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On Some Issues of Soviet-Korean Relations

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Summary:

The Czechoslovak Ambassador to Moscow reports on Soviet-North Korean relations, describing a visit to the Soviet Union by Kim Il Sung and a North Korean delegation which was meant to increase economic cooperation between the two countries.

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On some issues of Soviet-Korean relations

The recent visit of a governmental delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, headed by c. Kim Il Sung, in the Soviet Union was a significant event in the Soviet-Korean relations. The visit was initiated by the Korean side. In preliminary negotiations, Korean comrades expressed a wish that the program of the delegation's visit does not include mass political events and that the talks concentrate on practical problems of Soviet-Korean relations. Soviet comrades accepted this request, and thus only when visiting Gorkyi (today's Nizhnyi Novgorod - translator note), the Korean delegation, after some hesitation, took part in an official evening reception at the occasion of the Day of the Soviet Army. From this attitude of Korean comrades, it is possible to draw a conclusion that they did not want to appear in public with extensive speeches. C. Brezhnev greeted the delegation, and then the delegation met twice with c. Kosygin. The Soviet side paid close attention to the Korean delegation in Moscow as well as in every place the delegation visited.

According to the assessment of Soviet comrades, the talks and consultations went well. Korean comrades openly commented on serious international political issues. They strongly criticized recent events in China, they condemned the Cultural Revolution, its methods and form of implementation, and the political goals pursued by the Mao Zedong's group. Especially in conversations with c. Brezhnev and c. Kosygin, they voiced their concerns and criticized some aspects of the Chinese foreign policy (position on Vietnam, the unity of socialist countries, and the anti-Soviet campaign). However, they did not comment on these issues publicly. Their position on these issues, according to the opinion of Soviet comrades, reached the extremes currently possible for Korean comrades.

The Korean delegation was pointing out that the leadership of the Chinese CP increased its attacks on the DPRK, to which the DPRK reacted in a declaration of the Korean Press Agency, as well as in press conferences at some embassies of the DPRK. Members of the delegation were also mentioning that the Chinese leadership was exerting political and economic pressure on the DPRK, especially after the national conference of the Korean Labor Party and after KWP delegations took part in 18th Plenary of the CPSU and in other plenaries of fraternal parties. Besides that, the Chinese side is initiating all kinds of provocations at the border, and is also influencing Koreans living in the PRC. The Chinese side is applying economic pressure by limiting deliveries of raw materials and goods that are of vital importance for the DPRK, like coking coal, sulphur and some foods. On the other hand, Chinese authorities lately criticize strongly deliveries of Korean products to the PRC. The Korean delegation did not rule out that the Chinese side could in time completely cut off all economic ties.

Members of the delegation mentioned that the last developments in China are also

energizing provocative actions of South Korea that are supported by the USA, some of which could now lead to increased tension. They were criticizing very strongly the position of Japan that granted South Korea considerable aid in the total amount of 800 million USD (500 million USD in credit and 300 million USD in reparations). Then they talked about the increase of political influence of Japan in South Korea, and about penetration of Japanese capital. The DPRK is undoubtedly concerned about all these things, even though members of the delegation did not talk about it directly. According to the opinion of Soviet comrades, the main reason for these concerns is a possibility that these factors can represent certain stimuli for development of South Korean standard of living. In connection with the strong criticism of Japanese government's policy from the DPRK side, certain exaggeration of the militarization process in Japan is noticeable. It is well known that Korean comrades are critical of the Soviet Union's policy towards Japan, even though delegation members did not talk about it during their stay in the USSR. Soviet representatives are explaining in detail at various occasions the approach of the USSR towards Japan, and are informing Korean comrades about visits of Soviet delegations in Japan and about the overall development of relations. It appears, though, that while the Korean side is accepting Soviet information in this regard only formally, Korean comrades so far cannot be convinced about correctness of the Soviet approach to Soviet-Japanese relations. According to the opinion of Soviet comrades, a more flexible attitude of the DPRK towards Japan could be very positive for development of political and economic relations.

The Korean delegation came to the USSR with number of proposals, especially in the area of economic cooperation. During talks, Korean comrades avoided talking about aid from the USSR, obviously following the thesis of Kim Il Sung who stated that any help from the USSR and other socialist countries could be viewed in South Korea as certain dependency of the DPRK on these countries.

Proposals of the Korean delegation can be summarized in 4 points:

1. Aid of the USSR with construction and expansion of Korean factories;
2. Widening the scope of Soviet shipments;
3. Cooperation in logging on the territory of the USSR;
4. Shipments for securing the defense of the DPRK.

Even though in most cases, the Soviet side fully met requests of the Korean delegation, it was not possible to satisfy some of the requests (for deliveries of natural India-rubber, soybeans and wool). The Korean delegation asked for delivery of 200,000 tons of grain in 1967, with a requirement that the USSR commits to delivery of the same amount even in the next years. The USSR could not agree with these terms and promised to deliver only 75,000 tons this year. The Korean delegation also requested already for this year delivery of 400,000 of coking coal. The USSR promised to deliver 200,000 tons. These deliveries involve number of obstacles because coking coal needs to be transported from the European part of the USSR, which creates extraordinary demands on transportation and increases costs. It is possible that in these several cases, the results of talks did not quite met the expectations of the Korean delegation, but some of its requests exceeded current capabilities of the USSR.

Already during talks in the summer of last year, the DPRK asked for construction of an oil refinery with yearly capacity of 1 million tons. During the last negotiations, Koreans asked for an increase of capacity to 2 million tons, with which the Soviet side agreed, even though some Soviet experts believe that such a capacity is not for the

DPRK currently necessary. The refinery will be supplied with Soviet oil. Based on the negotiations, the USSR will help with construction of an ammonia production facility with yearly capacity of 50,000 tons, and also with reconstruction of a metallurgical plant.

Koreans asked for help with reconstruction and further development of coal mining industry. It was agreed in negotiations that Soviet and Korean experts would jointly produce a technical report and then the both sides would make final assessment of and decision about further steps.

The USSR promised help with geological survey (crude oil and ores). Also promised was help with equipment for laboratories of the DPRK's Academy of Sciences.

Koreans came up with a request for construction of a plant for production of aluminum. Here again, a group of Soviet and Korean experts will produce a technical report before the final approval.

The Korean delegation asked for renewal of cooperation in logging on the Soviet territory, with which the USSR agreed. The USSR further promised to deliver about 100 pieces of specialized machining equipment and, as a supplement to the summer 1966 agreement, 100,000 tons of super phosphates.

The USSR met fully basic Korean requests for a shipment of special equipment for securing defensive capabilities of the DPRK.

The Korean delegation expressed a request that the USSR accept 400 Korean professionals and students for study and learning on the job. The Soviet side considers this proposal of the Korean side as very important, and agreed to it.

Issues of future possible cooperation were also assessed during the talks. Some of these were solved during the talks; most of them will be reviewed later. The Korean delegation was stressing the possibility that economic cooperation can be terminated by the PRC at some point. Even though Soviet comrades do not believe that the PRC would go that far, they think it is necessary to do some preparation for possible further limitation of Korean-Chinese economic relations.

The Korean side is still falling behind in its shipments of goods to the USSR. During talks in summer of last year, Koreans promised shipments of tobacco, cigarettes and kitchenware of not very good quality. During current talks, they did not make any offers like those, even though it is well known that for instance half of shipments of non-ferrous metals the USSR is interested in is exported to capitalist countries. During the talks, the Korean side stressed the importance of the 50th anniversary of the GOSR. After a long time, members of the delegation again talked about friendship and cooperation between the USSR and the KWP while in the past, they were stressing friendship between peoples of the both countries.

There are still some differences in position of Korean comrades on some issues. Koreans do not promote the concept of peaceful coexistence; they justify it by the fact that they live in a divided country. It is to be expected that even further on, they will not fully understand the Soviet approach towards Japan, correctness of which only life can prove to them.

During conversation with c. Brezhnev, it was critically discussed that c. Khrushchev promised three times to visit the DPRK and did not keep his promises, and also that he allowed polemics to grow in published articles. During the talks, neither the Soviet nor the Korean side talked about issues of calling an international council of communist and workers parties.

When preparing the communiqué, Soviet comrades thought it was not necessary to mention the Soviet aid with securing the defense capabilities of the DPRK but the Korean delegation insisted on including it. Korean comrades also did not want to use the term "socialist community" and insisted on the term "socialist camp". Further the communiqué stated on their request that the visit of the Korean governmental delegation was on invitation of the Soviet government, which is not true because the visit took place on the initiative of the Korean side.

Even earlier, the Korean side invited c. Podgorny and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Soviet Government c. Novikov for a visit of the DPRK. During the visit of the Korean delegation in the USSR, Korean comrades invited c. Mazurov for a visit. Even though Soviet comrades have not made a final decision, it is expected that both these visits will happen at a suitable time.

Comrades consider the visit of the Korean governmental delegation as a significant step towards the development of Soviet-Korean relations, as well as a milestone in drawing the DPRK closer to the socialist community.

The report was prepared based on conversation with c. Sudarikov, head of the Department of Countries of the Far East, and with other officials of the USSR MFA.