

April 4, 1955

**Record of a Conversation with Editor of the Journal
“Novaya Koreya” Song Jin-hwa**

Citation:

"Record of a Conversation with Editor of the Journal “Novaya Koreya” Song Jin-hwa", April 4, 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI fond 5, opis 28, delo 314. Translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/116314>

Summary:

Song Jin-hwa and Byakov discuss the North Korean government's recent prohibition on private trade in cereal products and the situation in the Union of Korean Writers.

Credits:

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

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

FROM THE JOURNAL OF [stamp of N. T. [] SECRET
1st Secretary [] Fedorenko's [] Copy № 1
I. S. Byakov [] Secretariat: [] [USSR MFA
[] "Secret [] Far East
[] Incoming № [] Department
[] 492-if [] stamp:
[] 4 May 1955"] Incoming № []
[] 2029s
[] 4/6 May
[] 1955

Record of a conversation
with editor of the journal "Novaya Koreya"
Song Jin-hwa

29 March 1955

Today Song Jin-hwa visited the Embassy as his own initiative.

Song Jin-hwa intended to call his mother, who lives in the Soviet Union, to come to him, and in connection with this asked about the procedure for processing a departure from the USSR.

I explained to him the current procedure for processing a departure from the USSR and recommended talking about this issue with Cde. Seregin, Chief of the Consular Department.

In reply to my question, what is new in the capital, Song Jin-hwa said that right now many are talking about the mistakes made by the KWP and government on the issue of grain purchases and the prohibition on private trade in cereal products. He then told of various cases of how compulsory methods were employed during the grain purchases, even as far as beatings, arrests, and the eviction of peasants. Song Jin-hwa said that inasmuch as the grain purchases had been conducted through an equalization system (in accordance with the agricultural tax in kind paid, whether the peasant had grain or not), they took the last grain from poor and middle peasants by force, but they prohibited prosperous peasants, who still had grain, from selling it, thereby causing discontent in all strata of the peasantry, but they did not wring the actual grain surpluses out the prosperous peasants.

I asked how the prohibition on private trade in cereal products is being reflected in the urban population.

Song Jin-hwa said that the prohibition on private trade in cereal products is being perceptibly felt in a majority of the urban population since the food ration being issued is insufficient and these products are not sold on the market; as a result, one has to live on a single food ration and economize each gram of rice. Whereas before he invited a guest to his place two or three times a month, or went as a guest himself, now guest visits have stopped completely. He has had to dismiss his servant because of food difficulties.

Then Song Jin-hwa said that in connection with the abolition of private trade in cereal products and the 15% reduction of the managerial staff conducted at the start of this year a considerable number of the urban population was left without means of sustenance. About 90% of private Korean cafeterias and eateries have been closed.

On the contrary, private Chinese cafeterias, where the assortment of dishes is broader, are flourishing, provoking discontent among Korean business owners. In these conditions, South Korea propaganda that the Chinese business owners are forcing out Koreans, meets with sympathy among average citizens. In the city many say that Chinese business owners keep several Korean concubines, etc. Song Jin-hwa himself thinks that all these discussions are not without foundation. He said that the KWP CC and the government have made a serious political mistake in questions of grain purchases and the prohibition on private trade in cereal products, which does not promote a strengthening bond between the working class and the peasantry.

Then the discussion turned to Korean literature and the situation in the Union of Korean Writers.

Song Jin-hwa said that Han Seol-ya, the Chairman of the Union of Korean Writers, is a weak-willed individual and a sycophant who surrounds himself with such people. Taking advantage of the weaknesses of Han Seol-ya, Hong Sun-cheol, the Secretary of the Union of Korean Writers, directs all the affairs of the Union. Hong Sun-cheol behaved disgracefully in Moscow during his trip to the second congress of Soviet writers, [details of] which came from a large number of letters from Korean students in Moscow in which the students expressed their indignation at Hong Sun-cheol's behavior. The students reported that Hong Sun-cheol openly stood in a corridor of the hotel for five hours without entering the room given to him, demanding a better room; among the students he declared that there is nothing for him to learn from Soviet writers; he expressed dissatisfaction that eminent Soviet writers had not come to him; once, late in the evening he demanded kimchi (Korean fermented cabbage), for which they were forced to turn to the Korean Embassy, and other things.

The issue of Hong Sun-cheol's behavior is now being examined in the KWP CC.

Then Song Jin-hwa said that in connection with the declaration of a wish for the DPRK government to establish cultural ties with the countries of Southeast Asia and Japan it is planned to publish a journal, "Novaya Koreya" in English and a journal "Narodnaya Koreya [People's Korea]" in Japanese.

Song Jin-hwa said, the publication of the journal, "Novaya Koreya" in English is not yet possible because of lack of personnel who know English but the journal, "Narodnaya Koreya" in Japanese will be published beginning in May this year.

I thanked Song Jin-hwa for the conversation.

The conversation lasted 30 minutes.

Embassy First Secretary [signature]
(I. Byakov)

Four copies printed
1 - to Cde. Fedorenko
2 - to the DVO
3 - to Cde. Tugarinov
4 - to file
№ 277
4 April 1955
Drafted by Byakov
Typed by Fokina