

“Our hospital is in the forest”, article about everyday life in a partisan hospital, published in “Rodoljupka. Newsletter of the Antifascist Women’s Front for Primorje”, No. 9, August 1943.

English translation of the article:

“Our hospital is in the forest. We are very curious to see it. We want to know how it’s situated, what the living conditions are like, and what it is like for patients, those who are healing them, and those who are healed.

The paths cross more often, but the confident guide informs us that we are getting close. And indeed, all of a sudden, behind the greenery, a beautiful wooden building appears, one storey high – our hospital. The hospital is surrounded by life. The cart that transports the patients’ dirty clothes has just returned. They need to be disinfected to eliminate the chances of infection.

Our wounded comrades smile at us behind the large glass windows. It’s the room for those who need recovery. A row of tidy beds and numerous trimmed heads and smiling faces.

A nurse awaits us at the entrance, happy to show us how much they have achieved in setting up the hospital.

On the ground and first floor, there are six rooms for the wounded and sick. Everything is tidy and clean. We were not allowed to enter the rooms, only to greet them from the doorstep. The white scrubs of the doctor-comrades and nurses – remind us of the occupied areas. On the one hand, it’s because we thought that only there, doctors could wear white scrubs, and on the other, because these scrubs were brought here with the help of the [partisan] rear [system]. On each step of the hospital, we encounter a bond between our occupied positions and our liberated territory.

In the kitchen, several portions with cutlery are prepared for lunchtime. To us, this presents the achievements of our actions, when we transported hundreds of those food portions for the hospital.

On one table, we see folded laundry. Again, those are the countless packages carried from towns under the [barbed] wire – to the mountain peaks, in the hands and on backs of our female comrades and youth.

They take us to the pharmacy. A comrades in charge of this task proudly tells us that ours is the best-supplied pharmacy in central Europe. We wonder, “But who supplies you with all these special materials?”. The answer is: “The Peoples’ Liberation Council for Primorje”. And now, us, women from Primorje are proud because we see once again how our minute rear labour, such as running errands from shop to shop, has vast importance when its results are gathered and visible all in one place.

We ask them about the water supply. That’s their biggest problem. They have to transport water from afar on mules. Yet everything needs to be washed and cleaned. The laundry is washed by

young women and members of the Antifascist Front of Women from the nearby villages. On top of that, they also come every week to wash and clean the whole hospital and bring more water. Water is also collected from the roof in large barrels. The comrades are finding different ways of managing the situation, all to keep the hospital safe from the enemy. Since the forest locations with water springs are marked on the maps, the enemy can attack them.

Comrade Hospital's Commissar cares for the wounded' mood and peace of mind. He reads twice a day with everyone, and then there are discussions. Each department has an elder who is also in charge of that work.

We came to the doctor's room and found the other manager there. We haven't prepared any questions to officially "interview" him, but we're quickly getting the hang of it. The question comes naturally:

"Tell us, comrade, what do you most need so that we can tell our friends who organise actions?"

And the agreement is there right away: "It's good that you came, we were just discussing this. As always, we need all kinds of medicine, food, especially diet food such as rice, white semolina and flour, sugar, honey, canned goods, etc. Furthermore, we need laundry for the sick, and for the nurses, we need more white robes, rubber slippers, and white headscarves. To be able to work in the evenings, we need lights. Our hospital should be regularly supplied with fresh fruit, vegetables, and cigarettes."

We said goodbye to everyone at the hospital with the promise that we would continue collecting for the hospital."