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Journal of Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK A.M.
Puzanov for 28 October 1960

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Summary:

A.M. Puzanov visits Tokchon vehicle plant for a briefing on its condition. A.M. Puzanov and plant senior officials have a conversation regarding Khrushchev's visit to the DPRK.

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of Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK Cde. A. M. PUZANOV

from 19 October through 7 November 1960

[...]

28 October 1960

I visited the Tokchon [sic] vehicle plant with Embassy Attaché Tkachenko and had a conversation with the management of the enterprise.

Plant director Cde. Hong Kwon-kil [sic] said the following about the work:

The Tokchon automotive plant, built earlier to produce spare parts for vehicles, has begun manufacturing Synni-58 vehicles (akin to the Soviet GAZ-51) since October 1958. It produced 112 vehicles in 1959. In 1960 the collective of the plant continued to master the technology, improve production, and achieved a considerable grow of vehicle production: in January - 60; February - 71; March - 180; April - 210. In October 400 vehicles will be produced. As of 28 October the plant has produced a total of 2,060 vehicles (the 1960 plan is 3,000 vehicles).

At the present time has a considerable number of devices, and an assembly line has been organized in the engine assembly shop. Whereas in January of this year 4,800 man-hours were spent on the manufacture of one vehicle now it is 1,300 man-hours.

The reduction of the labor intensiveness of the manufacture of the vehicle allowed the enterprise's collective to considerably reduce the prime cost. In October of this year the prime cost of a vehicle was 4,300 won (against a planned prime cost of 4,500 won), whereas at the start of the year it exceeded 9,000 won. The selling cost of the Synni-58 vehicle is now 8,480 won.

The plant manufactures most of the parts and assemblies of the vehicle with its own resources and only 20% of the parts are received in cooperation from 24 enterprises of the country. The plant receives bearings, electrical equipment, tires and hoods, and rolled non-ferrous metals from the Soviet Union.

The director said that beginning next year they intend to organize the production of Korean carburetors at one of the machinebuilding plants.

Right now the plant manufactures several kinds of bearings with its own resources which are used in the assembly auxiliary assemblies of the vehicle.

I asked, how are materials ordered in the Soviet Union delivered.

The director replied that the Soviet side punctually delivers everything that we have ordered, and if we experience a shortage of these materials then it is only because we have not ordered them.

Afterwards in the course of inspecting the plant I asked, why are a large quantity of manufactured vehicles sitting on the plant's grounds?

The director replied that they have not been fitted with tires and hoods because of a lack of them (more than 500).

Then the director familiarized [me] with the plant's plans for the future. At the beginning of October of this year the plant manufactured a test model of a three-axle six-ton truck based on the Synni-58 vehicle. The 60-hp engine of the Synni-58 was used in the creation of this vehicle without changes and the new gearbox, which allows the necessary tractive power to be developed at a maximum speed of 37 kph. According to the engineers' calculations up to 80% of the parts and assemblies of the Synni-58 will be able to be used in the assembly of the new vehicles.

The director agreed with my comment that in Korean conditions, where there are many mountain roads, the engine power of the new vehicle will evidently be insufficient and added that testing of the vehicle is not yet finished.

Next year the plant will begin to produce one more type of vehicle, the Synni-60 akin to the Soviet GAZ-63. It is planned to produce 500 Synni-60 vehicles in 1961.

The director reported that about 5,000 workers work at the plant, 1,400 of them women. Young people constitute 77% of all the plant workers. There are 38 engineers and 229 technicians at the plant. The average skill level of the plant workers is 4.9. A machinebuilding institute has been open at the plant since September, and 420 plant workers have been accepted for the first course and preparatory section. Five released instructors, who previously worked as engineers at the plant, will hold lessons in special subjects. The director of the plant is the director of the higher educational institution. There is also a machinebuilding technical school at the plant where 310 people study.

This year the plant is devoting great attention to housing construction. The plant construction trust has handed over 400 apartments for operation. Two thousand workers have been provided with a residential building. There are nurseries with 500 places and a kindergarten for 300.

The director reported that prices for agricultural products are somewhat high at the present time in connection with the growth of the number of workers in the district capital and the increase of the population's purchasing power.

I asked, how are the decisions of the expanded KWP CC August Plenum being realized at the plant.

The plant director talked in detail about the technical innovation of the workers, the importance of introducing pressure equipment in their plant conditions which it manufactures with their own resources, how they solve problems of the mechanization of labor-intensive processes. The Plenum also set the task of improving work to train technical personnel. The creation of a machinebuilding higher educational institution at the plant was the most important measure in this matter.

Mentioning that one more issue was discussed at the Plenum, the results of the Bucharest Conference of representatives of Communist and worker's Parties, I asked [him] to tell what work is being done at the plant in connection with this.

The chairman of the plant Party committee said that the Conference of representatives of Communist and worker's Parties in Bucharest has great importance in strengthening the unity and solidarity of the countries of the socialist camp. Meetings have been held about this issue at the plant by collective. He said nothing about the nature of the meetings.

Then the chairman of the Party committee said that preparations for the celebration of the 15th anniversary of Liberation and preparations for the planned visit of the head of the Soviet government, Cde. N. S. Khrushchev had caused great labor enthusiasm in the plant's collective. This fact was demonstrated by the highest figure achieved in production in October - for the first time 400 vehicles had been produced in a month.

In connection with the planned visit of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev to the DPRK the plant's collective send a letter of welcome to the head of the Soviet government with an invitation to visit the plant during [his] stay in the country.

I thanked the plant's collective for the warm words of welcome expressed by the workers in the letter of greeting to Cde. N. S. Khrushchev, and said that Cde. N. S. Khrushchev has a great hope to visit the DPRK and familiarize himself with the great successes of the Korean people in socialist development. In connection with the fact that a sharp discussion developed on the most important issues of modern times at the 15th UN General Assembly session Cde. N. S. Khrushchev could only return to Moscow in the middle of October. Inasmuch as the holiday of the 43rd anniversary of the October [Revolution] was approaching and usually delegations from many countries are invited to the Soviet Union to the celebration of this anniversary the question could have arisen could the visit take place in the time which remained before the celebrations. The CPSU CC and KWP CC came to the unanimous conclusion to postpone this visit.

The plant management listened to this explanation closely and it was evident that the Korean friends regarded the circumstances which had developed with understanding.

Cde. Gye Chan-kwan [sic], Chief of the Main Directorate of Precision Machinebuilding took part in the conversation.

[...]

SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN THE DPRK [signature] (A. Puzanov)

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