

December 16, 1959
**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the
Hungarian Foreign Ministry**

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Summary:

Gábor Dobozi reports on a conversation he had about Soviet-North Korean relations,
North Korea's economic policies and planning, inter-Korean relations, and North Korean
media.

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Translation - English

[...] on 16 December I paid a visit to [Soviet] Comrade Yulin. During the conversation, several issues came up, on which I give the following information:

Comrade Yulin told me that the December plenum of the [Korean] Workers' Party had placed very healthy proposals on the agenda, and it also appeared to the Soviet Ambassador that this plenum had actually begun to correct the errors committed in the last years. He agreed with me that the most important resolution had been one that dealt with the rapid development of mining. In his opinion, mining should have been developed earlier, because that would have largely solved the problems which have cropped up in the supply of raw materials and in foreign trade. With regard to that, the issue of North Korea's foreign trade problems came up. Comrade Yulin mentioned that it caused very great difficulties in Soviet-Korean relations that the Korean comrades could not send goods in return for [the goods they got from the Soviet Union], although the Soviet Union asked Korea for goods which every country gladly exported (e.g. vegetables, fruits, canned food). He made mention of the fact that supplying Siberia with vegetables presented a very great problem to them [the Soviets], and they wished to import a large part of the needed goods from Korea. He told me that as regards the trade agreement for 1959, the Soviets had already met their obligations one hundred percent, whereas the Koreans had only met 56 percent of their obligations.

In the opinion of Yulin, most of the mistakes noticeable in the DPRK are attributable to one thing, namely, the exaggerated national pride of the Korean people. The mistakes made in the economic field also derive from that, for the Korean comrades are loath to adopt the experiences of other countries. They do not ask for advice, and they go their own way. He told me that after the 21st Congress [of the CPSU], Khrushchev had had a long discussion with Kim Il Sung in Moscow. Kim Il Sung set forth the data of their first Five-Year Plan and the targets of the coming years. Comrade Khrushchev did not agree with this plan, and made clear that these plans were not realistic, because they lacked an economic base. One could not base such a huge plan solely on the dynamism and enthusiasm of the workers, Comrade Khrushchev said. He censured the Korean comrades for taking no account of the possibility of cooperation with the other fraternal countries, and for wanting to produce everything by themselves. It was particularly inappropriate, Comrade Khrushchev said, that the DPRK wanted to make preparations for the large-scale production of tractors and trucks. At that time, Comrade Khrushchev's opinion was disregarded and Kim Il Sung maintained that they were able to fulfill the plan. Khrushchev told him that they [the Soviets] also wished to fulfill their Seven-Year Plan in five years, but if that was not possible, one had to acknowledge it. Kim Il Sung explained the production of tractors and trucks by saying that their agriculture was badly off, it was urgent to equip it with tractors and trucks, but, due to their very limited export potential, they were not able to import the latter.

Comrade Yulin told me that they had noticed several times that if the Korean comrades borrowed some experience from the fraternal countries, they were loath to speak about it. He cited as an example that the resolution on the reorganization of local industries had been patterned after a Chinese one, and when the Soviet comrades made mention of that, they [the North Koreans] declared that "this is not a Chinese experience, we carry it out on the basis of our own ideas."

On 1 October this year, Khrushchev again met Kim Il Sung on the occasion of the Chinese national holiday. Following the December plenum, it appears to them [the Soviets] that the talks were not unsuccessful, and certain changes are indeed noticeable. On this point Comrade Yulin mentioned that the Soviet government, though it had been aware of the inappropriate economic policy [of the North Korean leadership], decided to help the DPRK with everything. They follow the principle that if they [the North Koreans] want to solve the problems by themselves, they should realize the mistakes on the basis of their own experiences. In what follows he told me that the Korean comrades did not inform them either about the measures they

intended to take. [Similarly to the Hungarians,] they [the Soviets] also learn of their resolutions and plans only after these have become accomplished facts. Recently, all they could do was subsequently warn the Korean comrades that the elimination of boards in the ministries had not been appropriate. They still regard it as inappropriate, and they do not consider the explanation given by the Korean comrades acceptable, for the work of the boards was taken over by the ministries' party committees. The Korean comrades argue that the party committees include the ministers, deputy ministers, assistant under-secretaries and departmental heads, and, thus, they do not need to discuss the same task in two places [...].

Comrade Yulin regarded the extension of the powers of the provincial, city, and district party committees as the curtailment of professional one-man management. [...]

Comrade Yulin informed me that at the December plenum, Comrade Kim Il Sung had also dealt with the work of the Korean press and the self-conceit of party members. Comrade Kim Il Sung sharply criticized the press for often attaching great importance to issues of lesser importance, writing articles [about such issues] for days on end, and thus misleading public opinion. He also subjected the self-conceit of party members to sharp criticism. He emphasized that it was a very important task to accustom party members to modesty.

With regard to the press, Comrade Yulin also told me that they had a lot of difficulties, because the Korean press did not deal much with Soviet issues. They often prefer "their own little events" to great international events. For instance, while the world's press devoted whole pages to the reports that dealt with Comrade Khrushchev's visit to America, the Korean press published nothing, or just very short news [...], about it. It was only the intervention of the Embassy that ensured that subsequently the Korean press dealt appropriately with the visit. [...] I told him that we had also experienced similar phenomena; for instance, the Korean press hardly wrote anything about the 8th Congress [of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party] in the first days.

We also spoke about the Koreans returning from Japan. Yulin told me that until now, the Korean Red Cross and the Soviet shipping company had made agreements for three ships. They will bring home approx. 3,000 Koreans [...] the South Korean government did its best to prevent their repatriation. [...] from 13 December on, a state of emergency was declared in South Korea, and the navy was put on alert in case there would not be any other way to prevent the arrival of the repatriates' ships in North Korea. The captain of the first ship declared before sailing that if the ship were attacked, they would regard that as an attack on the flag of the Red Cross and also as an attack on the Soviet flag. According to the Seoul T'ongyang news agency, on 14 December the American commander of the UN troops stationed in South Korea gave an order that prohibited the UN soldiers stationed in South Korea from participating in any action directed against the repatriates. He also instructed the South Korean Minister of Defence to take similar measures with regard to the South Korean army.

[...]

Gábor Dobozi
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