Korean War. The American Medical Authorities were, indeed afraid of a plague epidemic, because in neighboring Manchuria a number of cases had been notified. A scientist of high repute, Dr. Smadell, who was at the time working for the army, asked to be allowed to go with a few colleagues to Madagascar, one of the French, overseas territories, where some cases of plague had also been notified. He was interested in Madagascar for two reasons. First, because the climatic conditions of the area where the disease had broken out were similar to those in Korea. Secondly, because some new antibiotics had just been tried in Madagascar.

Having obtained the necessary authorization, the mission got on with the work. One member of the party was an etymologist, who in his spare time had been collecting spiders for many years. In spite of the discreetness observed by the mission, rumor spread that there was a "secret" American mission on the island. That it was studying the plague... that it was collecting spiders- obviously with the intention of spreading the plague. Of course, no proven connection exists between the rumors abounding on the mission in Madagascar and the report of the International Scientific Commission. But, what is certain, is that the plague is not spread by spiders.

Professor Lepine had pointed out another interesting fact. The International Scientific Commission had invited a well-known Danish scientist named Henri Lassen, whose ideas were moreover quite progressive, to participate in their work. He went to the relevant areas, studied the question of germ warfare for a month, but returned from the Far East without having signed a single report. He was of the opinion that he knew no more after he came back than he did before he left.

Let's compare this attitude with that adopted by the only bacteriologist on the International Scientific Commission, N.N Zhukov-Verezhnikov, member of the Soviet Academy of Medicine. The latter, in fact made the following statement: "The American imperialists have perpetrated a new kind of crime. They have carried out a bacterial attack against Korea and the People's Republic of China." What is interesting in this statement is not its content, but the fact that the Soviet scientist had made it some three months before the Commission's conclusions, of which he was a member, had been reached!

According to a definition borrowed from Stalinist terminology, there exist actually two sorts of science: "bourgeois" science and "socialist" science. But from my personal experience, I cannot believe that there can exist an imperialist bacteriology or a proletarian bacteriology. This is not where the difference lies. Nor does it lie in the extent of knowledge, since Soviet scientific knowledge is well recognized. The difference lies more in the individual attitude which is adopted by a scientist and, even more, in the circumstances which determine whether the stance adopted is that of a Lassen or a Zhukov.

9.

I must add something with regard to the International Scientific Commission, which may appear to be something of a digression, but which is, in fact, the shortest way to get back to my subject.

This was something which took place in November 1955 in Budapest. There was a general assembly of the Communist members of the Hungarian Writers' Association. As early as that time, the majority of Hungarian Communist writers could see that Rákosi's policies were leading the country towards disaster. Which is what we were discussing with passion, my colleagues and I, during that meeting. One of the first speakers to address the meeting was Tibor Déry, whom I consider to be our leading contemporary Hungarian novelist. He made an impassioned plea for freedom in literature, referring to the ignorance and ill-will of the "Ubureaux." This old militant, who had spent his whole life in the service of socialism came to the bitter conclusion that the regime which called itself socialist, allotted to writers nothing but the role of "court jester."

Márton Horváth, the spokesman for the official line, replied Déry in outrageously violent terms, interspersing his attack with personal allusions.

Taking my turn to speak, I tried to prove that Déry had been quite justified in his defense of the writer's rights, but that perhaps his comparison to the "court jesters" was a little "exaggerated."

Why should I now be recounting these things? It's because after my conversations with the French scientists and the patient study of the international "scientific" reports, the Déry form of words keeps coming back to mind.

The readers of this series of articles, may perhaps remember the description I gave of my arrival at Pyongyang into the central quarter of Namnun-ri, where an old man and his two grandsons had just died of cholera. As a precaution I had been vaccinated against cholera, then I was made to put on a rubber outfit consisting of trousers which reached high above the waist, a hooded top

which allowed only my eyes to be exposed, black boots and long gloves, as well as a white overall on top. My mouth had been covered with a mask destined to filter the air.

Well now, in the course of my conversations with the French scientists, I learned some interesting things. Against cholera, you do not need one, but two vaccines, which have to be given at an interval of seven days. You are first given four billion units, and then eight billion units. Immunity is not acquired until a few days later. The injection which I had been given half an hour before going to the area was therefore not worth anything.

I couldn't believe my ears. What kind of gruesome comedy had I been made part of? After all, if the danger of infection did exist, then this injection would have been of no help to me. So this was just a stage set. And if the danger did not exist then why bother to vaccinate me at all? Again, just a staging of a fake performance.

And I who had allowed myself to criticize Déry's turn of phrase. "In a Stalinist system, the writer is a court jester!" Bitterness fills my heart. Yes indeed, I had been a court jester, a clown. With a cap: a mask to filter the air; with pointed shoes; rubber boots. And after me, how many more had been made fools in the same way? Writers, lawyers, scientists!

I have not told everything yet. I have just examined in detail the report of the commission of lawyers. On page 8 (English text), I find the following quote: "in the town of Pyongyang—mentioned later—two people became ill on 6<sup>th</sup> March, and another person on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Two of them died on the 8<sup>th</sup> March. That area of the city of isolated." The report says nothing more. Now, this is precisely the case which I had reported in my third article. I described it at length in my reports and in my book. That is, an old man and two of his grand-sons had died from cholera. That they had been struck down after the grand-father had swept some germ-carrying flies which had been dropped from an American plane.

No, really, so much cynicism is too much. The death of three people had been described to me in detail. The commission of Lawyers which arrived there after me, had only two deaths to record. The opposite might have been conceivable. But that one of the deceased could have risen from the dead is not. Which of the three did not die? The grandfather, the six year old boy or the two year old baby? Once you start in the direction of doubt, can one not ask oneself: had there been a single death from cholera on the 8th March in Pyongyang?

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I remember the turmoil which this triple decease had caused me. What curses had I not made against the aggressors of germ warfare! Today, I am reluctant to quote from my own writings, but it must be done.

"At Pyongyang the bacterial aggression has claimed three dead. An old man aged 68 and two little boys. It is against them that this germ war is waged. It is they--who are killed by American forces. They, the defenseless, the old and the children. Thousands of flies, epidemics are let loose upon them. What a dreadful deed! Can humanity tolerate such crimes?"

“The grave of the old mason, builder of the house, and of the two children, for whom the death-carrying flies had been a sort of game, is outside the town. It is an anonymous grave. Only their ashes rest there, buried two meters below the ground. Even the parents do not know the exact spot. Nobody ever takes flowers there. Never will their brother, their son or their mother visit the grave. It stands there silent amongst the silent mountains.”

“But humanity will not forget this grave. Billions of people will surround it with weeping eyes, and will say goodbye to the old mason and to the two little boys. And millions will brandish their fist and will cry out, just as the Korean mother had done: ‘Punish the criminals!’”

Whom did I mourn so much? In whose name had I uttered these emotional curses? Who today can give me the answer? The court jester went on and wept. That was his role. Many simple honest people went on and wept. But somebody was laughing someone must have been laughing with an infernal laughter at such a farce.

10.

Why the need for all this staging? Why the need for all these accusations, these gruesome efforts, this comedy?

The first reason seems to me to come from the source. Let me refer to Orwell's *1984*, which throws a cruel light upon the ways of a Stalin-like regime, and whose small number of copies which found their way into Eastern Europe have enjoyed an almost exaggerated reputation amongst clandestine readers. Orwell's formula is as follows. “Two minutes of hate”, means that every day, the propaganda machinery devotes two minutes to stirring up hate in the citizens' hearts. Well now, at the time of the “germ war”, which was a period of extreme tension, the daily dose of hatred was assured by the accusations made against the instigators of germ warfare.

It was one of the best orchestrated, the most powerful campaigns in history. Perfect, from the point of view of organization. Nothing was forgotten. From the meeting of the inhabitants in a block of flats, to a world congress.

Hundreds of thousands of protests were sent. From Peking to Vienna, in a whole series of capital cities, exhibitions were organized with germ warfare as the theme. An impressive number of U.N.O sessions were devoted to indictments and to moving speeches. I know that in the West these accusations were not met with little credulity. But the countries at which this propaganda was aimed were not of the Old or of the New World. They were the countries of Asia. One can moreover understand why this was so. The first atom bomb was destined for Asia. It was in Asia that the napalm bombing undoubtedly caused the greatest ravages. The people of Asia have therefore good reason for being receptive to accusations made against foreigners and whites. I was present in 1952 at the World Peace Congress in Peking, and I was able to witness the unanimous hatred with which Indians of the Congress. Burmese priests and Trotskyites from Ceylon condemned the “bacteriological warfare.”



Obviously, one could describe all these delegates as “sympathizers” or “fellow travelers.” But it will be remembered that in July 1952, the Pakistani delegate abstained from voting on the question of germ war in the U.N.O resolution. Now, everyone knows that Pakistani politics is much closer to that of the USA than to that of the USSR who represented the accusers. Even so, the Pakistani delegate was content to call for a thorough investigation into mater instead of refuting the accusation, because “if these accusations are well founded,” he said, “then the people of Asia are victims of the most horrible weaponry that humans could use.” He then added: “It is true, that if these accusations were unfounded, then these same people were taken in by a cruel farce.” “In either case,” he continued, “they will have suffered terribly.”

I cannot speak of this hate campaign as someone who is a complete stranger to it or a mere spectator. When I read again what I had written at the time, I am overwhelmed by burning shame. My articles were like oil poured over fire. And I cannot even say in my defense that I had distributed the oil sparingly. I cannot ask for my acquittal on the grounds of having myself been taken in and that I did not know what I was doing. These excuses were used by the Nazis. I consider them unworthy of me and of carrying little weight. Whatever the arguments which I may put forward in my defense, facts remain facts. I have contributed to the propaganda campaign surrounding the germ war. Due to my position and as a result of the role I played, I must be held accountable. My only excuse could be that of having recognized the truth and not to have hesitated to tell it. I don't have to settle the question in order to know if my present attitude can offset my past liabilities.

Over and above the campaign of hatred, the accusations of “germ warfare” had yet another objective. One of the greatest hate campaigns went on hand in hand with another, not less important campaign. That of public health.

If, at the time, there were sporadic reports of outbreaks of contagious diseases in Korea, I was not aware- even though I was there- of a single real epidemic. For an epidemic to start, and here all the scientists I consulted are in agreement, germs alone are not enough. You need favorable conditions of a special kind. A country devastated by war, whose inhabitants are under-nourished, do, of course, provide the sort of conditions in which an epidemic can spread more easily than in time of peace. Furthermore, Manchuria, neighboring on Korea, had at that time had several outbursts of epidemics.

Now, the Chinese forces of intervention were largely composed Manchurian soldiers. It was perfectly possible that they spread all kinds of disease. And yet, except in isolated cases, real epidemics had never had to be faced. Why? This was explained to us by arguing the efficiency of the defensive measures taken against the “bacteriological aggressor.” The “infamous aggression” had failed, thanks to a prompt show of strength.

Facts are facts. It is a fact that the Korean and Chinese authorities were at the same time launching a campaign against the “supporters of germ warfare” thus spurring on an unprecedented campaign of public health, quite unknown till then.

A large number of hospitals were established against epidemics. The whole North Korean population was vaccinated against a number of diseases. Each person had to carry their certificate of vaccination. It was impossible to enter a public building or be allowed into a theatre without showing credentials.

Each time we left Pyongyang by car and each time we returned there, our vehicle was disinfected. Around the capital a whole network of first-aid posts filtered the traffic. Everywhere, there were barriers and check-points.

Corpses had to be burned and their ashes buried deep in the ground. Existing public lavatories were condemned, and new ones had to be built at a prescribed distance from dwellings. The well-holes were regularly cleaned. They had to be closed, and the more important ones were guarded by soldiers. The drains were constantly disinfected. Stagnant water was systematically drained. New stables were erected at a given distance away from human dwellings. There were strict orders specifying that it was forbidden to drink water which had not been boiled.

In the name of defense against germ warfare, the whole country was swept by a wave of cleanliness. Everywhere people were spring-cleaning. Floors and pavements were washed. Walls were whitewashed, domestic rubbish was burned, and dishes were boiled. This campaign spread to neighboring China. Travelers who like me visited that country at the time, in answer to questions, found themselves saying: "Our pig output has doubled, we produced 20% increase in rice, 12% more kaolin, and in addition, we exterminated 424,352 flies!" Except for the figures, the answers were all very much the same. You may laugh, nonetheless, it was true.

What an infernal paradox! A hatred campaign used, when all is said and done, in order to promote public health!

Those who, like me have witnessed these events, who have gone all the way, cannot help but ask themselves with bitterness: Given a little more effort and care, could not the same results have been achieved by other means? Is there no honest path which leads to honest aims?

## 11.

How could I have believed it? This is the question which I keep asking myself. "How could you have really believed it?" is what others keep asking me. What struck me most during my enquiry, is that the scientists to whom I spoke, were not particularly surprised that I should have been taken in. Whilst I was telling M. Jean Rostand in detail what I had seen, he interrupted me smilingly at one point and said: "For heaven's sake, if you continue like this, I will end up by believing it myself..."

Others concluded:

All this fabrication can seem perfectly logical and convincing to the layman. So it seems that to have believed in this affair was quite natural for a layman. Even so, I still need to ask: "How, even as a layman could one have believed this? Well, I think that it is because in addition to the clever "construction" and its spectacular effect, there were other reasons

which—if I may say so—added weight to my credulity. Reasons which made me receptive, which turned me into a “suitable subject,” a malleable subject.

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To start with, I was a sort of believer. I believed righteousness unreservedly in the absolute correctness of the USSR cause. Especially because of the role it had played during the Second World War. I believed in the infallibility of Stalin, in the Hungarian Party, in Rákosi.

I remember the first evening I spent in Moscow. A car drove me from the airport to my hotel, and on the way we passed the length of the Kremlin wall. I was moved to tears at the mere thought that somewhere there behind a window, no more than some one hundred meters away, may be Stalin!...

It's a tragedy that a whole generation brought up on the skepticism nourished by Voltaire, and who came to the Communist Party of their own free will, should have turned into a generation of believers—and thoroughly fanatical believers at that—once they were within the Party. When Marx was asked by his daughters which was his favorite proverb, he answered; “*de omnibus dubitandum*” (we must question everything). Half a century later, the most militant advocates of Marxism-Leninism could easily have chosen their motto: “*credo quia absurdum*” (I believe because it is absurd).

Apart from the general fanaticism, which I am not trying to minimize, I had had experience of certain things in North Korea which prepared me to accept straight away the accusations made of American germ warfare.

At the time when this accusation was being made, I had already been in North Korea for nearly six months. I was staying in the area where the armistice negotiations were taking place. But I also visited the front line and the hinterland. Today, when I am forced to admit the inanity of these germ war accusations (and I admit it without hesitation), I must not refrain from mentioning a whole series of actions taken by the American forces, and especially by the American Air Force, some of whose methods of fighting exceeded those normally acceptable in war and which provoked horror within the onlooker.

I refer in the first instance to what is called “air terror”. The American Airforce as good as reigned supreme in the sky. Thanks to that supremacy, it inflicts such destruction that few houses remained unscathed in North Korea. From one day to the next I witnessed the disappearance of insignificant villages. I saw along the roads hundreds of corpses of peasants all dressed in white. I saw towns of 150 to 200,000 inhabitants reduced within two years of war to wasteland upon which you could grow corn. I saw with my own eyes hundreds of women and children affected by this most inhuman of weapons, napalm. I am familiar with all the objections: the Communists did not declare “open” their towns... Chinese soldiers were camping in the villages... psychological resistance in North Korea had to be overcome.

Of course, I can today understand the crushing responsibility of the North Korean government, to whom human life came cheap. It -is true that urban conurbations were not declared open cities. It

is a fact that Chinese units were often stationed in the villages. And then, I know also, that “war is war” and there are always a great many innocent victims.

Even so, the simple peasants were in no way responsible for the stationing of the Chinese. The workmen, small shopkeepers and artisans in the towns could not by themselves declare their city as “open” And what about all those villages which had been razed to the ground, without there ever having been a single Chinese. And the city areas, which had been obliterated, even though they were nowhere near any military objective.

Another thing. I had the about the worst possible information about the regime of Syngman Rhee. I am not talking about information from Communist sources. It was in “The Daily Mirror” in which I read: “Syngman Rhee is a vain and savage dictator, whose long and sinister past stinks of corruption, intrigue and violence.” It was a Member of the Labour Party who had declared in The House of Commons: “All England is anxiously following the overtures of the double dealing South Korean assassin.”

Today, I am well aware the North Korean Government was composed of Stalinist puppets, all just as murderous, whose hands were just as stained with blood as those of Rákosi in Hungary. But that does not mean that I see in Syngman Rhee’s men the ideal leaders of future Korea. Far from it.

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Let me continue. I will now move on to China. I went there three times. In 1951, in 1952 and in 1953. In my experience, which is shared by many Western, non-Communist observers, the immense mass of the Chinese people has taken much more favorably to the policies of Mao than to those of Jiang Jieshi. I do not know whether the feelings of the Chinese towards Mao and his followers have changed. All I know is that the countries from the, so called, “Socialist block” whose conditions of life had been able to observe, it seemed that the longer the Party had been in power, the greater the increase in the number of people deceived. But I repeat, I do not know the present feelings in China.

Yet, in spite of all the negative phenomena which I had mentioned with regard to the role played by official China in the bacterial war, I must express the opinion that a more tolerant and understanding attitude towards Chinese problems would be a better policy than the rigidity and intransigence which is now shown to it by certain Western Powers.

As to the simple Chinese soldiers whom I met in Korea, I must say that their relations with the civilian population—not a negligible factor—were extraordinarily good. These soldiers were so willing to help the poor villagers in every way, that these poor people often preferred them to their own soldiers. And if what I had heard said in the village, where the Hungarian hospital stayed about the insects brought in by Chinese soldiers, were true, then these must have referred to some special teams under order from higher up.

One final factor could have contributed to my believing in the accusations thrown at the “perpetrators of germ warfare.” The leaders and the United States press had never denied that

there had been in their country a research connected with germ warfare. During the discussions at the United Nations, Mr. Cohen, the American representative, whilst stressing the defensive nature of this research, did nevertheless admit them. At the same time, it is also a fact that the Government of the United States had indeed signed the 1925 Geneva Convention prohibiting the use of bacteriological weapons, but this signature had never been ratified.

I had to go into all these details. I think I have been a biased political supporter long enough to know that I must be content with nothing but the whole truth, or at least the truth such as I see it. I have already said at the beginning of this series of articles how I was overtaken, little by little, by doubt. And how I had to acknowledge the crimes of Stalinism. I must add a fact which I had only discovered recently. I must admit that it was this fact which caused my cup to overflow.

Here it is. The first person to have made an accusation concerning the criminal use of germs was none other than Joseph V. Stalin. On 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1933, during a meeting of an extended Central Committee and of the Central Commission of Control over the Communist Bolshevik Party of the Soviet Union, Stalin, whilst speaking about "criminal activity" of certain Soviet citizens, said "that they deploy a method of sabotage in the State farms and kolkhozes, and that a few amongst them, including certain academics, manifest such zeal for sabotage that they inject plague and anthrax germs into the cattle at collective farms. And that they favor meningitis germs for horses, etc....."

During the great trials of 1937-38, trials which we know now had a variety of accusations gorged to suit the cause, two defendants mentioned similar facts. One admitted "that he had cultivated virulent germs in three different establishments in order to kill some herds of Soviet pigs." The other one admitted "that he plotted with Japanese spies to release, in case of war, some particularly virulent microbes amidst the Red Army!"

The chief prosecutor in these fabricated trials was A. Vyshinsky. The same Vyshinsky who has since been delicately disowned by Soviet Lawyers. The same Vyshinsky who, whilst he was Minister of Foreign Affairs in Stalin's day and led the Soviet Delegation at the United Nations, lodged the most terrible accusations with regard to "germ warfare" in Korea!

## 12.

I have come to the end of my investigation. This is all I have to say. I know that for some I will have said too little. And for others, I will have said too much. Some people during my investigation showed interest in this work but, they added:

Of course, the -thing would be quite "open" if you could explain exactly how the preparation of the bacterial campaign was hatched behind the scene in the Politburo. If you could show the exact role played by the Russians and the Chinese, etc....

It would obviously have been more of a sensation to have started my account something like that: "I know from a reliable source, from the mouth of a Chinese Minister himself, that one day Stalin called in Beria and Molotov and told them: "Listen guys..." It is possible that this is just

what had been the case. But it is also possible that the truth was quite different. I don't know, and I will refrain from giving details which I do not know.

For others, to have even put forward facts verified by me personally was still too much. They believe that ultimately a lie can be tolerated, but that its exposure is treason.

And without going into the details which could bring them face to face with a painful truth, they prefer to ask: "What's the point of it?" I won't say that this question makes no sense. On the contrary, I won't avoid the answer. It is evident that those who will benefit from my testimony are those who were accused of having started a germ war. And those who will suffer from it are the ones who had drawn up this accusation. But if anyone was accused wrongly, is it not a duty for those who are aware of this false accusation to speak out?

So then, some sanctimonious rogues may say, all this will benefit "the American Imperialists and capitalists". This comment we have already heard at the time of our struggle against Rákosi's regime. I can remember one day, in the corridors of the Hungarian Parliament, Rákosi himself put the question before some colleagues and me: "Why tell everybody that the Hungarian worker does not live well? You will sow doubt in the hearts of French and Italian workers who are convinced that our workers have a good life. This way you would only serve the exploiters of the working class."

In Rákosi's eyes, the worry was not so much the fact that the workers' standard of living was low, but that this fact should be known. And since everything we might say—we, the Hungarian intellectuals—would not cross beyond the border of our country, the Hungarian revolution, by suddenly allowing truth to erupt before the world, may have stunned many a well-meaning Western worker and intellectual.

My intention is not to indulge in a comparative analysis of the imperialist states which exist in the world. Nor do I wish to ask the question: Who is the greater oppressor of the people? Who exploits them more? I will simply say: If, as we are taught by Marxism-Leninism, American imperialism was full of lies and contradictions, why not simply denounce these contradictions and lies? Why is it necessary to invent new ones?

I most certainly wouldn't wish the bricks extracted from one wall of lies to serve in the construction of a pile of prejudice, hypocrisy and arrogance. If I have written these articles it is not so as to contribute in whatever form to the lowering of even one worker's wages. To contribute to the taking away of land from the Hungarian or Chinese peasant. It is not so that a descendant of a Czar should return to the throne of Russia or a descendant of Li, to the throne of Korea.

It is not out of the question to suppose that my testimony doesn't pass almost unnoticed, that someone makes use of it directly or indirectly to ends of which I do not approve. I am not afraid of this, because I am convinced that my testimony is more likely to serve those who believed in the accusations, that the accused themselves. It will perhaps contribute to the dispersing of the fog and the darkness which at present extend from the Danube to the Yellow sea. And with my scant means I will have helped truth to emerge. Why should this be of less interest to the Russian

worker, the Chinese peasant, the Korean fisherman than of interest to anyone else? I believe that it is precisely for them that this is most important.

Some people will say—and I can hear them already—that there exists another fog and other lies, in the United States, for instance. That is true, no doubt. Great American writers—not to mention French and English ones—often denounce the inconsistencies and social ills of their society. They will continue to do, I imagine. Without wishing to lecture anyone and by simply following my own course and that of so many Hungarian writers, I can say that the best a writer can do is to sweep his own doorstep. If, for example, Soviet writers had done less “exposing” of the West, and instead had shown, however discreetly, more of Stalin's crimes (pure wishful thinking, I know), then the world would be better for it, and so would certainly be Soviet literature.

Several people have asked me if I was not afraid that people might say: “Here is a witness who said ‘yes’ in the past and who is saying ‘no’ today. Had I thought of that?” Yes, I had. And this is precisely what was tormenting me. But just because I had been mixed up in a lie, through both the fault of others as well as my own, must I remain with it to the rest of my days?

A great many Hungarian writers and journalists have had to face the same question: “You’re a good one to talk about the crimes committed by Stalin and Rakosi.” Poets were told. “You who had written odes to them!” “You’re a good one to talk about troubles of the peasants and the hardship of the workers, you who had written a poem entitled: “A victory each day!” We had the personal experience of passing under the whips and it was the crimes, the mistakes and the errors of the past which were hitting us.

And yet this path had to be taken. Quite simply because there was no other way. Happy, and to be envied are those who have never erred. Those who have no amends to make. I am not one of them.

To all that, I will add a series of paradoxical events. I’ve already said that the Korean Foreign Minister who had thrown the germ accusations had been executed and that the Deputy Health Minister disappeared without trace. On the other hand, the journalist who at that time when I was sending my reports from Korea, was editor of the Foreign Affairs Section on the *Szabad Nép* (central paper of the Hungarian Workers Party) as well as his colleague who had been the proof reader of my Korean book before its publication, were both thrown into prison in Hungary for having taken part in the revolution.

The other day, there was a knock on the door of my modest room in Paris where I am now a refugee. It was the ex-editor of “*Szabad Nép*,” the same who had signed the telegram sending me from Gaesong to the “germ war” area. At the time, he believed in it firmly. Since then, he has had to leave Hungary for also having taken part in the revolution.

The Hungarian revolution was the revolution of people who had been duped, of “nation deceived. Of workers who had been told lies and told that they had become the owners of their factories. Of peasants who had been given land to appease them but which was now being taken away from them. Of intellectuals who had been deprived of their sole treasure: reflection.

If there had not been such flagrant differences between the facts and the words, if there had not been an abyss between the propaganda and reality, perhaps the revolution would not have broken out.

“What’s the point of all that?,” the author of these articles has been asked. Well, what was the point of all the lies, deceptions, the cheating in Korea, in Hungary and elsewhere?

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To end, I should like to say a few words to those who, with me, took part in the propaganda surrounding the bacteriological warfare, and who lent credence to it with their name and authority. I beg them to think once again about what they had seen in Korea. That they reconsider all that in the light of Khrushchev’s revelations; in the light of the affair of the doctors and the events in Hungary. If they have any doubts, let them be made public, just as at the time, their evidence had been made public.

I should also like to turn towards the Chinese Peoples Republic. Various Communist individuals, Poles, Yugoslavs, who have recently spent some time in China, have informed me that some Chinese leaders in the course of friendly conversations, stated that they considered the whole Korean War to have been a mistake into which they had been pushed by Stalin. And that they believed the accusations made about germ warfare to have been without foundation. If that is so, and I do not doubt it, then it is not enough to exchange such confidences in small gatherings and in cozy chats during a nice dinner. It is certain that if the Chinese leaders were today telling the truth on the war in Korea in general and on germ warfare in particular, this could contribute towards an international lessening of tension and generally improve the international situation of the People’s Republic of China. They would thus make a bigger step towards reconciliation and towards peace than a dozen Peace Congresses and the releasing of thousands of white doves.

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After so many tragedies and national catastrophes, having come from a country which has seen so many ruins and so much sorrow, and as stateless that I now am, I nevertheless retain the hope that the world will one day find a way to progress in peace without either 'A' bombs or 'H' bombs. I trust in man who, though fallible, weak and responsible for many faults, in man who can be deceived once, twice, a hundred times, but who continues to thirst for truth and who, in spite of everything, ends by finding it—or at least come near it. That is why I undertook the painful task of examining my past.

I am happy to have done so.

I don't know whether complete freedom and peace are possible in this world. However, I now feel more free and more at peace than before.

END

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**Document No. 18**

[Source: Personal papers of Milton Leitenberg. Accessible at  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123088.>]

HARRY S TRUMAN  
INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI  
July 25, 1969

Dear Congressman Kastenmeier:

In reply to your letter of July 11th, I wish to state categorically that I did not amend any Presidential Order in force regarding biological weapons, nor did I at any time give my approval to its use.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Honorable Robert W. Kastenmeier  
House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C. 20515

*Note*

President Truman's signature appeared in the original letter.

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**Document No. 19**

[Source: *Yanhuang chunqiu* no. 11 (2013): 36-39. Translated by Drew Casey. Accessible at  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123080.>]

**([*Yanhuang chunqiu*] Editor's Comment:** This essay is the posthumous work of Comrade Wu Zhili, former director of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army Health Division. With the exception of a few sentences and obvious typographical errors, this journal did not permit alterations in order to not influence the understanding of its contents.)

It has already been 44 years (in 1997) since the armistice of the Korean War, but as for the worldwide sensation of 1952: how indisputable is the bacteriological war of the American imperialists?

The case is one of false alarm.

That year the Party Central Committee confirmed (at least at the beginning) that it believed that the U.S. Army was conducting bacteriological warfare. We mobilized the whole military and the whole nation, spending large amounts of manpower and materiel to carry out an anti-bacteriological warfare movement. At the same time, American imperialism was also

notoriously reaching a low point. When the former commander of U.S. Forces in Korea, [Matthew Bunker] Ridgeway, was transferred to Allied Headquarters Europe at the end of 1952, crowds jeered him at his arrival to the airport, calling him “the god of pestilence”<sup>55</sup> and causing him embarrassment. Not until he swore by the name of God that the U.S. military did not undertake bacteriological warfare was he allowed to go.

The affair originated with the appearance of large numbers of flies<sup>56</sup> and fleas on the snowy winter ground. It was later learned that these were snow fleas (in Korean called ‘oguli’), not human fleas,<sup>57</sup> and that they are a natural phenomenon on the snow in the winter. Snow fleas are of the order Springtail (*Collembola*), genus Dark springtail (*Isotomopalustris*)<sup>58</sup>. I also had reports of snow fleas in Northeast China. At that time we thought flies and fleas could not be found on the snow, and given that foreign newspapers were reporting that Japanese bacteriological war criminal Ishii [Shiro] had come to the front lines in Korea to investigate suspicious deaths on the U.S. military side, the Central Committee determined that the U.S. military was conducting bacteriological warfare.

The principal course of the affair was as follows: On January 29, 1952, the [Chinese People’s] Volunteer Army Health Division and Volunteer Army Headquarters received a telegram from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Army claiming that U.S. planes flew over Pyonggang county (where that army was encamped) on January 28, 1952, and on the snow-covered ground in the trenches many types of insects were discovered. Among them were fleas, flies,<sup>59</sup> and spider-like insects. The 42<sup>nd</sup> Army sent specimens of 23 fleas (snow fleas), 33 flies,<sup>60</sup> and spider-like insects. Our chemical testing lab conducted cultures and did not discover pathogenic bacteria. The head of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Army Health Division was Gao Liang, a very attentive and qualified health cadre who had been the head of education at the medical school when I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. He must have been somewhat on alert about bacteriological warfare in order to send this telegram. The 42<sup>nd</sup> Army’s telegram was also sent to PVA Command, where it drew the a high degree of attention from Commander Peng Dehuai, was forwarded to the Party Central Committee, and was sent to every unit to alert them and require timely reports of any similar situations. At that time almost all units sent telegrams of similar discoveries (within two months there were close to a thousand reports), reporting that the enemy dropped all kinds of things, including dead rats, flies and large mosquitos, vessels with insects (which were U.S. Army iron 4-compartment ammunition cases and paper parachute tubes used for spreading propaganda material), tree leaves and snakes, and one or two units reported that some North Korean citizens had suddenly died. [There were also] reports that large amounts of dead fish floated up in the river, and ten or more specimens of

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<sup>55</sup>The Chinese word used, *wenshen* [瘟神], is a deity traditionally believed in Korea and China to cause disease and pestilence. The fact that European crowds were using the name of a Chinese deity in this case may be embellishment by the author.

<sup>56</sup> More specifically, “houseflies.”

<sup>57</sup> The Chinese term is generally used to refer to the *Pulex irritans*. The original article uses the common names for organisms, except in a few cases where the scientific name is given parenthetically after the common name in the text. In all other cases, the translator has provided the scientific nomenclature in the footnotes.

<sup>58</sup> Possibly intended to refer to *Isotomurus palustris*.

<sup>59</sup> Although the author used the term for “housefly” above, this instance uses only the more general categorical sense of “fly.”

<sup>60</sup> Here the author uses the term “housefly” again.

small dead fish (crucian carp<sup>61</sup>) were sent in, which a bacteriological culture found to have pure salmonella. *People's Daily* again reported that U.S. planes were dropping bacteria, dead rats and other things.

Coincidentally, at that time suspicious deaths were discovered on the U.S. military front lines, and the U.S. military sent Japanese bacteriological war criminal and former head of Unit 731 Ishii to North Korea to investigate this matter and publish this information. Based on the above information, the Party Central Committee determined that the U.S. military was conducting bacteriological warfare. After just a few days, on February 22, 1952, the front page of the *People's Daily* ran an eye-grabbing top headline, which, in the name of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army and the North Korean government, denounced the U.S. imperialists for carrying out large-scale bacteriological war in Korea and Northeast China. Photographs of the dropped objects and bacterial smears were attached. This drew jarring and successive condemnation from the whole world. Prior to this, we did not know *People's Daily* would publish so quickly. After publication, I said to Health Division Deputy Director Zhu Zhiguang (since passed): "From here on, we should be passive." Zhu said, "After today, we can only write an article."<sup>62</sup>

The Central Health Division<sup>63</sup> was under the charge of Deputy Director He Cheng. He had worked in Northeast China, and knew that Japan's Unit 731 had engaged in<sup>64</sup> bacteriological warfare. He knew Ishii's person and deeds, and that they were *his* mistaken decision- and the Party Central Committee agreed. He sent entomologist Professor He Qi and bacteriologist Professor Wei Xi (both of them since passed) to Korea to investigate. Before they came, we had already dispatched men (including myself) to the reporting units many times to ascertain the situation, an investigation which concluded that there were insects and other objects dropped on the snow, but which did not discover people who had died suddenly or suspiciously fallen ill. Units that had previously reported deaths said that the reports had been hearsay. As for flies, almost every house has them in front of and behind the stove—they could fly out the door onto the snow at any time.

My personal analysis was: (1) Imperialism is capable of carrying out all manner of evils, and bacteriological war is not an exception. (2) Severe winter, however, is not a good season for conducting bacteriological war. When the weather is cold the mobility of insects is weakened, and is not conducive to bacteria reproduction. (3) Dropping [objects] on the front line trenches, where there are few people and sickness does not spread easily, and where the U.S. military's trenches are not more than ten meters away, allows for the possibility of ricocheting. (4) Korea already had an epidemic of lice-borne contagious diseases. All the houses in the cities and towns had been burned down, and the common people all lived in air-raid shelters. Their lives are already difficult, but the Korean people are extremely tenacious and bacteriological warfare

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<sup>61</sup> *Carassius carassius*.

<sup>62</sup> Zhu uses the word for an academic article [*wenzhang*, 文章] rather than the word for an official report [*baogao*, 报告].

<sup>63</sup> It is unclear whether this refers to the PLA Central Health Division or a national government central health division, but in either case it is superior to the PVA Health Division.

<sup>64</sup> The word in Chinese translated here as 'engaged in' often has a negative connotation, and can imply that the speaker/writer feels that the action carried out was nefarious.

cannot be the greater disaster that forces them to surrender. (5) Our preliminary investigation still could not prove that the U.S. military carried out bacteriological warfare.

I reported my viewpoint to Deputy Commander Hong, and he agreed that I should send a report of my opinion to Commander Peng and the Central Committee. I suggested that it would be wise to not publicize this as a major matter, in order to avoid being passive and wasting manpower and resources (this was before Professors He and Wei had arrived). Just then, a telegram arrived from the Central Committee, criticizing my lack of vigilance and saying that the enemy had not carried out bacteriological warfare, but that we could still take advantage of this to reinforce health work. Afterward Professors He and Wei carried on with their investigations and observed insect specimens and bacterial smears. He discovered that the so-called fleas were snow fleas, while Wei discovered that although the stained snow flea smears seemed to have bubonic plague<sup>65</sup> bacteria, they showed to be gram-positive (bubonic plague is gram-negative). They could not culture plague. I asked their opinion. He Qi said (verbatim), “I think it’s a *false alarm*.”<sup>66</sup>

After Commander Peng saw my telegram, he requested that I give an in-person report. Deputy Commander Hong asked me to give Commander Peng a realistic account of my viewpoint. Coincidentally, Chief Kim of the Korean People’s Army Disease Prevention Bureau was ordered to come get to the bottom of things and discuss with me how to manage the situation, because they also could not come up with evidence. I took him with me to see Commander Peng, hoping that Kim could be a witness to the fact that evidence of bacteriological warfare could not be found. That evening, we arrived at the PVA Headquarters in Hoechang County (We were posted at Seongcheon County, about a two-hour drive from the Command). Commander Peng, Deputy Commanders Deng Hua and Song Shilun, and ten or more others were sitting. We reported the results of our investigation and our opinions as stated above. Commander Peng said sternly (this is the general idea): “Our Health Director is an America imperialist operative and speaks on behalf of the enemy. Can the health of the Volunteer Army be guaranteed?” Then he said, “There are others who report that you<sup>67</sup> are neglecting the sick and wounded. If a thousand or ten thousand die on the battlefield that’s fine, but if one dies afterwards I will come to you for a reckoning.” I said, “I will no longer act as Health Director. I have no other request, except please let me stay in Korea and fight.” Commander Peng declared the meeting temporarily in recess for the standing committee to deliberate. When the meeting resumed, Commander Peng said, “The standing committee still wants you as the Health Director. Do a proper job. Set up a general disease prevention office and be the deputy director. Deng Hua will be the director.”

On the road later with Director Kim, he said that he was scared and trembling because he thought I’d be beheaded. He also said, “Your Commander Peng is great, he loves the troops! He both educates you and regards you highly. You have a good Party, and a good Commander. After returning to post, I reported everything to Deputy Commander Hong, including what Commander Peng said to me personally. Hong did not utter a word, except to say “Do a proper job!” After only a few days, the Director of the Northeast Military Region Health Division, Dai Zhenghua (since passed), was tasked by the Central Military Commission to investigate anti-

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<sup>65</sup> *Yersinia pestis*.

<sup>66</sup> In the original manuscript, the author has He Qi saying the term “false alarm” in English.

<sup>67</sup> The Chinese word used here is second person plural.

bacteriological warfare work. I gave him a report of Commander Peng's instructions. Dai said, "Don't be afraid, just go do what Commander Peng said." That night at midnight, I received a phone call from the Soviet Chief of Staff at Headquarters who, through a translator, said, "Stalin has asked whether bacteriological warfare is really occurring." I answered, "Go ask Commander Peng," and hung up the phone. I thought to myself, this is really hard to figure out! If I don't do this right I'll be beheaded. I should prepare myself to be beheaded.

After only a few days, He Cheng and Gong Rengquan organized a disease prevention inspection unit with a 30-person strong line-up that included He Qi and Wei Xi and had it come to Korea to aid in countering bacteriological warfare. Among them were:

- Entomologist He Qi
- Flea expert Liao Zhiying
- Parasite experts Wu Guang and Bao Dingcheng
- Bacteriologists Wei Xi, Chen Wengui (a plague expert who proved that Japan used the plague during the War of Resistance), Fang Liang (Korean), Xie Zhimu, Guo Shiqin, and Cheng Zhiyi
- Virologist Guo Chengzhou
- Epidemiology experts He Guanqing and Yu Huanwen
- Expert in *Rickettsia* corpuscles Liu Weitong (who is also an epidemiology expert)
- Approximately 10 young scientists (Ren Minfeng, Wu Zilin, Hu Jietang, Li Yimin, Li Zhenqiong, Gao Yundiao, Liu Yujing, etc.)
- 10 or more photographers and technicians

I divided them into 4 teams, the largest of which I placed near the Health Division. I placed the other 3 teams in the health departments of the Eastern, Central, and Western fronts respectively. These 3 teams were to take charge of the preliminary examination of specimens sent up from the field, and were responsible for directing disease prevention work on the ground. Specimens that had problems in the preliminary examination would be sent to the group headquarters at Seongcheon for a secondary examination. The number of specimens received was large (several hundred), and some had bacteria cultured from them. All of these were *Salmonella*-type, and neither plague<sup>68</sup> nor cholera<sup>69</sup> appeared. A few times anthrax<sup>70</sup> was found on tree leaf specimens. There were all kinds of so-called "dropped objects," but it was difficult to link them to bacteriological warfare.

I quickly formulated anti-bacteriological warfare measures (strengthening individual health measures, giving more types of vaccinations, requiring everyone to pin their trouser leg and sleeve openings tight and wear scarves around the neck, setting sentries to watch the sky, developing methods for collecting and submitting specimens for examination, on-the-spot swatting of insects dropped from the air, sprinkling sanitizer, discovering suspiciously ill personnel first isolate them and then report, etc.) and promulgated them throughout the whole army. I also got Commander Peng's approval (which the PAV Headquarters and allied

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<sup>68</sup> *Yersinia pestis*.

<sup>69</sup> *Vibrio cholera*.

<sup>70</sup> *Bacillus anthracis*.

governments circulated to the whole army) to perform autopsies on the dead, giving a green light to researching the cause of their injury and death.

For the entire year, no sick patient or deceased person was found to have anything to do with bacteriological warfare. Because of our particular focus on health, the number of sick personnel was greatly reduced. Later, in 1987, a few army leader cadres ran into me and said, “The American imperialists engaged in such massive germ warfare but our side didn’t even have one death!” By then, I thought this was unimaginable.

That year [1952] we were busy with receiving investigatory delegations: Li Dequan [Otto Braun, Comintern advisor to the Chinese Communist Party] and Liao Chengzhi led the Chinese team, the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, and the International Scientific Commission. The head of the latter delegation was Royal Society fellow Joseph Needham, who wrote *Science and Civilisation in China*.<sup>71</sup> The deputy head of the delegation was U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences fellow Zhukov-Verezhnikov, who was experienced in this area and was a medical expert at the trial of Japanese bacteriological war criminals in Khabarovsk. He brought a young English translator named Mr. Kowalski.<sup>72</sup> Members of the delegation included Brazilian biologist and bat expert Dr. [Samuel B.] Pessoa, French veterinary expert Professor [Jean] Malterre, Swedish clinical laboratory scientist Dr. Andrea Andreen (female), and Italian biologist Dr. [Oliviero] Olivo. Our own Dr. Qian Sanqiang was the point-of-contact, Doctor Chen Shu was the Russian translator, tropical disease expert Dr. Zhong Huilan and (gynecology) professor Yan Renying (female) were English translators. Of the former two investigation teams, one was entirely Chinese and of course fully cooperated.

The International Association of Democratic Lawyers, not being natural scientists, diligently noted down everything we said, all the while cursing American imperialism. It was not the same with the International Scientific Commission: although they believed that the American imperialists conducted bacteriological warfare, we could not produce proof of the issue. Soviet Academician Zhukov was entrusted [with the task] by Stalin. He was an all-right fellow. When they came to Korea, which was right after the U.S. military conducted a huge bombing raid on Pyongyang, Pyongyang was a field of rubble. The investigation teams first inspected the bacterial evidence dropped by American planes in the Northeast [of China] (July 12 to July 25). Before entering Korea, Zhukov had said to them, “Korea is a battlefield and very dangerous, we might as well make a conclusion about the results of the Northeast investigation and sign it in order to avoid working hard and accomplishing nothing [if we get killed].” The other delegates thought this made sense, and wrote the initial conclusion that the U.S. military had conducted bacteriological warfare in Northeast China. In Korea (July 28 to August 1), they were set up in a hotel deep underground, but were still harassed by American planes at night.

On the day the hearing began, the Korean side reported two cases. One was of cholera deaths: American planes dropped straw baskets on Daedong in Pyongyang, which contained mussels carrying cholera. Patients ate the mussels, got cholera, and died. Korea had not had cholera in many years. The other case was of plague deaths: one day a family discovered fleas on

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<sup>71</sup> The Chinese title for this book is *The History of Chinese Science and Technology*.

<sup>72</sup> This rendering in English is an approximation of the original Russian name filtered through Chinese pronunciation.

the surface of their water jar, which was very strange. After a few days, members of the family fell ill and died. The autopsy revealed plague. Korea had never before had plague. (This case was prepared under the guidance of Professor Chen Wengui at the request of the Korean side, it was similar to what he observed in water jars in the 1940s when Japan dropped disease-carrying fleas at Changde).

The Volunteer Army brought forward the case of two first lieutenants at the 20<sup>th</sup> Group encampment who discovered a dense group of fleas while chopping wood. They collected quite a few and sent them in. Plague was cultured from the fleas. Because we required everyone to tighten their trouser leg and sleeve openings and immediately sanitize areas upon which objects had been dropped from the sky while we were countering anti-bacteriological warfare, the army did not have any sick or dead. The scientists easily accepted this, and they adopted the testimony. The truth of this matter is that the fleas were discovered in small thatched cottages in the forest. These cottages have firewood and other assorted items in them that are suitable for flea colonies. It is difficult to say that the American imperialists dropped these in. When they were giving the above report, they did not mention the thatched cottages. This time when they were asked to go out and testify at the scene, one of them said that Chairman Mao taught him not to lie. He was unable to move. What to do? Only to persuade him to submit to the current needs of the struggle against the enemy and say that the place where fleas were discovered was out in the open. All the flea specimens were human fleas (*Pulex irritans*<sup>73</sup>). As for the plague, that was easy, we [could] cause it to appear.

About the middle of May, Chen Wengui phoned me from our inspection team's bacteria lab to tell me that Fang Liang had lost the plague cultures dropped by the enemy (the bacteria lab was originally Fang Liang's responsibility, in reality the lab had never had plague cultures). Chen Wengui had studied plague with an Indian professor,<sup>74</sup> and discovered it at once. I realized that this was a big problem and immediately notified Director He Cheng in Beijing and Director Wang Bin in Northeast China to promptly send Comrade Men Xin to get the plague cultures or else this would all be [too] difficult to manage. Men Xin (who later served as the director of Military Hospital 203 in Liaoyang, since retired) went to Shenyang, and came back in 5 days with two tubes of plague cultures (packed in sealed iron pipes). I gave one tube to Chen Wengui, and gave the other to the North Korean deputy prime minister of health protection Ro Jin-han<sup>75</sup> in the presence of the deputy captain of our disease prevention unit Li Zhefan. He had asked for the bacteria cultures before, and at this moment he knew exactly why I gave him the cultures. After this, I told Li Zhefan, "In case it will be difficult when the time comes to prove bacteriological warfare, inject me with plague and let me die. This way, the director of the Health Division will have caught the plague dropped by the U.S. military even if it is not iron-clad evidence." He said, "That won't do. We can always think of another way." It was apparent how large the pressure was at this time. Li was of Korean ethnicity.<sup>76</sup> Before Liberation he had done plague prevention work with Soviet experts in Northeast China and was already a

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<sup>73</sup> That is, *Pulex irritans*.

<sup>74</sup> The name of the Indian professor is given in Chinese as *suoke* [索克], but the English spelling could not be determined.

<sup>75</sup> In simplified Chinese pronounced *Lu Zhenhan* [鲁振汉], which in Korean hanja is rendered 魯振漢 or in Hangul 로진한.

<sup>76</sup> That is, ethnic Korean Chinese.

remarkable expert. A few years ago I asked him if he remembered this affair, and he said he did not remember it too clearly.

Within this one year I went to Beijing three times to report on issues related to anti-bacteriological warfare. I saw Premier Zhou [Enlai] every time. Even though Premier Zhou had many matters to attend to, he asked a lot of very detailed questions about this issue. One time, the Korean Deputy Prime Minister for Health Protection went with me to Beijing and gave the Premier a report of the preparatory work of the International Scientific Investigation Team. The Premier asked the Korean side what difficulties there were, and I interjected, after which the Premier immediately asked Deputy Prime Minister Ro what he thought of my opinion. It moved me that the Premier had the noble character to respect the opinions of others, and at the same time made me feel like I should not so wantonly interrupt. One evening, at a little past 8 o'clock, the Premier was eating while discussing issues with me. He only had a small bowl of rice, two small plates of vegetables and a small bowl of soup. Quite a thrifty life.

Before the investigation teams returned to Northeast China, they went to Pyoktong prisoner of war camp on the northern border of Korea and met with several U.S. airmen. They had earlier published in *People's Daily* that they had dropped bacteriological bombs. With the investigation teams, they freely discussed the classes they took on bacteriological weapons and their experience with "bombs that don't explode." After the ceasefire, they were exchanged back to their country. I heard that they were all disciplined for this. I really admire the persuasion work of our personnel in the prisoner-of-war camps.

When the investigation teams returned to Beijing, they signed and published a 500-page-thick black book, *Report of the International Scientific Commission for the Investigation of the Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China*. They were received by Chairman Mao.

After the international scientists gave their report to Chairman Mao, he said, "I see that the American imperialists are experimentally engaged in bacteriological warfare." They unanimously approved what he said.<sup>77</sup>

After Academician Zhukov returned to the Soviet Union and reported to Stalin, a telegram came from the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party saying that bacteriological warfare was a false alarm. Premier Zhou immediately sought out Chief of Staff Huang Kecheng and Deputy Commander Hong Xuezhong and asked, "Have you been up to tricks?" Hong answered, "Yes, otherwise we wouldn't have had anything to report." At that time, China had sent people to Europe to do anti-bacteriological warfare propaganda. Premier Zhou promptly ordered a retraction. Afterwards China did not raise the matter again, but following [generations] did not know. A few people who write books are always inserting that the American imperialists engaged in bacteriological warfare. I always recommend conveying that we were "threatened" by bacteriological warfare, thus taking a more defensible position. When he was sick, Huang Kecheng asked me to pass his opinion to the comrades at the Academy of Military Sciences who were editing an encyclopedia: "The American imperialists did not engage in bacteriological warfare in Korea. Right now the two countries' relationship is not bad, and it would be

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<sup>77</sup> Or, "They unanimously approved this way of putting it."



inappropriate to keep talking about this issue.” When they heard this, they sent someone to ask if there had been bacteriological warfare after all. I only said that we do not have enough evidence.

This has been my silent regret for decades. There has been no other. I only feel sorry for the international scientists who signed their names. Perhaps I am too naïve, because it is possible they knew the truth but obeyed the requirements of the political struggle. If it was like this then fine, but if not then they were deceived by me. I had unceasingly expressed my apology for them to Huang Kecheng. Huang said, “You don’t need to feel this way, this was political struggle! Furthermore you had expressed your views on bacteriological warfare from the beginning. It was not an easy situation, and you were given responsibility too late.”

I think that there will be a day in history to speak clearly about this incident. Now that I am an 83-year-old man who knows the facts and is no longer on duty, it is fitting to speak out: the bacteriological war of 1952 was a false alarm.

September 1997

*(Retrospective from February 2, 2005: Last year, in 2004, Professor Li Yimin at the Military Hospital Academy of Science forwarded an essay written by a professor at a Belgian medical college, discussing this affair in particular, which said: “Russia has published documents from the former Soviet Union. In the fall of 1952, the Soviet Central Party Committee sent telegrams to Chairman Mao Zedong and Chairman Kim Il Sung respectively, claiming that the U.S. military had certainly not conducted bacteriological warfare and that it was a false alarm. The Academy membership of Soviet expert Zhukov has been revoked because he took the lead on producing the black book.”)*

(The author [Wu Zhili] is the former Director of the Chinese People’s Volunteer Army Health Division)

([Yanhuang chunqiu] Editor: Huang Zhong)

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**Document No. 20**

[Source: Personal papers of Milton Leitenberg. Accessible at <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123154>.]

Tibor Méray:

**Germ Warfare**  
Memories and Reflections<sup>78</sup>

The aim of this workshop is to analyze new evidence on the Korean War and to examine unanswered questions. Being a writer rather than a scholar, I would like to start on a personal note. It may sound strange but, personally and subjectively, the first and foremost question that

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<sup>78</sup> An amended version of Tibor Méray’s reflections was published in *The Korea Society Quarterly* 3 (Fall 2000): 10-11, 44-45.

remains unanswered for me, even today, is this: Why was it I who became entangled in this Korea story?

Let me begin at the beginning. I graduated from the Budapest University in September 1946, majoring in Hungarian and Latin literature. Next day I was married and on the following day I took up employment in the editorial office of the central daily of the Communist Party, *Szabad Nép* (Free People). For a year I was learning the profession, then in the fall of 1947, at the age of twenty-three, I was appointed editor of the cultural section of the newspaper. From that point onward I was kept busy with cultural topics, theatre, cinema, literature, music, fine arts, and education. At the same time I also wrote a few film scripts.

On the afternoon of July 21, 1951 the telephone rang on my desk. You can imagine how surprised I was when the head of the party's AGITPROP, who was previously my Editor-in-Chief, asked me what opinion I had of Kaesong. I gave a vague answer—until then I had no dealings with foreign politics, my work kept me busy for fourteen to sixteen hours a day and, at the most, I might have glanced over the headlines of articles that were about foreign affairs. I probably said something like "It is an important place." The reply was as follows: "The reason why I have asked you is because you have to go there on the first available plane. You will be sending reports about the armistice talks."

The shock left me breathless. Until then I had only been abroad twice, to neighbouring Czechoslovakia to attend film festivals. No Hungarian correspondent had ever been to Korea, and, by the way, not even to the People's Republic of China which at that time was not quite two years old.

If I may quote what the great statesman, Winston Churchill, said of Korea in 1953: "I'd never heard of the bloody place until I was seventy-four." Well, at that time I was twenty-seven. (I would like to ask the Korean participants who are present here: please do not be offended! They or their parents would have heard almost nothing about Hungary until 1956. Small countries are condemned to the fate that only wars, revolutions and natural disasters make them known in the world)

I had to prepare for the trip in a great hurry. My weatherproof coat was worn out and I had no time to buy a new one. I planned to buy one in Moscow while waiting for the connecting flight to Beijing. After my arrival there I went to the famous GUM department store. A staff member of the Hungarian Embassy came with me since I did not know Russian. They had suitable coats in the store but there were hundreds of people lining up to buy one. This was not quite as I had imagined the country of "achieved socialism". However, the person who came with me told the people in the line that I was on the way to Korea so they let me go ahead of them. I was witness to the fact that in the Soviet bloc the name "Korea" was some sort of a magic word.

Half a century has gone by since this, and I have been through many things. I have found answers to many questions and have not found answers to many others. For instance, I now know that it was the North Koreans who asked the European communist countries to send correspondents to Kaesong so they could show the UN correspondents that there were Europeans

on their side, too. The one thing that I will never understand until my dying day: why, in Hungary, was it I who became the "chosen one"?

I have to admit that my introduction is not altogether innocent. The organizers of today's workshop, Mrs. Kathryn Weathersby and Mr. Christian Ostermann asked me to talk about the germ warfare. (Tomorrow, at the Korea Society's conference, I will talk about my other Korean experiences) Well, in the telling of the story of my departure to Korea I would like to show what an inexperienced, green person I was when I wrote about the germ warfare. I was not conversant with international politics and was even less knowledgeable about issues such as warfare related to bacteria. This may sound like a preliminary apology. Well, it is!

On the other hand, I can give an exact account of how I became involved in the germ warfare issue. I was in Kaesong on February 22, 1952 when the Foreign Minister of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea stated that from January 28, the American interventionist army had started germ warfare against the Korean People's Army, the Chinese volunteers and the peaceful Korean population, in order to cause mass destruction. This statement was confirmed two days later by the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, Zhou Enlai.

I was horrified. This was an astounding announcement. At the same time I did not see that it had anything to do with me as a correspondent, after all I had been sent to cover the armistice negotiations at Kaesong (by then at Panmunjom).

A week later I received a telegram from my editorial office. It contained a question that was meant to be a reproach. How is it possible that I am sitting in Kaesong where nothing is happening when the whole world is buzzing with news about germ warfare?

On March 2 I travelled from Kaesong to Pyongyang. I will give you a brief account what I saw and heard in the North.

In a half-ruined building that housed the Ministry of Health I spoke with the Deputy Minister then with the Minister himself. They told me in detail how the Americans were waging germ warfare. The Minister showed me a map of North Korea which had twenty two red circles on it: these were the places where, up until that day, germ warfare attacks had been made—mainly along the front and on the Western half of the country.

A number of scientists also participated in the conversation. They led me into a nearby laboratory. Countless bottles and boxes were there, in them were hundreds or thousands of various insects. They said that peasants, village communal committees, health groups and soldiers had sent the insects there.

They stood me behind a microscope and showed me all sorts of preparations. They stated that these had been obtained from flies, fleas, centipedes and fish that American planes had dropped. They added that the strange oval-shaped creatures that I was looking at were cholera bacteria. They also showed plague bacilli. They remarked that not 'all insects and fish were contaminated—this was part of the American trickery. The Americans wanted to create the impression that the emergence of these insects in winter was a natural phenomenon.

All this impressed me. Still, I said that I would like to see a germ attack in real life, rather than insects in a laboratory.

I did not have long to wait. A few days later they took me to look at something on the spot in a little village called Sono-ri. The village people related that on the night before February 28 American planes circled above the village, for a long time and at a low altitude, without dropping bombs. Next morning a peasant found eight small heaps of flies on the ice of the Daedong River. They were alive, crawling and flying about and they soon spread over an area of several hundred meters. The inhabitants of the village spent four days exterminating them by burning dry wood and com husks.

They took me to the river. There were black stripes on the white ice, marks of a bonfire. I did not see any sign of life. I was probably at the twentieth such place when I noticed moving spots. They were hundreds of flies. They were alive and were crawling on the ice, slowly staggering. At one place the sunshine had melted the ice into a puddle. About six or eight flies were swimming in the dirty water. This happened ten days after the peasant mentioned above found them.

The Central Laboratory in Pyongyang showed that the flies were contaminated by cholera. I asked how the flies remained alive in temperatures of minus 5 to minus 10 degrees Celsius. They told me that these flies were a special strain that were bred especially for the purpose of germ warfare. They also explained to me why the flies were dropped in Sono-ri. The Daedong [Taedong] River flows from Sono-ri toward Pyongyang. The waterworks of the capital was located between Sono-ri and Pyongyang. Therefore if the drinking water were to be infected at Sono-ri then the drinking water of Pyongyang would be also infected. It would cause mass death.

Another shocking experience was in store for me, two or three days later in Pyongyang. They took me to the central district of the capital, to Building No.6 in Street Number 2 of Namnun-ri District. Before this I received a cholera immunization. I had to put on a rubber outfit from head to toe, trousers up to my chest, a jacket with a hood which went right down to my eyes, long black boots and long gloves. They tied a white operating theater gown over my rubber suit and a surgical face-mask over my nose and mouth.

A thick seagrass rope was around the block of houses where we went and armed sentries stood next to the rope. No one was allowed to enter or leave this area without special permission.

At this place a grieving couple told me that on the night before March 5 American planes dropped five small piles of flies that fell in their courtyard. Near to them were oblong-shaped white envelopes and South Korean leaflets. The couple set off to work early morning while it was still dark. The flies were found by their two children, one aged six, the other aged two and their sixty eight year old grandfather. Although the grandfather was cautious about the insects, somehow they still touched them. Next day they became ill and died. A laboratory test showed that the flies were infected with cholera.

This is as much as I can relate about my personal experiences. I saw what I saw. Whatever I heard as an explanation I believed and wrote down. What happened to me was exactly the same as happened later to members of the International Scientific Commission who investigated the germ warfare in Korea and who were much more experienced and better qualified than I was. I believed because I wanted to believe. I trusted those who gave me the so-called scientific information just as this Commission did. A member of the Commission stated: "We felt so sure of the integrity of our Chinese hosts that we entirely trusted statements which they made regarding American use of germ warfare. The scientific foundation of the Commission's work consisted of the fact that the delegates implicitly believed the Chinese and North Korean accusations and evidence."

I have to say that my belief was shaken not by Korea but by events in Hungary. Not long after my return to Hungary I realized the extent of the crimes of Stalinism that had been committed in my country and the mass of lies that covered these crimes. At this stage simple logic led me to the history of the Korean War. I asked myself whether they had told me the truth about many things, including the germ warfare. I knew the similarity between the two regimes. The parallel caused me to be filled with doubts. However, in Budapest, I was unable to get at the proof.

I fled to the West after the 1956 Revolution. The *Voice of America* radio station sought me out virtually in the first moment, while I was still in Vienna. They asked me to issue a statement saying that the germ warfare was a lie. I replied that I could not say that I did not see what I saw. The most I could do was to have doubts about the explanations of what I saw. However, until I was able to substantiate my doubts I was unable to speak. "So you still believe in it?" was the rather aggressive question. "I have written and talked for too long about something based on belief. Now I want to find facts," was my reply.

Only science could provide help to find answers to my doubts. Early in 1957, after I arrived in Paris, I sought out the specialist scientists who were considered the best in France: the director of the Pasteur Institute, the head of the cholera section of the same Institute who was the director of the International Institute of Epidemiology, the head of the Entomology Institute, the head of the Bacteriological Department of the University of Medicine and the best known biologist in the country who was also a member of the French Academy. I told them in detail everything that I had seen and heard in Korea. All these meetings lasted several hours and they listened to me with great patience.

I gave an account of their replies in a series of articles in a daily called *Franc-Tireur* in May 1957. There is not enough time to talk here in detail about these articles. I only wish to outline the opinions quoted in them. The French scientists all acknowledged that the campaign aimed at the general public was very cleverly orchestrated as far as propaganda was concerned. While I was relating my experiences to the biology professor Jean Rostand, the member of the French Academy, at one stage he interrupted me saying: "If you keep on with this story even I will believe it!"

At the same time they all found details that were absurd from a scientific point of view. There were such factual errors as made the entire concept unacceptable. One of the scientists

pointed out the fragility of the vibrio, or Asiatic cholera bacterium. In temperatures of minus five to minus ten degrees it is impossible to spread an epidemic with this vibrio. According to the opinion of the director of the Pasteur Institute it would be possible to infect a smaller group, for instance, the General Staff, but on a country-wide scale it would be hazardous even to those who employed this warfare. The opinion of the cholera-specialist director of the Epidemic Prevention division of the Pasteur Institute was that the immunization that I received immediately before I visited a house in the Namnun-ri district in Pyongyang was worthless. Two injections are required against cholera, seven days apart. First 4 billion units then the second time 8 billion. Furthermore, these immunizations become effective only five days after the second injection. The most direct statement was made by Professor Seguy, director of the Entomology Institute, who had studied flies for 45 years. "Using flies in germ warfare is impossible" he said. "Flies can spread cholera where it already exists, transmitting it from infected feces. However, flies cannot hold the bacteria longer than half an hour. Also they cannot, for this purpose, be dropped from a height in paper envelopes. They would perish while falling down,"

I would like to add that the international prestige of Professor Seguy was such that the report of the International Commission for the Investigation of Facts Concerning Bacterial Warfare in Korea and China contained five references to his books. The professor knew this report, he had it in his library earlier on. However, when I visited him he did not have it any longer. "It was all nonsense. I threw it out," he said.

There was a common element in the view of the French scientists. This was evident in a series of questions rather than a statement. Was I present when the flies were dropped on Sono-ri? Did I see the planes actually dropping the flies? Did I see when the cholera bacteria were found? Was I present to the end during the laboratory examinations? Was I present when the insects were dropped on the courtyard in Pyongyang? Did I see who dropped them? Did I see when the old man and the children touched the insects? Was I present when the corpses were taken into the laboratory? And when samples were taken from them? And when they found cholera bacteria in the samples?

Of course, these questions sounded somewhat rhetorical but, essentially, if anything could be substantiated in these accusations made by the North Koreans and the Chinese, it could only be verified if someone followed through every instance from the beginning right to the end.

Incidentally, this was the point where the French professors' interpretation coincided with that of the International Scientific Commission. The Commission's report drew up an ideal scheme, a complete series that, according to its members, would be a source of perfect evidence. This scheme starts with airplanes and then involves containers, the creatures that were dropped, the meteorological situation and bacteriological examinations right up to the establishment of the illness. The report notes at this place: "Naturally, a complete series of proofs could only be found very rarely or never." The Commission itself never followed through such a series and never referred to an individual who would have done so. Thus the term "very rarely" evaporates from the Report and all that remains is the word "never". The Scientific Commission itself, with this fact, qualified the scientific value of its own Report.

I would like to add to this, as an anecdote, that members of the Commission of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, who were also busily investigating the germ warfare in Korea, were taken to the Daedong River, the same place where I had been taken earlier. Where I saw flies, the Report of this Commission mentions "ant-like insects." The laboratory that told me about cholera bacteria informed the Lawyers' Committee that they found "bacteria which caused a disease of the intestines". The two can be hardly the same. This is not all. This Committee was taken to Pyongyang, to House No.6 in Street No.2 in the Namnun-ri district, the same place where I had been earlier. The Committee's Report, regarding this inspection, reads as follows: "In Pyongyang City (as mentioned above) two persons fell ill on March 6<sup>th</sup> and another on March 8<sup>th</sup>. Two of them died on March 8<sup>th</sup>." You will remember that I was told that three persons died. I can only be glad that one remained alive out of the three, even though I will never know whether this fortunate third person was one of the children or their grandfather. I hope that in actual fact all three of them!

When information gathered on the spot was so unreliable and scientific investigations did not substantiate anything, then, according to the simplest logic, we are talking about an invention. With very few exceptions, the opinion of the whole Western scientific community was similar to that of the French scientists. It is another matter that the campaign of hatred that was based on the propaganda of germ warfare was particularly effective in the West, more precisely, in Western Europe. As for the only positive outcome of this propaganda: it was an unimaginably thorough campaign for hygiene that I witnessed both in Korea and China. Due to time limits I am unable to go into details about this.

A big question remains: Who invented the story about the germ warfare?

I have to tell you straight away: I don't know the answer and as far as I know no one has been able to say with certainty who it was.

I would like to attempt an exercise, using the method of elimination.

I find it inconceivable that the campaign started "from below". I have seen many campaigns which started from below": The Stakhanov system, the "Socialist work competition" offered for Stalin's seventieth birthday, the so-called "Peace government bonds" offered "voluntarily" to be deducted from wages. All these "from below" campaigns, which were started off with great enthusiasm, came into existence by reason of the Political Committee of the Communist Party having decided it at the top.

Could the leadership of the Korean communist party have been the initiator? Theoretically it could. More so because there is an unclear factor that up until this day remains to be solved. The accusation of germ warfare was first heard not in February 1952 but nine months earlier. On May 8<sup>th</sup> 1951, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Korea sent a cable to the President of the United Nations Security Council, stating that the US forces in Korea had used bacteriological weapons during the period of December 1950 to January 1951 and had spread smallpox. This accusation had been maintained for a few weeks then suddenly vanished—until February 1952. Therefore it was the North Koreans who came up first—just as in February 1952—with the topic of germ warfare. Why they became silent for several months is a mystery.

However, it can be taken with certainty—if one knows the Soviet-North Korean relationship—that the North Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs could not have sent a cable such as this to the UN Security Council without Soviet permission or instigation. I think that North Korea can be eliminated from the initiators.

Now the Chinese and the Russians are left. A Chinese initiation appears to be less likely in light of the North Korean cable in May 1951. Also making it less likely is that the first accusation was followed by a noncommittal attitude by the Chinese. This contrasted with the North Korean statement in February 1952 when only two days later Zhou Enlai also joined in protest, in the name of the Chinese government. In my opinion neither this second North Korean statement could have been made without Soviet permission or instigation, nor Zhou's protestation made without a preliminary harmonizing with the Kremlin. On the other hand, to support the theory of Chinese instigation I can quote a personal experience. As I have mentioned, I had talks with the deputy Minister for Health, then with the Minister for Health in Pyongyang in March 1952. The first meeting was on March 6<sup>th</sup>. The deputy minister then told me the following, literally: "It was the Chinese volunteers who first informed us about the bacteriological attack when they reported that they had found unusual insects." Three days later, on March 9<sup>th</sup>, the minister asked me, that in any report I might write about this matter, to not mention Chinese volunteers but soldiers fighting on the front. This episode suggests that in February 1952 it was the Chinese who suggested to the Koreans to raise the charge of germ warfare.

Even if we do not exclude the Chinese as the initiators of the 1952 germ warfare accusation the role of the Soviets still remains to be investigated.

They are the most difficult to catch. As far as the Korean War was concerned, they made an effort to present themselves to the outside world as remaining in the background, or at least in the second or third row from the front. They supported the accusation of the germ warfare, echoed it, at home and also at international forums; they also supported the so-called investigating committees which were in fact dependent on them—but as if they had nothing to do with the whole affair. However, perhaps they were not as innocent as they chose to appear.

In this propaganda campaign it was stated—and unfortunately it was true—that the American government had granted immunity to certain persons who, during the Japanese occupation of China, directed a program of biological warfare. They were General Shiro Ishii and several of his collaborators. The immunity they received was in exchange for information gathered from them. However, it is also true that several members of General Ishii's group became the Soviets' prisoners in Manchuria and twelve of them were tried by the Russians in December 1949 in Khabarovsk. Therefore the Russians had at their disposal, beside their own experimental results in germ warfare, material gained from the Japanese officers. This is an important factor because the North Koreans and the Chinese (who had been in power only for two years) were at that stage unlikely to be in possession of sufficient material to enable them to build up a charge of germ warfare, or to compose a 650 page document which was published by the International Scientific Commission—given that the science was mixed with pseudo-science. We can deduce from this that the Soviets were either the instigators or that they participated, right from the beginning, in formulating the charges—or perhaps they did both.



There is another circumstance that is not without interest. I was still in Hungary in the spring of 1950 when the communist leadership raised a charge against the US, stating that they had wanted to ruin the country's potato crop by using Colorado beetles. Similar accusations were heard in Czechoslovakia and Poland. It more than probable than these accusations originated from a central source, namely from Moscow. It was a fundamental factor in the whole Soviet AGITPROP mentality to make the West, and first of all the US responsible for difficulties encountered in any area whatsoever. Has the potato crop failed? This is because of the American Colorado beetles. There are difficulties with Tito? It is the Americans who stand behind Tito. Do they intend to make purges within the communist party? The Titoist conspirators must be unmasked, tried and executed and the Americans must be accused because they are the ones who direct their puppet, Tito. Is there a danger of epidemic breaking out in North Korea and China? Before the outbreak of an epidemic, or before the epidemic becomes widespread we must point an accusing finger at the Americans. This mentality at that time, in 1950, pervaded the young China much less than was the case with the Soviets. This is another indication that the idea to raise the accusation of germ warfare could have originated in Moscow.

Finally something more. While I was writing my series of articles in Paris I unearthed two curious facts. In the joint sittings of the Soviet Communist (Bolshevik) Party's Central Committee and Central Control Committee, on January 7, 1933, Yosif Vissarionovich Stalin stated, in connection with the criminal activities of certain Soviet citizens: "They organize wrecking activities in the collective and state farms and some of them, including certain professors, go to such lengths in their zeal to destroy as to inject the germs of plague and anthrax into cattle and on the collective farms they help spread meningitis among horses, etcetera". In 1937-38, during the show trials an accused person confessed "to manufacturing virulent bacteria in three separate factories in order to destroy herds of Soviet swine". Another defendant admitted that "he had connived with Japanese intelligence to infect the Red Army with highly virulent bacteria in the event of war".

Stalin, therefore, had an old and favorite idea: the accusation of germ warfare. As far as I know he was the first politician in the world who formulated these kinds of charges, pre-dating the North Koreans and Chinese by more than ten years. I do not consider impossible that it was the same Stalin who remembered this idea during the Korean War.

All these are, naturally, presumptions. Fifty years have gone by but I do not know of anyone who has found irrefutable evidence. It is a grotesque situation that while we are searching our minds the solution is perfectly simple. It would be sufficient for a safe to be opened in Moscow or Beijing and we would know everything. Few secrets have been revealed in Beijing but many in Moscow. However, these revelations have been, without exception, in connection with internal affairs, party-matters of the Communist bloc; after all, conflicts with Belgrade or Beijing can also be traced back to the internal affairs of the relevant communist parties. Gorbachev may come, Yeltsin, too, Putin after him, but in the realm of foreign policy the Kremlin does not reveal many secrets. Why? How can we interpret this in any other way than that Russia continues to accept the legacy of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, with all its faults and crimes? Asking this question and establishing this fact causes one to think and suggests a prospect rather disquieting to contemplate!

(Translated by Christine and William Hyde)