

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

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Summary:

In this report, Hungarian Ambassador to North Korea József Kovács details a conversation with Soviet Ambassador Moskovsky and Romanian Ambassador Bodnaras about the Soviet interpretation of North Korean-Chinese relations. Moskovsky states that his predecessors underestimated the situation.

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

- English Translation

On 10 January 1964 I invited Comrades Soviet Ambassador Moskovsky, Romanian Ambassador Bodnaras, their wives to dinner. During the conversation that followed dinner, Comrade Moskovsky told me the following facts about Soviet problems that had arisen in the past years in connection with the interpretation of the Korean political situation and perspectives.

The development of the Korean situation and the fact that the Korean Workers' Party took sides with the Chinese party took the Soviet comrades, to some extent, by surprise because, among others, their former Ambassador, Puzanov (he was in Pyongyang between 1957 and 1962), failed to indicate, or underestimated, the tendencies and phenomena of Korean-Chinese rapprochement, which undoubtedly developed more and more as early as that time. Puzanov also took a negative view of the anxieties that were aroused by this development.

Comrade Moskovsky told me that after his arrival (in August 1962), on the basis of his conversations with the various Korean leaders, his other impressions, etc., he had been obliged to form an idea [of the North Korean situation] that was entirely different from what he had been prepared for, or what several high-ranking diplomats of the Soviet Embassy wanted to ram down his throat. With regard to that, Comrade Moskovsky blamed several employees of the Soviet Foreign Ministry and the Soviet Embassy (he mentioned former Counselor Kryukov and current First Secretary Titarenko by name), who were assigned to Korea as many as two or three times, "got accustomed" to the 1954-1956 situation, and were incapable of comprehending the change that had taken place in the political situation [...]. Comrade Moskovsky emphasized that as a consequence, a struggle had been waged at the Embassy with regard to the interpretation of the Korean situation. During the introductory visit and other visits he paid to the Korean leaders on occasion—in spite of the apparently friendly tone—various allusions, etc., were made by the Koreans. However, when he (Comrade Moskovsky) expressed concern about this at the Embassy, Kryukov and others did not attach importance to it; they attempted to jump down his throat ("Kim Il Sung is our man, I am on very good terms with him, we were hunting together," "the minister was lying in a state of drunkenness under my billiard-table," etc.). True enough, some of the diplomats in question have, in the meantime, modified their standpoint; among others, Comrade Puzanov [...] signed a document, in which he had "enumerated but not proved and interpreted" a few phenomena. However, he was forced to do so by the party secretary and some other diplomats of the Embassy, who threatened him with taking him to task along the party line and declared that if he did not sign, they themselves would send it to Moscow!

Nonetheless, no substantial change took place after Comrade Moskovsky had sized up the situation. Moreover, when he, in his quarterly political report, was obliged to describe the problems related to the Korean political situation, it was the same employees, who had returned home but continued to deal with Korea, who evaluated his reports at the Foreign Ministry. They forwarded his reports with comments like "the Ambassador overstates the matters," etc. This situation had developed so far that in the summer of 1963 during his vacation, Comrade Moskovsky said, "I was compelled to appeal to the top man [Khrushchev]. I told him that either the Foreign [Ministry] should be sorted out, or I should be recalled and reinstated in my former position!" (previously he, as Deputy Premier of the RSFSR, had dealt with cultural and ideological issues). That settled matters, and the December 1963 plenum of the CPSU CC also proved him right.

In addition to the development of the chemical industry, the December plenum also dealt with questions of the inter-party debate, and it was Comrades Ponomarev, Ilyichev, and Andropov who gave an account of the latter. In his concluding remarks, Comrade Khrushchev also referred to these issues in more detail. The standpoint of the Korean Workers' Party was also made known in these speeches, and Com. Puzanov's responsibility [for misinterpreting it] became obvious. During the intermissions of the plenum, Comrade Moskovsky said that several CC members, particularly the Ambassadors, had surrounded Puzanov (at present he is Ambassador in Belgrade), besieging him with their questions ("you [ty] always reported that you hunted, were on vacation, and drank with Kim Il Sung, and that everything was fine!", etc.), and afterwards, Puzanov did his best to spend the intermissions in the restroom!

Comrade Moskovsky told me that the six thousand participants of the plenum had reacted with deep indignation and a loud outburst to a piece of information given in the concluding remarks of Comrade Khrushchev: at that time, the Soviet government managed to [...] get Eisenhower to eliminate the humiliating fingerprinting that had been required of Soviet citizens who entered [the United States], then recently Kim Il Sung introduced it with regard to the Soviet specialists! The Korean officials demanded fingerprints from the Soviet technical experts who worked at the construction of the radio station, the experimental nuclear reactor, and the weaving mill (!) which were built with Soviet assistance and co-operation, and they made them fill out a form of 72 questions, in which they had to describe their circle of relatives and friends in detail, with addresses! A Korean "colleague" told one of the technical experts that "if we cannot get you for some reason, we will get your relatives; this is why it [the questionnaire] is needed!"

[...]

József Kovács
(Ambassador)