

May 8, 1958
Journal of Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK A. M.
Puzanov for 8-9 May 1958

Citation:

"Journal of Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK A. M. Puzanov for 8-9 May 1958", May 8, 1958, Wilson Center Digital Archive, AVPRF fond 0102, opis 14, delo 6. Translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116268>

Summary:

Torbenkov reports on the construction of a cement plant, an irrigation system, and an agricultural collective in North Korea. Nam Il outlines plans to improve sanitation and prevent illnesses from spreading.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from ROK Ministry of Unification

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

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USSR EMBASSY IN THE DPRK

№ 102

14 May 1958

[faded MFA stamp:

0132

22 May 1958]

[handwriting: "copy to
Torbenkov"; illegible
signature and abbreviation]

JOURNAL

of Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK A. M. Puzanov during the
period 29 April through 12 May 1958

[handwriting: "Please show to Cdes.

Nikitin

Samsonov

Andreyev

Kovalev

Ognev

N. Torbenkov

29 May 1958"]

Pyongyang

[...]

8-9 May 1958

At Nam Il's invitation, together with Embassy Counselor M. Ye. Kryukov, senior desk officer trainee D. A. Priyemsky, and A. G. Chasovnikov, an economist of the GKEhS mission, I visited and inspected the construction of the Novo-Madonsky cement plant. Jeong Jun-taek, Kim Gwang-hyeop [Kim Kwang Hyop], and Ri Cheon-ho (Minister of the Chemical Industry) and chairmen of the provincial Party and people's committees (North Hwanghae) were also at the plant.

By decision of the KWP CC the finish of the construction of the plant, set at 1960 by the five-year plan, was moved to the first quarter of 1959, that is, it was decided to put the plant into operation a year earlier. As a Presidium member, Nam Il was selected as the person responsible for finishing the construction by the designated deadline. Military units of up to 1,000 men are being sent to the plant; there are already 619 of them there at the present time. Therefore the trip to the construction of the plant by Nam Il and Kim Gwang-hyeop is also explained by the above circumstances.

First we inspected the subsidiary enterprises of the construction trust building the plant: a small concrete plant, a carpentry workshop, a brick factory, etc. These

enterprises completely serve the needs of the construction.

Then we inspected how the equipment and materials received from the Soviet Union are being stored. The total weight of the equipment and materials is up to 20,000 tons. The main equipment is being stored well, in covered depots. Of the main structures the following have been done: both furnaces have been put in their places. Welding is going on right now. Columns of precast concrete are being set up for the coal and lime warehouse. Columns are being raised by crane which were built by the Koreans based on the design of Soviet engineer Markin, who is at the construction site. A substation and mechanical shop will finish construction in the near future.

After the inspection a meeting was held with the participation of the construction supervisors and foremen. The state of the work and issues which needed to be decided in order to finish the construction of the plant at the established time were studied in detail. It turned out that there is not enough construction equipment at the plant (bulldozers, excavators) since half of the equipment received from the Soviet Union was sent to other more important construction sites. There are also not enough engineers and building technicians. Kim Gwang-hyeop, who was at the meeting, promised to assign the necessary number of construction specialists from military battalions to work at the construction site, and Minister of the Chemical Industry Ri Cheon-ho [promised] to send engineers and technicians from the ministry. Nam Il promised to examine the issue of help with mechanisms.

At the meeting they turned to us with a request to transfer Stepanov, a Soviet control and measuring instrument specialist, as a very experienced knowledgeable engineer, from the Heungnam mineral fertilizer plant to the cement plant. Chasovnikov, who was present, said it will be possible to do this. In addition, the trust management asked that the dispatch of an additional 16 specialists from the Soviet Union, who are very much needed in installing and preparing the plant to start up operation, be sped up. GKEhS representative Chasovnikov reported that the Ministry of the Chemical Industry has not yet submitted a request [saying] how many engineers need to be sent from the Soviet Union. Nam Il noted, "Do everything possible with your own specialists and it will be necessary to get specialists from the Soviet Union for the essentials".

The meeting which was held will undoubtedly accelerate the pace of construction. However, it ought to be noted that for known reasons Nam Il gave instructions in general form. For unknown reasons the Minister of the Chemical Industry, who was present at the meeting, did not speak. The issues of intensifying mass political work, production competition, and improving the provision of amenities of the construction workers were avoided at the meeting.

Nam Il told us that the current manager of the trust which is building the Heungnam chemical works will be appointed the manager of the construction trust.

We inspected the workers' housing of the plant which is being rebuilt. The houses are two-story, brick, and completely satisfactory.

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We also visited and inspected the construction of the Odidon [sic] irrigation system. At the present time construction of a trench is being done and construction of the body of the dam has begun. The length of the dam is 275 meters and the height is 37 meters. The amount of water in the reservoir is over one billion cubic meters. Twenty seven hundred cubic meters per second will pass through the dam during filling, while the ordinarily it will be 57 cubic meters. An electrical power station will be built at the dam equipped with two turbines with a total capacity of 7,000 kilowatts. According to

the plan the completion of construction is to be in 1961, however the builders have undertaken a commitment to finish the main work by 1960. The total cost of the construction is 900 million won, and the irrigated area is up to 15,000 jeongbo.

Five hundred and sixty construction workers and 600 peasants from surrounding villages are engaged in the construction at the present time. But the work has essentially been halted: there is no cement, metal or wood at the construction project. A narrow-gauge rail branch line has been extended but it is not operating because there is no bridge (up to 150 meters long) across the river and they have not begun to build it. Nam Il promised the builders help.

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We visited and inspected the Honggol [sic] agricultural collective. There are 161 households and 340 people fit for work in the collective. Fifty jeongbo are used for upland crops and 130 for rice. This year cooperative members decided to transplant 100% of the seedlings cultivated by the cold method to the fields. At the present time 30% of the seedlings have already been planted. Of the upland crops seven jeongbo have been devoted to corn and 20 jeongbo to cotton. Forty servicemen engaged in the planting of cotton seedlings in feeding blocks came to the cooperative to help in spring watering work. In 1957 10 jeongbo were devoted to cotton and a harvest of six centners of raw cotton was gathered per jeongbo. In 1958 it is planned to get 20 centners per jeongbo.

The cooperative is building a primary school with its own manpower, the construction of which will be finished by September.

In 1957 an average of 20 centners of grain and 20,000 won were issued to each household for workdays. This year it is planned to issue 40 centners of grain and 50,000 won to each household.

Yang Sin-deok [sic], chairman of the cooperative, has an elementary school education; in 1957 he studied at one-year courses for agricultural workers in the city of Sariwon.

The fact that the majority of useful work is being done manually stands out. No one pays attention to this, no one calculates what an enormous amount of labor is spent per unit of production. For example, cutting the seedlings of cotton into little cubes and removing the cotton seedlings from cold frames is done manually, they are placed on boards separately, whereas this ought to be done during removal from the cold frames. Women move the seedlings to the place of planting (on [their] heads). The planting is done along a long cord with a spacing of 60 x 20 cm, a hole is placed under each plant and mineral fertilizer (ammonium sulfate) placed, the little cube with the seedling is placed in the hole manually, dirt is poured in and packed manually, watered manually, and they also carry the water on themselves a considerable distance.

With a more attentive attitude toward labor costs the expenditure of labor could be sharply reduced in this agricultural cooperative. Unfortunately, there is also such a situation with labor costs in other agricultural cooperatives visited now and previously. Opinions were exchanged about this with Nam Il. He agreed that more serious attention ought to be paid to reducing labor costs per unit of agricultural output produced.

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During the trip Nam Il informed us that the Cabinet of Ministers had adopted a decree which approved a detailed plan of measures to improve the level of sanitation in the cities and villages, to fight for cleanliness and standards [kul'tura], and to eradicate widespread illnesses; he also reported that a meeting of chairmen of provincial Party committees was held in the KWP CC on 7 May. This meeting talked about the speech and instructions of Kim Il Sung which he gave at a meeting of the KWP CC staff concerning the issue of increasing the monitoring and inspection of the work of government and Party organizations in order to prevent excesses in work, and it was also reported that a Cabinet of Ministers decree had been adopted about issues of culture, public health, and the necessary work which provincial Party and people's committees need to do.

Then Nam Il said that Kim Il Sung was indignant about the incorrect behavior of Ministry of Trade officials who had proposed closing the store of the trade mission serving Embassy, Trade Mission, and GKEHs officials, and said that it is intended to open a Korean store to serve all officials of the diplomatic corps, but the issue of closing the Soviet store is to be decided by the Soviet comrades themselves and when they consider it advisable themselves, that is, after we open the store it will completely meet the requests and needs of the Soviet officials.

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In the evening I was at a reception held by Czechoslovak Socialist Republic Ambassador Mikulas Surina on the occasion of the 13th anniversary of the liberation of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops, a national holiday. In a conversation Surina said that he will be evidently recalled after the Czechoslovak Party congress since [their] child is sick and the doctors are not letting [it] go with him to Korea and it is hard to live any longer without [his] wife.

[...]