

March 11, 1960
Journal of Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK A.M.
Puzanov for 11 March 1960

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Summary:

Puzanov asks questions to Kim Byeong-su about a DPRK tractor plant and informs him tractors are made in the Soviet Union.

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

[...]

11 March 1960

I visited the Kiyon [sic] Tractor Plant together with Embassy Counsellor V. I. Pelishenko and N. A. Novikov, Chief Engineer of the staff of the Counsellor for Economic Issues. I had a conversation with Kim Byeong-su, director of the plant and Mun Gwan-hyeok, chief engineer of the plant (both studied at the Sverdlovsk Institute and know Russian well).

Kim Byeong-su said that beginning 2 July 1959 the plant began producing parts and subassemblies for the VTZ-28 tractor entirely from the drawings received from the Soviet Union. One hundred tractors were assembled to this time; however, it was impossible to do further work from the old drawings since all the subassemblies could not be interchangeable due to imperfect technical documentation and required the manufacture of custom-made parts.

I asked the director his opinion about the technical documentation received from the Soviet Union.

Kim Byeong-su replied that the engineering and technical personnel of the plant are very satisfied with the drawings and engineering documentation prepared by the Vladimir tractor builders. These drawings completely cover all the tractor manufacturing processes and necessary equipment, attachments, and punches. He said, we needed from the very start to produce tractors from those drawings and to more vigorously raise the question about this in the Ministry. However, at that time the Ministry demanded machines from us and we could not switch from the manufacture of tractors from Soviet drawings right away.

Then Kim Byeong-su told how the technological infrastructure of the machine tools and equipment went in the process of coping with the new tractor. For 40 days the engineering and technical personnel literally did not leave the plant since it was necessary to translate all the technical documentation into Korean. Beginning in August of last year the plant started manufacturing the technological infrastructure from the Soviet drawings. Twenty-four thousand various attachments, punches, and instruments were manufactured. The coefficient of technical equipment has reached 4.9 at the present time and will reach 6 by the end of the year. However, in a number of sectors attachments for machine tools have still not been manufactured. The mechanical shop has not managed to manufacture the equipment for all the operations. Therefore the plant management decided to entrust the shops

themselves with making the necessary equipment for them. Operations groups of the best engineers, technicians, and most-skilled workers were created in the shops to solve more complex problems and remove bottlenecks. As a result of these measures the production of subassemblies and parts throughout the plant increased by 30%.

I told the director what is the correct way to solve the problem of the technological infrastructure of the shops. You have unleashed the shops' initiative, and the workers and technicians on the shop floor [na mestakh] know their own bottlenecks, and will concern themselves with how best to remove them.

I asked what was the prime cost of a tractor at the plant.

Kim Byeong-su replied that at the present time they spend 2000-2100 man-hours per tractors against the planned 2340 man-hours. Of these about 500 man-hours are spent on manufacturing gearboxes.

I noted that this points to the great expenditure of labor for the manufacture of a machine if one considers that in the Soviet Union 400-450 man-hours are required for the production of such a tractor.

Kim Byeong-su said the prime cost of the tractor is 7500 won against the planned prime cost of 5800 won. In the fourth quarter of 1960 we intend to reduce the prime cost to 4700 won. Plant workers' wages constitute 33% of the prime cost of a tractor. In the plan to reduce the prime cost of a machine plant management envisions moving more workers to a piecework wage. Right now actually only 50-60% of the workers work per a piecework system.

At the present time the plant has produced 274 tractors from the Soviet drawings. A quarterly plan providing for an increase of the production of machines in each quarter has been drawn up to produce 3000 tractors a year: 1st quarter - 470; 2nd quarter - 680; 3rd quarter - 850; and 4th quarter - 1,000.

Then Kim Byeong-su told of cooperation in the production of the tractor. The plant produces 1700 of the 3024 parts and subassemblies of the tractor with their own personnel. In the system of cooperation 12 plants supply electrical equipment, rubber, plastic parts, and the cast steel and rolled metal needed to produce a tractor. The supplying plants still do not supply the tractor builders with the parts and materials in a timely fashion, which does not allow them to accumulate the necessary stock of subassemblies.

I told the director how the business with supplies through cooperation is done in the Soviet Union. The CPSU CC and Soviet government strictly track and demand timely supplies through cooperation. The plant director has to first fulfill orders for export, give products through cooperation to other enterprises or other councils of the national economy, and only then meet the needs of his own enterprise. Violation of this principle entails criminal responsibility. In addition, the enterprises loses bonuses. Party commissions specially created for this purpose at enterprises strictly track the correct and timely fulfillment of order for export and cooperation. At your plant the production technology requires certain stocks. The Main Directorate [glak - SIC] of Precision Machinebuilding should help you in supplies through cooperation. It is easier to do this now since all the issues can be decided within the framework of one State Committee.

The collective of the plant is faced with still one more task, increasing quality. Right now they don't admonish you for the quality because the production of tractors was only recently started, but by the end of the year when there is mass production they will tell you about this. The problem is that the repair base in the country is just being

created. Conditions for operating tractors in agriculture are difficult. Therefore the effort for the high quality of the manufacture of tractors should be intense, especially as you have noted and as an inspection of production has shown, you have trouble with quality.

I asked what materials the plant receives from the USSR and how these supplies are made.

The director replied that they receive all the bearings, electrical equipment and instruments, steel tubes, rolled non-ferrous metals, and rubber hoses from the Soviet Union. All the deliveries are being made well, but they have not been ordering a number of materials in the USSR and they are experiencing shortages of them.

Then the director reported that in the construction of a new casting house of 15,000 square meters will be finished in May where they will temporarily locate the assembly shop, and the mechanical workshop will be retooled. There are 520 pieces of equipment in the machine tool inventory of the plant and individual workshops are 70% supplied with Korean machine tools. Four thousand two hundred and forty-five people work at the plant, of which 50 are engineers and 267 are technicians. In spite of the fact that there is a large residential building for 1000 people at the plant the housing situation remains stressful. Only 60 apartments were built in 1959. Right now there is not enough housing for 1,745 families.

I asked how the workers are supplied with food.

The director said that they receive rice, soy sauce, cabbage, pollack [mentay - SIC], and other food for the dining hall in the residence building, but things are worse with supplying the workers through the stores. The average wage of the plant workers is 42 won (the average skill level of the workers is 4.9).

The director suggested inspecting the plant. During the inspection of the workshops he said that the plant workers manufacture by themselves the 38-spindle drilling machine to process the cylinder blocks designed by a graduate of the Polytechnic Institute. Kim Jeon-geol, one of the worker innovators, remade a Korean-made lathe into an eight-spindle boring machine, improved the design of a cutting tool into surface planing machines, which increased their productivity by 30%. Another worker, an inventor, independently built a machine to manufacture radiator pipes.

During inspection of the plant I talked with one of the workers who had been repatriated from Japan. He was satisfied with his work and his treatment from comrades at work.

I thanked Kim Byeong-su for the opportunity offered to familiarize myself with the work of the enterprise and expressed confidence that with the effort of all the personnel the plant's collective can fulfill the Party's and government's assignment to produce 3000 tractors in 1960. But special attention ought to be directed to quality and reducing the prime cost.

Gye Heon-su, Chief of the Directorate of Precision Machinebuilding of the State Committee for Heavy Industry (he graduated from the Sverdlovsk Institute) Kim Jin-heon, acting chairman of the plant Party committee took part in the conversation.

Embassy attaché V. N. Tkachenko recorded the conversation.

[...]

□USSR AMBASSADOR IN THE DPRK

□□□□□[signature]

□□□□□(A. PUZANOV)

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