

October 8, 1957
Journal of Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK A.M.
Puzanov for 8-11 October 1957

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Summary:

Puzanov describes a visit to Kangwon and the ongoing reconstruction efforts in that province. Puzanov also comments on Ri Sang-jo's expulsion from the KWP.

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8-11 October 1957

I went to the province of Kangwon together with members of a Soviet government delegation to conclude a Convention on Border Issues.

The delegation was accompanied by Minister of Internal Affairs Pang Hak-se and other senior MVD officials.

During the trip we visited Wonsan, where we were at a steam locomotive, railcar construction, and repair plant and the port; we visited the Tuam [sic] border detachment in the district of Koseong and a military unit of the 3rd Corps of the 1st Army located on the coast three or four kilometers from the neutral zone, and were also in the Diamond Mountains.

The steam locomotive, railcar construction, and repair plant is being repaired with the help of Polish specialists, up to 50 of whom are at the plant.

In a conversation with me Polish specialists said that the conclusion of all the work is planned for the second quarter of 1958. Many young people (18-20 years of age) work at the plant, men and women. Several of them have received technical training in China; others finished apprenticeship schools at the plant and part have had no training.

The considerable number of idle tools stands out. The Polish specialists explain this by a shortage of workers.

It is felt both at the plant as well as in the entire city that more attention is being paid to the Korean-Soviet friendship month. There are very many posters and slogans in the city, and Soviet and Korean flags have been hung everywhere. At the plant many tools are decorated with banners devoted to the friendship month.

In a conversation with me the chairman of the Party committee and deputy chairman of the people's committee informed [me] that a 30,000-person rally of workers was held on the day of the beginning of the friendship month, 7 October.

The seaport is being partially used to anchor fishing ships and partially to receive and process fish.

The port is not suitable for receiving ships - it needs much work to clear it of sunken ships and accumulations of silt and soil.

A survey of the city showed that it was completely destroyed during the war. Only smoke stacks remain from a number of enterprises; from the refinery, wrecked cracking plants. There is little housing in the city and construction is still being done on a small scale. The quality of construction is quite low.

In a conversation with me province leaders reported that the harvest is going normally and more than half of the rice crop has been harvested. In spite of the fact that the crops suffered to a considerable degree from a spring drought and from summer flooding, the rice harvest collected will be somewhat higher than last year's (presumably, an average of 30 centners per hectare). The corn harvest is determined to be 15 centners per hectare against 10 centners received last year. The potato harvest is good, an average of 10 tons per hectare.

The border detachment. The strength of the detachment is 72-75 men. it is

commanded by a senior colonel, with whom our border guards held a detailed conversation. The physical training of the soldiers and the work of the sentry dogs were also displayed. We inspected the grounds of the detachment.

Members of the delegation, border guards General-Major Ivanov and Colonel Ponomarenko, gave a high appraisal of the soldiers' preparedness and the detachment chief's knowledge of the requirements of border service. By way of passing on the Soviet experience of border service our comrades said that they clearly had an insufficient number (20-25 men) right in the detail performing patrol service, whereas in Soviet border detachments the majority of the soldiers are designated for patrol service. The Korean friends thanked [them] for the advice.

In the military unit the soldiers' skill in setting up a field gun (located in an underground shelter) to starting positions and preparing to fire was demonstrated.

General-Lieutenant Sobolev, Deputy Commanding General of the Maritime Military District, gave [them] excellent marks.

Ryu Gyeong-su, the Commanding General of the 1st Army, on vacation in the area of the Diamond Mountains gave a dinner in honor of the Soviet delegation.

It was pleasant to observe the scene of a meeting of old friends, Colonel Ponomarenko met with the Commanding General of the 3rd Corps, and also some commanders who had previously served with him in a detachment and had participated in battles at Khasan.

A statement by Ryu Gyeong-su, the Commanding General of the 1st Army, about the newly-appointed Chief of the KPA General Staff Ri Geon-mo, former Commanding General of the 2nd Army, made in a conversation with our General-Major Ivanov, stands out.

Ryu Gyeong-su said that Ri Geon-mo, is clearly not a suitable figure for chief of the General Staff. When Cde. Ivanov noted that the KWP CC had evidently examined this issue comprehensively and considered all the capabilities of the Commanding General of the 2nd Army, then Ryu Gyeong-su said that of course we will act as the KWP CC decides.

For my part I think that such a negative assessment could have been given because rumors reached Ryu Gyeong-su to some degree that his candidacy was being considered for the post of chief of the KPA General Staff.

According to the assessment and opinion of our military specialist Colonel Stepanov, the Commanding General of the 2nd Army is a more trained military official for the post of chief of the General Staff than the Commanding General of the 1st Army.

During the trip conversations were held with Pang Hak-se. What deserves attention from what was said is that in the assessment of Pang Hak-se no serious material about the subversive activity of the anti-Party group has been unearthed by the investigation since the September KWP CC Plenum. Speaking of the summons of Ri Sang-jo to the KWP CC Plenum in connection with the issue of his Party membership, Pang Hak-se said he should have been expelled from the Party long ago for misuse of money during the war.