

December 24, 1956

**Notes from a Conversation between the 1st
Secretary of the PRL Embassy in the DPRK and
Comrade Samsonov, 1st Secretary of the Embassy
of the USSR on 20.XII.1956**

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Summary:

The document features a conversation between Brzezinski Henryk and comrade Samsonov. To the questions of the 1st Secretary of the PRL Embassy in the DPRK, Samsonov states his opinion on the following topics: the group from the August plenum, different groups in the leadership of the DPRK, exchange of party cards, changes in economic policies, the standard of living of the population, agricultural production, Korean unification, and the role of the intelligentsia in the DPRK.

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Embassy of the Pyongyang, 24.XII.1956
People's Republic of Poland
in Pyongyang [trans. note: tilted stamp]

Secret [trans. note: tilted stamp]

N o t e

From a conversation with comrade Samsonov, 1st Secretary of the Embassy of the USSR on 20.XII.1956

During a meeting with Comr. Samsonov at the Soviet Embassy, whose goal was to discuss a range of problems with the DPRK, the following issues were brought up:

1) Group from the August plenum.

Four persons from this group, who went over to China during the time that the 8th Congress of the C[ommunist] P[arty] of China was taking place in Beijing, remain in China to this date. Because there were 2 members of the C[entral] C[ommittee] and one deputy member of the CC (Minister of Internal Trade, Chairm. of Tr. Uns. and dir. of dept. of construction materials in the Council of Ministers dep. memb. of the CC), and these people according to Comr. Samsonov reached the leadership of the KP of China. In Beijing, in agreement with the Soviet comrs. a decision was made. Then Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai came to Pyongyang for the September plenum of the Kor. Workers' Party. Comr Samsonov believes that Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai conducted talks with the Korean leadership. As a result, the plenum adopted a new stance vis-à-vis the group from the August plenum, which is now not being called anti-party, but instead people who got lost and their mistakes should be treated as a dispute within the party and one must aim to remove mistakes by way of persuasion.

Comr. Samsonov stated that the Korean comrs. consider the September plenum a watershed in the party's work in the sphere of methods of educating party members.

On this occasion, Comr. Samsonov said that two deputies to the chairman of the Pyongyang committee of the Workers' Party were also tied to the August group. Their party cards were given back to them at the September plenum and they were directed to work on a very low level of administrative work. (the August plenum removed them from the party).

Later, answering the question of how the September plenum was conducted locally, Comr. Samsonov stated that it can be deduced from the information of leading persons at the Soviet Embassy, that after the September plenum of the CC of the Workers' Party, no plenums of the P[rovincial] C[ommittee] or D[istrict] C[ommittee] took place, but meetings of party activists were conducted.

The issue of such extreme change in the stance of the CC at the September plenum compared to the August plenum, when the whole group (without Choe Chang-ik [Choe Chang Ik] and Pak Chang-ok [Pak Chang Ok]) were thrown out of the party, was generally incomprehensible to the members of the party. Kim Il Sung explained that the change of stance toward this group proves the strength of the party and that ideological convincing is the best method of party work.

On the question of the later fate of the August group, Comr. Samsonov stated that the former vice-premier Pak Chang-ok has become the director of one of the largest factories. Choe Chang-ik, former vice-premier, is still not working.

In the opinion of Comr. Samsonov, the August group should be considered a healthy current in the party.

2) Different groups in the leadership of the DPRK

In response to the question whether one hears about the existence of Korean, Chinese and other groups in the DPRK leadership, Comr. Samsonov stated that indeed four groups existed: Soviet, Chinese, South Korean and North Korean. Kim Il Sung brought up the question of these groups at the plenum of the CC of the Workers' Party in December of last year. "Kim Il Sung asserted that after 10 years one should not call oneself a Soviet or a Chinese Korean, that we are all, said Kim Il Sung, members of one party and we stand on the foundation of one ideology regardless of whether we came from the USSR, from China or from the South." Koreans who have come from the USSR had Soviet citizenship. There were facts [sic.] that members of the government of the DPRK were Soviet citiz.

At the beginning of the current year Soviet passports were taken away from all Koreans who had come from the USSR. Today all are Korean citizens.

Kim Il Sung's speech, taking Soviet passports away caused the issue of the groups to calm down gradually. Today, affirms Comr. Samsonov, one barely hears about these groups.

3) Exchange of party cards.

A campaign of exchanging party cards is continuing in the DPRK. Comr. Samsonov, following the Korean comrades, gave the reasons for the exchange of cards:

a) Among the existing cards there are still many old ones from before 1948. There were many cards with the old name of the party, the Korean Workers' Party of North Korea (beginning in 1948, the party's name was changed to the Korean Workers' Party of Korea).

Also, in the war period about 450,000 new party members were accepted, and they received substitute cards (certificates, 450,000 is nearly half of the number of members of the party, which in April 1956 had 1,154,000 members).

b) There was bad paper in the old cards and many had been destroyed or were in poor condition.

c) The exchange of cards was combined with an education campaign for the party members.

d) On the occasion of the card exchange, the rehabilitation of wrongly punished comrades is being conducted.

Comr. Samsonov informed that the arguments given in points "c" and "d" are treated by the Korean comrades as marginal in the campaign of exchange of party cards, and the facts given in points "a" and "b" were the deciding cause.

4) Changes in economic policies.

Comr. Samsonov agreed with our opinion that the guidelines of the IIIrd Congress of the Kor. Workers' Party in the sphere of the development of the national economy were calculated for the further development of the concept of making Korea a self-sufficient state in the industrial aspect, which, if one takes into account the financial possibilities, the destruction and the level of cadres is completely unrealistic.

The August plenum of the CC of the Kor. Workers' Party adopted a new course in economic policy calculated at abandoning the construction of huge and expensive factories, and it was decided to build those factories that, on the basis of Korea's

natural wealth, will bring relatively quick economic results and at the same time allow for a quick raising of the standard of living. Comr. Samsonov can see the continuation of this program in the last December plenum of the CC.

5) The question of raising the standard of living of the population.

In the opinion of the Soviet comrades, the DPRK government made substantial efforts in 1956 in the area of improvement of the living standards of the population. Comr. Samsonov relayed the following facts:

a) Lowering of prices, which gave the nation 12,000,000,000 won in savings. The Soviet comrades converted this sum into rice at free-market prices, as a result of which the calculation showed that the population can purchase 120,000 tons of rice, at the latest lowering of prices, which represents a substantive position in the feeding of the population.

b) After the IIIrd Congress of the Party, working people and students had their daily coupon ration of rice increased by 100 gr.

c) In November an increase in wages was conducted, 35% on average. In 1957 the government of the DPRK intends to achieve much more in the sphere of raising the standard of living of the population than it did in 1956.

6) Agricultural production.

Last year 2,430,000 tons of grains were harvested, claims Comr. Samsonov. To feed the population of the DPRK the minimum is 3,000,000 tons. Imports did not fully cover the shortfall. From this stemmed difficulties in hiring new workers [CONNECTION?] (workers and their families obtain rice with coupons, non-workers do not receive coupons for rice).

This year, according to Comr. Samsonov, the harvest is better than in 1955. Still in the opinion of Comr. Samsonov, they have not reached 3,000,000 tons.

7) On the question of Korea's unification.

Comr. Samsonov agreed with us that the government of the DPRK in its resolutions and announcements treats the question of unifying Korea rather as propaganda. The existing program of unifying Korea proposed by the DPRK totally negates the government of Syngman Rhee. The DPRK government does not want to talk with the government of Syngman Rhee. Of course, in these conditions it would be impossible in the near future to launch some talks with the current regime in the south.

Also, as Comr. Samsonov stressed, one can observe a recent calming down of the tone (by the DPRK toward Syngman Rhee). While before official government documents labeled the southern government a clique or a dictatorship, in the latest DPRK protest over the reaching of an agreement between the USA and South Korea we read: "American imperialists and Syngman Rhee."

8) About the role of the intelligentsia in the DPRK.

In the opinion of the Soviet comrade, the old intelligentsia has been removed from having an influence in the life in the DPRK. The young intelligentsia, which indeed stands on the foundation of party and government policies, but this intelligentsia is only just being created. Still, the intelligentsia in the DPRK plays no visible role in political life. There has so far been no positive or negative critique of the factual state of affairs in the DPRK by the intelligentsia.

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Brzezinski Henryk

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1st Secretary of the PRL Embassy in the DPRK

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Brzezinski Henryk

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