



January 11, 1964 Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry

Citation:

“Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,” January 11, 1964, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0015/RT/1964. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai.
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110616>

Summary:

Ambassadors from the Soviet Union, Hungary, and Romania discuss the zealosity of Koreans acquiring new technologies.

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

- English Translation

On 10 January I invited Comrades Soviet Ambassador Moskovsky and Romanian Ambassador Bodnăra to dinner. Comrade Moskovsky told me the following about the problems of the thermal station being built with Soviet assistance in Pyongyang.

On the basis of the reports of the Soviet technical experts involved in the construction [of the power station], last summer he [Moskovsky] was compelled to visit Comrade Kim Il and call his attention to the absence of safety equipment and the neglect of safety regulations at the construction of the thermal power station. Serious accidents were a common occurrence at the construction site, and all the warnings of the Soviet experts were in vain. On the Koreans' part these issues were dealt with in an irresponsible and thoughtless way.

Kim Il received the information with thanks, and promised that he would submit the issue to the Council of Ministers, but it has yielded very little practical results. Last December, 11 fatal accidents occurred at the site. Among others, five Korean workers fell down simultaneously from a height of 27 meters. Of them, three died instantly, while one got caught on a hook by the rib and, having not been taken off for a long time, bled to death. The fifth one got caught on a hook by the clothes, and he had been hanging there for hours until they took him off, but he became mentally unbalanced in his alarm.

In late December, Deputy Premier Nam Il, accompanied by the chairman of the city party committee, the ministers concerned, etc., visited the construction site. He informed the construction's Korean management about the personal instruction of Kim Il Sung: they were to put into operation the first section of the thermal power station by March 1964! Comrade Moskovsky told me that approx. 20 percent of the construction of this first section had been completed in one and a half years, and now they [the leadership] wanted to have the remaining part of the work completed in three months! No one dared to oppose the instruction, both the local and the ministerial leaders promised everything to Nam Il. After the meeting [...] [a North Korean engineer] went up to one of the Soviet comrades and stated: "Have you seen this comedy? Everybody knows it cannot be done, but no one dared to tell the truth!"—Comrade Moskovsky said that 1500 soldiers dressed in pufaika and 1500 workers dressed in linen suits (!) were working at the construction site. In the morning a 40-minute open-air political meeting is held, but during this time they are frozen so much that following the meeting, everybody runs to warm himself, and they begin working as late as around 11 o'clock.

Otherwise, the Korean press investigated issues of industrial safety several times in the last few months.

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(Ambassador)