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Journal of Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK A.M. Puzanov for 4 February 1960

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Summary:

Pak Yong-guk provides information about the progress of the repatriation of Korean citizens from Japan to the DPRK.

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JOURNAL
of Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK A. M. Puzanov for the period
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Pyongyang
[…]

4 February 1960

All the ambassadors were invited to a guest house at Moranbong where Pak Yong-guk, Chief of the KWP CC International Department, provided information about the progress of the repatriation of Korean citizens from Japan to the DPRK.

Deputies to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Gwang-seon and Kim Tae-hui, Hon Don-cheol [sic], Chief of the 1st Department, and other MFA senior officials were present at the conversation.

Recalling that 5,936 people had been sent in six trips since the start of repatriation, 14 December of last year, Pak Yong-guk cited some data about the composition of the repatriates who arrived in the first five groups. Among them are 148 Japanese who wishes to come to the DPRK with their husbands or wives (one Japanese) of Korean nationality. The social composition of the repatriates is: workers (the majority), merchants, owners of small businesses, scientists, persons in the arts, specialists, office workers, peasants, students, and also people without a profession. More than 90% of the adults are from South Korea and only about 10% from North Korea.

The main reasons which prompted the repatriates to go to the DPRK are ethnic discrimination in Japan, the lack of civil rights, and the lack of opportunity to give the children a proper education. The business owners and merchants were comparatively better than others, however the threat of ruin constantly hung over them and there were also subjected to discrimination. Knowing that in the conditions of the DPRK they will not be able to engage in private enterprise these people nevertheless also decided to put an end to a life without rights in a foreign land.

The Japanese who have arrived in the DPRK initially had fears that the Korean population would hate them. However, the warm reception given these people, as all the repatriates, helped dispel these fears. Pak Yong-guk reported that there is information that individual Japanese women want to get married to Koreans in order to come to the DPRK and obtain the ability study at no cost.

The KWP CC and DPRK government adhere to the following policy in connection with the repatriation: provide all the repatriates with work and study in accordance with their specialty and wishes; completely provide them with everything needed for a normal life (an apartment, furnishings, household articles, etc.); systematically

pursue educational work among the repatriates in order to make the advantages of the socialist system clear to them.

The press of the capitalist countries, primarily of Japan, has exhibited considerable interest in the repatriation and placed much material about this issue. Pak Yong-guk cited some newspaper statements which have in common an admission of political defeat of the South Koreans and the victory of the North Koreans Communists. These newspapers describe the repatriation of Koreans to the DPRK as "the first mass movement from a country of the free world to a Communist country".

Pak Yong-guk reported that according to available information the number of those wishing to be repatriated increases with each day, more than 10,000 have already registered, and registration continues. The repatriation will apparently continued for several years. A desire to be repatriated to the DPRK is also expressed by Koreans who consider themselves citizens of South Korea, which also influences the South Korean population. The ruling circles of the US, Japan, and South Korea did not expect that the repatriation of Koreans to the DPRK would take on such a massive nature Convinced of the impossibility of completely wrecking repatriation the South Koreans are striving to at least limit it, resorting to threats, blackmail, and bribery in order to force people who have applied to repatriate to abandon it. Intrigues by the South Korean agent network in Japan have provoked the indignation of the Japanese public at large.

Touching on the activity of representatives of the International Red Cross Committee in Japan there to observe the progress of repatriation Pak Yong-guk cited several facts demonstrating that whereas initially Red Cross representatives regarded the performance of their functions only formally, recently a desire has been observed on their part to put some pressure on the repatriates to force them to abandon repatriation. It is obvious that the Japanese-South Korean talks were resumed under US pressure on 30 January. The South Koreans are speeding up the achievement of an agreement on the question of the legal status of Koreans in Japan in order to step up actions against the repatriation of Koreans to the DPRK and get them to repatriate to South Korea. This complicates the question of repatriation to the DPRK, but at the same time puts the sides participating in the talks in a difficult position: the South Koreans are demanding the Kishi government stop repatriating Koreans to the DPRK but Kishi cannot ignore Japanese public opinion, which supports repatriation and opposes the ratification of the Japanese-American treaty.

Pak Yong-guk said that repatriation is a great victory for the policy of our Party and government, our great success. At the same time this demonstrates the isolation of the Syngman Rhee clique. All Korean people support the DPRK government. And if our proposals about the peaceful reunification of the motherland are realized, then we will win.

In conclusion Pak Yong-guk stressed the great aid of the USSR, PRC, and the other socialist countries in implementing the repatriation of Korean citizens, noted the selfless work of the crews of the Soviet ships transporting the repatriates, and expressed deep gratitude to the Soviet people, the Chinese people, and the peoples of all the fraternal countries for the aid and support.

Reply to questions of the ambassadors, Pak Yong-guk reported that the issue of citizenship of people of Japanese nationality who have come to the DPRK with husbands or wives will be decided later by agreement between the Red Cross societies of both countries; that the citizenship of Koreans in Japan, that is, DPRK and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) is determined by their oral declaration during the registration conducted by the Japanese authorities in 1952.

In the name of the ambassadors the dean of the diplomatic corps, PRC Ambassador

Qiao Xiaoguang, thanked Pak Yong-guk for the detailed information, congratulated the KWP CC and DPRK government for the successful start of the repatriation, and wishes [them] further successes.

After the briefing a dinner was given and a viewing was held of a film about the struggle of Korean citizens in Japan to return to the motherland, about the assembly in Niigata and the departure for the DPRK on the Soviet motor vessels Tobol'sk and Kril'yon of the first group of repatriates, and also about the enthusiastic reception of the repatriates by the Korean people at Cheongjin and Pyongyang. The film was edited from pictures made by the department of culture of the League of Koreans living in Japan and a Korean film studio.

During the dinner I informed the ambassadors and those present about the conference of leaders of the fraternal European socialist countries held in Moscow to exchange experience in the development of agriculture and distributed the Conference Communiqué. I also told of the Central Statistical Directorate reports printed in Soviet newspapers about the results of the January 1959 Soviet census.

The Ambassadors thanked [me] for the information and the delivering the Communiqué.

I asked Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Gwang-seon's opinion about the possibility of sending some small souvenirs to the actors engaged in the staging of the play "Brat'ya", which Soviet Embassy officials saw a few days ago, leaving with a good impression.

Pak Gwang-seon replied that this would be good

I asked what would be better, to send the gifts through the MFA or directly to the theater?

Pak Gwang-seon avoided a direct answer, saying "as the Embassy sees fit, you can send directly to the theater or possibly through the MFA".

[…]

USSR AMBASSADOR IN THE DPRK
[signature] (A. PUZANOV)

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