April 30, 1981

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", April 30, 1981, Wilson Center Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1981, 86. doboz, 72, 003729/1981. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai. https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110137

Summary:

A North Korean delegations visits technical universities and colleges in Czechoslovakia and the GDR. North Korea urgently seeks to send post-graduate students and trainees to study in fields related to nuclear physics, laser technology, etc.

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

In this report of ours, we summarize the pieces of information we received from GDR and Czechoslovak diplomats about the visit of a Korean delegation of higher education to Czechoslovakia and the GDR:

The Korean delegation that visited both countries was headed by Han Gi-hwan, the vice-chairman of the Commission of Education. With regard to him, it is worth mentioning that he had studied at Prague Technical University, has a good command of Czech, and knows the Czechoslovak institutes of higher education extremely well. He graduated in technological studies. Perhaps this is why the [institutes] the delegation visited in both Czechoslovakia and the GDR were, almost exclusively, technical universities and colleges.

In both countries the aim of the visit was similar to the purpose of the delegation that had visited Hungary: i.e., in brief, they need technical experts who graduated from institutes of higher education and are familiar with modern technology in order to fulfill the economic targets approved at the 6th KWP Congress, and toward this goal they asked the Czechoslovaks to receive 37 post-graduate students in such technical fields whose subjects mostly belong to the category of state secrets. To mention only a few of the most important ones: microelectronics, laser technology, nuclear physics, enrichment facilities, reactive engine technology, protection of nuclear reactors, electronic equipment of nuclear reactors, isotope separation, and so on.

The aforesaid reveal that the Koreans are concerned mainly about the subject of nuclear energy and they are interested in every question related to it. This interest is not a recent one. For instance, last year they sent 5 post-graduate students [to Czechoslovakia] in the field of nuclear physics, with a concrete program that the Czechs were compelled to reject because of the strictly confidential nature of the field. Thus, the Korean side was forced to recall its candidates for postgraduate studies.

It is characteristic of their [intense] interest [in nuclear energy] that the Korean side would be willing to meet all financial expenses of the 37 post-graduate students. This would also include one year of language learning and 3 years of probation. The Koreans wanted to send half of the post-graduate students as early as February 1981 and the other half in September. The Czechoslovak side rejected this request, saying that they would be absolutely unable to receive post-graduate students this year, and that it would be similarly impossible next year unless it was included in the work plan of cultural cooperation that was to be signed.

In the GDR, the Korean delegation similarly visited technical universities and colleges. They asked the Germans to receive 17 post-graduate students and 41 trainees as early as this September. The GDR was also unwilling to receive them so urgently, saying that due to language and other problems, they would not be able to receive the postgraduate students this year. In order to solve the language problems, two German instructors are to be sent to the DPRK, who will prepare the Korean sponsored students during 3 months of intensive language training. The other problem, about which the Germans did not speak to the Koreans, was similar to that of the Czechoslovaks. Namely, the Koreans asked for receptiveness in fields that are also partly confidential. For instance, microelectronics, optical electronics, laser technology, cybernetics, the technique of chemical and physical analysis, nuclear physics, photogrammetry, non-ferrous metallurgy, and so on.

It is worth mentioning that the Korean side asked the GDR to set up a high-capacity observatory that they want to establish on the Korean-Chinese border. The Germans rejected their request. The German comrades proposed to the Koreans to send post-graduate students to the field of social sciences as well, but the Koreans did not respond to that.

Having compared the experiences of the [North Korean] visits to the three socialist countries (HPR [Hungarian People's Republic], GDR, Czechoslovakia) and discussed it with the Czechoslovak and GDR diplomats, we may reach the following conclusions:

- In order to achieve its economic objectives, it is absolutely necessary for the DPRK to have a supply of highly qualified technical experts. Their effort to achieve this aim is understandable even if they overestimate the opportunities of the fraternal countries and [underestimate] the latter's difficulties with regard to the reception of postgraduate students.
- On the other hand, they do not have a technical and technological basis - particularly in the case of nuclear technology, microelectronics, laser technology, and so on - that would explain the training of technical experts in these fields. This raises a question: in which fields and for which purposes will the Korean technical experts who are to acquire such skills use their knowledge?

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