

## **New East German and Soviet Evidence on North Korean Support to South Korean Political Parties and Labor Unions**

by James Person

It is a well-known fact that despite national division and legal restrictions in South Korea, North Korea has succeeded in maintaining connections with, and has provided support for pro-northern elements in, South Korea. In 2010, NKIDP made headlines with the release of a collection of (East) German STASI files detailing established diplomatic procedures for transiting South Korean citizens through the German Democratic Republic to Pyongyang for meetings with Korea Workers' Party officials.<sup>1</sup>

Newly translated German and Russian documents from 1960 provide additional evidence of North Korean political and material support to South Korean political parties, labor unions, and student groups. The documents also shed additional light on Kim Il Sung's 1960 proposal for an inter-Korean confederation as an interim measure toward unification.

Records of an August 1960 meeting between the Soviet and East German ambassadors to North Korea, obtained by NKIDP from Russian and German archives, indicate that Pyongyang maintained ties with, and even provided material support to, the Socialist Mass Party (*Sahoe taejungdang*), trade unions, and student groups based in Seoul, Busan, and Masan. Members of these groups reportedly even travelled illegally to Pyongyang in August 1960 to celebrate the 15th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan and to hold meetings with the leadership of the Korean Workers' Party (KWP).

The newly translated documents also reveal details about North Korea's policies toward inter-Korean relations. In addition to publicly calling for the establishment of an inter-Korean confederation, under which both countries would maintain their political systems, the North Korean leadership also sought to broaden its connections inside of South Korea through "organized bases" of the working class and young people. The KWP had also established a special office for relations with South Korea, featuring three departments tasked with overseeing direct ties with the South, agitation and propaganda, and Japanese-South Korean ties.

The conversation between the Soviet and East German ambassadors also reveals new details about North Korean development strategies and about tensions in Sino-DPRK relations.

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<sup>1</sup> "NKIDP documents obtained from East Germany's STASI archive featured in *Donga Ilbo* article on clandestine South Korean members of the Korean Workers' Party," April 16, 20120, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/nkidp-documents-obtained-east-germanys-stasi-archive-featured-idonga-ilboi-article>.



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**DOCUMENT NO. 1****Note about a Conversation in the Soviet Embassy with Comrade Puzanov**

*[Source: Bundesarchiv (SAMPO-BA), DY 30, IV 2/20/137. Translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer]*

SED Central Committee  
 Department of International Relations  
 Archival Signature: SAPMO-BA, DY 30, IV 2/20/137

[GDR Embassy in DPRK]  
 Pyongyang, 30 August 1960

Note  
about a Conversation in the Soviet Embassy with Comrade Puzanov

I provided Comrade Puzanov with a translation of our [SED] Central Committee's communique and resolution on the results of the Bucharest Meeting, as well as with some oral information. Comrade Puzanov gave me some oral information about the meeting of the CPSU Central Committee. In the further course of conversation we talked about the KWP's [Korean Workers' Party] position regarding the decisions made in Bucharest. Comrade Puzanov told me that Kim Il Sung visited Beijing in May 1960 upon invitation by Mao Zedong. During his visit in Moscow, Comrade Kim Il Sung informed Comrade Khrushchev about attempts by the Chinese comrades to pull the Korean comrades into the plot against the CPSU leadership. Comrade Kim Il Sung had told Comrade Khrushchev that they [the Koreans] strictly rejected this Chinese suggestion. In this meeting, Comrade Khrushchev asked for extensive information about Korea's economic development. He provided ample advice on how to draft the DPRK's Seven-Year-Plan and promised the Korean comrades substantial Soviet aid if they pursue correct economic policies. Comrade Khrushchev recommended to Comrade Kim Il Sung to practice a somewhat more flexible policy towards South Korea. He suggested learning more from the German comrades' experiences and following the concept of a confederation vis-a-vis South Korea. Comrade Kim Il Sung promised to share these questions and suggestions with the KWP Presidium. (Meanwhile it has become known that those suggestions were honored.) According to Comrade Puzanov's opinion, at their recent Central Committee meeting the Korean comrades have taken a clear stand concerning the policy of the Soviet Union. They are in complete support of the course adopted by the majority of the communist and workers parties as they were reflected again at the Bucharest Meeting. They condemn the position of the Chinese comrades.

When discussing the course of the KWP so far, Comrade Puzanov conceded strong tendencies of personality cult which represent a certain obstacle to the implementation of the party's policy. During last year as well, the Korean comrades attempted to apply some methods similar to those of the Chinese comrades (the policy of leaping forward, some methods of economic guidance et cetera). Also, at the [KWP] December Plenum in 1959 the acceptance of disproportions in the economy was defined as a deterministic element for the construction of socialism. Currently there exist two so-called complex cooperative economies, which are similar to the [Chinese] people's communes. Yet Comrade Puzanov does not consider this to be substantial issues. Also,

in his opinion they have already corrected some of those mistakes. They have made their own experiences and already moved away from the Chinese experiments. In March 1960 they already omitted the phrase about the determinism of disproportions, and today it is no longer in use. Following my mentioning of policy towards South Korea, Comrade Puzanov said the Korean comrades now conduct a mostly correct policy. Like myself, he also thinks the Democratic Party in South Korea is a conservative party. Existing contradictions within this party must not be overestimated since those are just internal power struggles. In addition, Comrade Puzanov told me the Korean comrades have close ties with the Socialist Mass Party in South Korea, certain trade unions, some independent politicians and local student organizations in Seoul, Busan, and Masan. He said that all those receive political and material support from the North Korean comrades. During celebrations for the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary [of Korea's liberation from Japan], representatives of these organizations were illegally present [in Pyongyang] and subsequently had a meeting with members of the KWP Presidium.

In order to make policy towards the South more operational and effective, a special office for dealing with South Korea was established with the Presidium of the [KWP] Central Committee. It has the following departments: Direct Ties with the South, Agitation and Propaganda, and Japanese-South Korean Ties. The head of the office is a Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the KWP Central Committee. During our discussion, Comrade Puzanov explained the Korean comrades primarily make efforts to find an organized base in the working class and among the youth [in South Korea].

Furthermore, Comrade Puzanov informed me that all material sent by the Chinese comrades containing attacks against the policy of our party [CPSU] and popularizing their [Chinese] false ideas, is returned [by the Koreans]. When asked to state their positions during discussions, they [Koreans] respond frankly. They continue to send their own material to the Chinese comrades (within the framework of the diplomatic corps). Puzanov suggested all representatives from socialist countries should do it this way. In his opinion, the Chinese comrades [in the diplomatic corps] are right now very cautious. You can just tell by the fact that they join diplomatic events only with second-ranking representatives.

Comrade Puzanov promised to inform me immediately when the exact date of arrival and length of stay for Comrade Khrushchev [in the DPRK] is finalized. We will certainly have to talk later how to arrange our reception, in which Comrade Khrushchev will certainly participate. Comrade Puzanov thanked me for the information and proposed to meet more frequently from now on, also within the larger framework of adding other representatives of the socialist countries.

The conversation was trusting and friendly. I do think that Comrade Puzanov is minimizing some of the mistakes the Korean comrades have allowed to occur, and which are still not yet fully overcome. Those mistakes are also criticized, for instance, by the Czechoslovak ambassador, the first secretary of the Polish Embassy, and by other diplomats from the socialist countries.

[signed]  
K. Schneidewind  
[GDR Ambassador]

CC:

3x Deputy [Foreign] Minister Ambassador Comrade Schwab  
(maybe 1 copy to Section [Far East] and Comrade Florin)  
1x Ambassador [Pyongyang]

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**DOCUMENT NO. 2**

**Journal of Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK A.M. Puzanov for 25 August 1960**

*[Source Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVPRF) Fond 0102, opis 16, delo 7, listi 8-10. Translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg]*

[Stamp: Far East Department  
SECRET  
Incoming 02044s  
23 September 1960]

USSR EMBASSY IN THE DPRK  
N° 153

TOP SECRET  
Copy N° 3

19 September 1960

[Handwritten: to Cde. [[Samsonov]  
26 September

N [[9]35  
illegible signature,  
date off the page [19]60]

Pyongyang

JOURNAL  
of Soviet Ambassador to the DPRK A.M. Puzanov for the period 24 August through 9  
September 1960

[....].

25 August 1960

I received GDR Ambassador Schneidewind at this request.

The Ambassador provided information about the work of the last CC Plenum of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. The Ambassador also talked about an increase in the activity of the Chinese Embassy in the GDR. In particular, when making a report about people's communes, the Embassy counsellor in Leipzig said that it is time for the GDR to also switch to the organization

of people's communes. In connection with this there was an article in the GDR national press signed by an observer which rebuffed the inaccurate assertions of the Chinese Embassy counsellor. Officials of the Chinese Embassy have made a practice of inviting the heads of provincial Party committees to the Embassy and holding conversations with them about the other issues of international life in which there are differences of views between the Communist Party of China and the Communist Parties of the socialist countries.

The Ambassador then reported that the leadership of the GDR ministry [of foreign affairs] has given him the following instructions: touch base with the Soviet Ambassador about your activities with respect to relations with the Chinese Ambassador concerning existing contentious issues.

It was arranged that we Ambassadors should not enter into special discussions with the Chinese Ambassador about issues of concern where there are differences between the CCP and the Communist Parties of the socialist countries. However, if the Chinese Ambassador or officials of the Chinese Embassy popularize mistaken anti-Leninist views among officials of the diplomatic corps about the most important issues of the present day and the international Communist movement, then give a forceful rebuttal to these mistaken views. As regards the newsletters recently being distributed by the Chinese Embassy in which articles are placed from Chinese newspapers and magazines containing anti-Leninist views, [we] have decided to return such newsletters to the PRC Embassy.

Kurt Schneidewind talked about the meeting of the SED CC Foreign Policy Commission. The Ambassador noted in this regard that in the latest report of Kim Il Sung about the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Korea a program for the unification of the country, which had not previously existed, was laid out quite clearly. Obviously, the Ambassador noted, the advice of the Soviet leadership had been taken into consideration in Kim Il Sung's speech. The Ambassador also made critical comments about the KWP CC not giving an appraisal of the election platform of the Democratic Party of South Korea and, in his opinion, is not analyzing the differences between the Democratic Party groups, New Faction [Shinpa] and Old Faction [Gupa].

I did not agree with the Ambassador's opinion that the friends did not have a clear program for the unification of the country before Kim Il Sung's latest speech at the festive meeting on the occasion of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Korea. I talked in detail about the measures successively adopted by the Korean friends directed at the peaceful unification of the country on democratic principles. I said that the issue of the creation of a Confederation of North and South Korea had actually been a subject of discussion between Cde. N. S. Khrushchev and Cde. Kim Il Sung during their meeting in Moscow in June of this year.

The Ambassador thanked me for the explanation and said that now he is better informed about the steps of the KWP CC leadership and DPRK government concerning the peaceful unification of the country.

Kurt Schneidewind expressed his ideas about the Korean friends adopting the experience of the Chinese comrades on a number of issues. In particular, he pointed to the planning of the

economy - the theory of uneven development, and the creation in two districts of the DPRK of farms combining all the enterprises and agricultural cooperatives of the district along the lines of the people's communes.

I agreed with the Ambassador that in the past year the Korean friends had tested the uneven method [Translator's note: *skachkoobraznoe razvitie*; however, this is certainly a reference to the contemporaneous experiment in the PRC called *bol'shoy skachok* in Russian, known in English as the "Great Leap Forward"] of economic development of the country on the model of the Chinese comrades and were convinced by experience that disregard of the socialist law of systematic development of the economy leads to serious consequences and damage. As regards agriculture, in my view, the Chinese experiment was not manifested in the organization of the two state farms on the model of people's communes, as the Ambassador said, but in the excessive and completely unjustified ballyhoo about getting high rice grain harvest yields of 10-15 tons per jeongbo, and four to five tons of corn per jeongbo, that is, two to three times more than the harvests obtained in 1958. Attention was not paid to cultivated area when this was done. As a result, the total crops, especially grains, including corn, were sharply reduced last year, but the obligations to obtain high harvest yields naturally turned out not to have been met. All this led to a sharp under-fulfillment of the plan for the gross grain harvest and even its decline compared to the actual 1958 gross grain harvest. With regard to the people's communes, from the very first days of this movement in China until recently, both Kim Il Sung and the KWP CC leadership and DPRK government have taken a consistently correct position. They think that the organization of people's communes is inadvisable in DPRK conditions and that the only correct way is the agricultural workers' cooperatives of the Soviet Union, taking into consideration the local and national characteristics of Korea. As is well known, the development of DPRK agriculture is taking this path.

Based on last years' experience, the Korean leaders themselves are convinced of what violating the law of proportionate development of the economy leads to, and at their December CC Plenum they adopted certain measures to correct the mistakes which had been made.

The Ambassador thanked [me] for the explanation and expressed complete agreement with the ideas stated.