

November 3, 1972

Conversation between Lee Hu-rak and Kim Il Sung

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Summary:

Kim Il Sung stresses the importance of reunification through the formation of the coordinating committee and emphasizes the role inter-Korean economic cooperation in facilitating dialogue.

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Korean

Contents:

Translation - English

Conversation with Kim Il Sung

Date and Time: Nov. 3, 1972 10:15-12:20

Location: Pyongyang Government Building

Participants:

From Seoul

Lee Hu-rak Co-chairman of the Coordinating Committee

CHANG Ki-yeong Assistant to the co-chairman (IOC Committee and former Vice Premier)

CHOI Kyu-hah Assistant to the co-chairman (Special Assistant to the President for Foreign Affairs)

KANG In-deok Assistant to the co-chairman (KCIA Director for Office 9)

JUNG Hong-jin Assistant to the co-chairman (KCIA Director of Negotiation and Settlement)

LEE Dong Spokesman for the co-chairman

From Pyongyang

KIM Il Sung

KIM Il 1st Vice Premier

PAK Seong-cheol Deputy Co-chairman

KIM Joong-lin Secretary of Central Committee, Workers' Party of Korea

RYU Jang-sik Assistant to the co-chairman (Deputy Director of Organization and Guidance Department & Director of External Affairs, Workers' Party of Korea)

LEE Gyung-seok Assistant to the co-chairman (Cabinet Secretary)

HAN Wung-shik Assistant to the co-chairman (Cabinet Secretary)

KIM Deok-hyun Assistant to the co-chairman (Chief Officer of the Political Bureau, Central Committee, Workers' Party of Korea)

North (KIM): Is President Park doing well and healthy?

South (LEE): Yes, he is very well and healthy. He also requested that I deliver his regards.

North (KIM): I am very pleased to meet you again Director Lee. Also, it is my first time meeting with Mr. Chang and Mr. Choi but I am well aware of your names. I planned to meet you in the afternoon. However, I had to rearrange the schedule due to other arrangements. Let's have a conference in the afternoon. How is the harvest in the South?

South (LEE): We have had good projections but suffered some damage towards the end due to the cold weather.

North (KIM): We generally have two harvests a year in the North. The South also has two harvests in most areas, is that right?

South (LEE): That is correct. We must settle with organizing the South-North Coordinating Committee. As I mentioned to Vice Premier Pak, I believe there has been significant progress in the South-North relations since the July 4th Joint Statement. We need to reach a consensus on organizing the South-North Coordinating Committee. During our previous meeting, Premier Kim mentioned, "we can't expect we will solve the issues at once. We must study them with the lapse of time and take

care of the simpler matters one by one." My research on the issues is generally based on your remarks.

North (KIM): There has been a significant progress after the Statement. I met people who I've never met before. Last time we had four guests and we have more guests this time..... To my mind, we should reach an agreement regarding the Coordinating Committee Since Director Lee is here, we should reach an agreement during your visit and start resolving more practical issues next time. How about we discuss the issue in the afternoon meeting?

South (LEE): Since the Premier mentioned so, I'm certain the Vice Premier will do as you suggest.

North (KIM): The Coordinating Committee is very advantageous in solving the issues of our nation. Nevertheless, we do not need to be impetuous. A number of people in the world dislike us being reunified. Since early times, the great powers have ruled over small nations by splitting them apart. Looking through history and philosophy books, it appears that the great powers have been quite distrustful. Korea is located in the midst of China, the Soviet Union, Japan, and the United States. Thus, I imagine that outwardly they say they want us to reunify but in their hearts, many of them don't. It's easier to control [us] when we are divided. We must reach reunification by any means. Some even call us different people when we are in fact the same.

For example, people in Germany called themselves "Germans" under Hitler's rule. Now they argue that they are different nations. We believe in Marxism, so how shall we define our people? People with common language, writing system, culture, and history shouldn't be split into two nations. Our people shouldn't belong to two nations. Although it's imperfect, King Sejong developed our own writing system in order to filter out the Chinese alphabet, and greatly contributed to the advancement of our culture. We share the same writing system, history and Korean blood. Why should we be divided? If we let this continue, our people could split into two. I recently spoke to the people who came from Japan that we shouldn't tolerate them to speak only Japanese and no Korean. There are people who try to connect with Japan. The Chinese are quite odd people. It is being said the Won and Qing took over China. In fact, China is taken over by the Han. Chinese are quite difficult to assimilate. The Chosun people are quite frail in this sense..... We somewhat lack strength in this. Nonetheless we hold on to the heart even when abroad. In this sense, the bloodline is not that simple. The Japanese Colonialists attempted to change our family names calling it the "oneness of Japan and Korea" They ruled over the Chosun people for 36 years but they failed to assimilate us into Japan.

Our nation should not be divided. If one diverges from us, he deserves to be declared a traitor. When Director Lee first came to the North, I spoke highly of you being brave and heroic. Once you have come to the North, shouldn't you prove to the world that our people cannot be divided? Liberalism? Socialism? Which one is better? We should sort out the virtues, dispose the vice, and select the strengths..... What is the confrontation for? I heard some media in the South call this a confrontation with dialogue. Confrontation means to compete with each other, [and] people from the same nation confront each other. Competition results in winners and losers. We shouldn't win or lose, don't you think?

South (LEE): I need to clarify one misunderstanding. I believe there are some differences in the sentiment of the word. It seems you are disturbed by the word confrontation. In the South, confrontation does not necessarily relate to winning and losing. What it means is to do our best and result in a success. I'd like to point out that the word confrontation does not carry a negative nuance.

North (KIM): Regardless of whether you call it competition or peaceful coexistence,

two nations may coexist but there can't be coexistence within one nation. We shouldn't argue with each other over Liberalism and Socialism. Competition within one nation is unnecessary as it merely measures the superiority between two systems.

Please deliver my words to President Park. We need to fix the misunderstandings if there is any. Anyhow, we must cooperate [hap-jak]. The Coordinating Committee should focus on cooperation rather than regulating military confrontation, defamation and aspersion. My faith is in the cooperation of South and North. We should put ourselves together. Of course, the tasks won't be accomplished at a stretch. Let's start one by one. We should cooperate in sports, culture, and also economy. I have thought about a number of things for us to cooperate on at the present time.

Anyhow, through the process of economic cooperation [and moving on to] political and cultural [cooperation], we will be able to develop further understanding of each other, and it will be beneficial in pursuing our nation's goal. For instance, the North has abundant underground resources. We recently discovered iron ore deposit. There are several billion tons. The Japanese, who came before to seek iron ore, only saw the surface of it.

South (LEE): Where did you find that much?

North (KIM): It was also because the Japanese had not yet developed the technology then. Anyways, the Japanese were not even halfway through with iron ore.

We found hundreds of millions of tons in Kaechon and several more billion tons in Pungsan. It's about ten billion tons altogether. We have plenty of iron ore. Our concern is that we can't drill deep enough since for now we can only excavate about four to five hundred meters

North (Kim II): We can currently dig down to 1,000 meters.

North (KIM): Right, now it is 1,000 meters underground. We need equipments to dig as deep as 2,000-3,000 meters... but the equipment is awfully expensive. We also need about two hundred thousand geological researchers, but we only have around a hundred thousand.

South (LEE): How good is the quality?

North (KIM): The quality is over 30%. It's about 70% when separated. The quality is outstanding. We trade iron ore with Japan and China. We exchange iron ore for coke.

There is just a plentiful amount of iron ore. We also found nickel. Let's work cooperatively.

South (LEE): It is best to proceed with easier tasks and leave more difficult tasks for later, as you previously mentioned. Economic cooperation is also included in the function of the Coordinating Committee. It is said well begun is half done. I believe the Coordinating Committee will be organized soon to process things step by step.

North (KIM): Let us develop a cooperative project.

South (LEE): The development itself is not that significant. However, the issues you have mentioned will be solved gradually.

North (KIM): We have plenty of issues to cooperate on. For instance, about five to six million tons of pollacks and sailfin sandfish travel to our coast annually, but we are capable of fishing five hundred thousand to six hundred thousand tons at the most. I'm not certain about the depth but the large mass of pollack that crowds in is about three thousand meters wide and five thousand meters in length, according to the fishermen. If the fishermen of the South and North cooperate, we are capable of fishing much more.

Fishing is a seasonal business that lasts for about a month. We are now capable of fishing only about 10%. The scientists researching marine resources say catching about 50% of pollack will not damage the population of pollacks. In other words, fishing 250 thousand tons of pollack is acceptable. Won't it be mutually beneficial if the fishermen from the South and North worked together? Let's cooperate in fishing as well.

The South has developed light industry and manufacturing industry, and the North has developed heavy industry

We decided to focus on machine industry since long ago. Since we have abundant iron ore, we produce tractors and automobiles to export to our neighbors. We have a big market. We can have a prosperous life promoting machine industry. Although there have been significant advancements, we are yet at a beginning stage. Still, there is some gap to compete in the Capitalist market. South-North cooperation is desirable. We can also divide work. It will greatly reduce each other's burdens. As a result, we will prosper having no need to envy others.

I heard that the South is actively developing many industries. However, I wonder, is the South capable of further advancements without developing the resources in the North? Of course, you could import from other countries, but is it necessary to import resources when your closest neighbor has abundant resources? We need to cooperate one step after another in order to develop trust. Words can't tell one's true intention. If the Coordinating Committee has this task in the item, we ought to start from that specific task.

South (LEE): I am well aware. Indeed, we must proceed with the tasks one by one as the projects that Premier Kim mentioned are included in the Coordinating Committee's projects rather than [emphasizing the] organization of the Committee itself.

North (KIM): We should put [the projects] in action. Let's work on a wide range of projects. Cooperation in culture is an integral part as well. One word could have multiple meanings. If the separation continues, we could separate into two nations. Language, writing system.....

Kim Du-bong who stayed in Yanan, had an argument with us regarding our writing system. Reforming the writing system is what you studied and it will leave honor to you, but in fact it will encourage a division of our nation. Thus, we rejected writing system reform. He proposed to reform our writing system similar to "Latin." Exchange in science..... That is the reason why I support cooperation than exchange.

Scholars in the South are more knowledgeable of what we are not familiar with. Likewise, our scholars may be more familiar with what the scholars in South have less knowledge of. In order to develop industries, we will also need cooperation in the sphere of science. The mass media call it confrontation with dialogue, competition with dialogue. However, it is now the time for us to cooperate.

Since we have initiated a conversation, the Coordinating Committee should refrain

from doing all talks and no action.....

South (LEE): Listening to your remarks, Premier Kim, it is exactly the same as what President Park has in mind. President Park always mentioned that we will prosper when the South and North become one. We could develop Geumgang Mountain, go sightseeing in Mt. Geumgang, and visit Busan afterwards. When we put our efforts together, we will be able to display our might even without political integration. Since President Park and Premier Kim have similar thoughts, the cabinet members around the President and the Premier must work hard to promote what you have in mind.

South (CHANG): I likewise heard President Park remarking the exact same thoughts.

South (LEE): For instance, we purchase the iron ore at POSCO from Australia for roughly eleven dollars per ton. If the North could supply the same resource, the tariff barrier is abolished. How beneficial is that?

North (KIM): I'd be delighted if President Park has similar thoughts. It is perhaps a good time for us to cooperate. We will have understandings instead of misunderstandings. When the South and the North cooperate, all the issues will vanish.

South (LEE): If the athletes had come together and participated as a unified team in the last Olympic Games, we could have better displayed the power of our nation to the international world, I believe.

North (KIM): We are then truly invincible. Our football team came back yesterday from a game in India. India has four hundred million people and we only have twenty-five million but we were winning by 7 to 0. Then the Indian audiences cheered for more goals. We won by 9 to 0, eventually.

Was it "basketball"? It was not soccer. We had a match with West Germany and we were winning by a goal. The referee must have been bribed. We lost a point due to penalty [shoot]. Then he called for extra time but our team refused. We lost the game because it was counted as withdrawal. When we went to the Soviet Union, the Soviets [told us that they] also lost 6 to 0 with West Germany but with Chinese team... it is the Chinese team, isn't it? They won by 4 to 0. What does a large population matter? When we unite, we can defeat all. Our nation is strong and our people are full of fight.

South (LEE): We should form a unified team for the next Olympic Game. We should also participate as a unified team in international competitions prior to the Olympic.

South (CHANG): We can cooperate in cheering even at the moment.

North (KIM): Cooperation, from economic to cultural and political cooperation, it is not much of a complicated issue. What is Socialism? "Nasser" is known for his support for Socialism. So are "Somali" and "Sukarno." In fact, they were all Nationalists mistaken for Socialists. Our Socialism doesn't know the Russian's quite well. Before the war, we hardly mentioned Socialism. We developed Socialism after the war. We published a thesis in April 1955. The Soviets and the Western world laughed at us because we wanted to adopt Socialism. They derided us saying Socialism has to be after industrial development. In fact, we were devastated in ashes due to the war. Middle-income farmers, wealthy farmers and small business owners all became penniless. We were already through with land reforms like in the South. An advanced country will not allow a feudal ownership of land..... Since everyone is penniless, we needed to pull together. Then we discussed how and came up with a cooperative farming system. Thus we asked the people to choose among 1. Labor exchange fields, 2. Co-owned

labor fields, and 3. Possessions combined fields. In the cities, the small business owners had "empty hands and naked fists" . Therefore, the state had to lend them money, and we decided that loaning a sum of money to a group is more efficient than lending portions to individuals. It is how we came up with a production cooperative community. Now, we only have Socialist-owned and state-owned [properties]. We did not replicate the Russian system by rote. We didn't experience major tragedies, for instance beheading the wealthy farmers as in Virgin Soil Upturned (Sholokhov's work). That is the reason why I believe in Juche. If we didn't cooperate then, the development to the current date was quite impossible. Because we irrigated the land without the distinction of ownership, we now have 7 billion m² of rice fields .

South (LEE): In the South, we have about 20 billion m².

North (KIM): Socialism is not a big threat. I would avoid giving you a lecture on Socialism. Nevertheless, we can progress from economic cooperation to political cooperation at anytime.

South (LEE): As you have mentioned, we should expedite simpler assignments and take time with more complicated issues. We should work together under this principle.

North (KIM): I have one concern. Politics, culture and society, none of these are completely independent from one another. In order to resolve this issue, that issue will come into conflict... We must loosen the tension between the South and the North. For we are uncertain of when we might have a war, we have significant burdens in military expense. The burdens in military expense need to be the first issue for us to solve. The South receives 250 million dollars in foreign aid but we have no foreign assistance. It is a lot of pressure for us. We need to take care of this issue first. Why would the U.S. support South Korea and for what would they continue the support? If we are unable to solve the political issues, it is not going to work later. We should reduce the military expenses and promote peaceful operations. We produce guns, and you import them from overseas. We need political cooperation in order to solve this issue as well. Guns are not like food in a sense that it can't be consumed. So what will unused guns become? Prior to all, we need to cooperate instead of attacking each other and decrease the military expenses. Also regarding the issue of federation, we must proceed with a primary form of a federation to the international community, leaving the systems in the South and the North the way they are. It will lead us to clearing up all issues. We will need a common name externally. Do we want to join the UN as a divided country? No, I would never. Even when the South attempts to, you can't join the UN because we can veto. We could maintain as two countries domestically but to the outside world, we should become one country. The Republic of Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea..... We can also come up with a new name. The Confederal Republic of Korea sounds reasonable. Under the agreement, we could co chair the federation. This way we will be able to raise the nation's dignity. That's how we will raise dignity domestically. Let's study this. I meant to mention this when I meet with President Park but I decided to speak to you since we are running out of time. Without the tension loosened, we won't be able to solve the problems.

South (LEE): Shouldn't we consider the South-North Joint Statement a peace agreement? What matters is the will to conform to the statement. While President Park is in the office, there is no need for you to be occupied in producing guns. The federation issue is also very complicated that it requires multidimensional research. I once read about your stance towards federation, Premier. President Park has also mentioned previously about the need of a board of representatives until we are finally reunified. All in all, we will need to study more.

North (KIM): You tend to separate the matters but we look at the matters interlinked.

We call it dialectical materialism. For us, it is difficult to separate the matters individually. The exchange of dispersed family members through the Red Cross Societies Even though it may seem like a simple issue, it is not indeed. For example, Lee Bom-sok, the chief South Red Cross delegate, has an aunt in the North. I asked them if they wanted to meet. However, the aunt didn't want to meet her nephew. Why was it? Her sons and daughters have to make their careers but she was worried that it may hurt her children's careers if people learned that her nephew is a high-ranking official in the South. I'm certain there are many people with similar concerns in the South.

If people worry that finding dispersed family could harm them, and thus, change names and tell lies to find dispersed family members, it is never a simple issue.

We are accused of linking politics, and you tell us that you are disappointed. Nevertheless, we must make sure that no one suffers any harm. At a factory, I met a man whose father left for the South. I asked him if he wanted to meet his father. He answered, he wouldn't meet his father because he did wrong, and if he did right, he will call him father. I asked him if he really meant it and he answered yes. We must be able to take care of the [South-North] issues considering related matters. Now that we opened up, we shouldn't reversely close the door. Who would blame Kim Il Sung or president Park anymore? Our thoughts and your thoughts can be different. The initial philosophy can be different. For us, everything is interconnected.

You observe matters as separate. Individual matters can be solved in parts. Nonetheless, do the other matters follow? We can draw closer the differences in thoughts. Military issue..... The South has about seven hundred thousand and we have about four hundred thousand to five hundred thousand. Why do we need such a number for? We only need about hundred thousand from South and another hundred thousand from us as a strategic unit. Even in the case of Japanese invasion, two hundred thousand is enough.

South (LEE): We will need some in Amnok River as well.

North (KIM): Exploiting underground resources, economic and political cooperation, and a decrease in military expenses

South (LEE): That is exactly the reason why we are organizing the Coordinating Committee. We will open the doors one by one.

North (KIM): I heard President Park wishes that we be reunified in the 80s. Then I will be 70 [years old] and President Park will be around 67-68 [years old], isn't it?

South (LEE): What he intended is that we eventually be reunified in the 80s through preceding economic and cultural exchanges. Even if we have some delays, aiming for the 80s will give us some time.

North (KIM): Director Lee mentioned that I shouldn't take newspapers seriously but we ought to pay attention to what they say.

South (LEE): I am confident that these conversations bear significant meaning. I come to Pyongyang to listen to Premier Kim's thoughts, and Vice Premier Park comes to Seoul and hears President Park's thoughts..... When your remarks are drawn closer to your intents, things will proceed with one accord.

South (CHANG): Yes, I suppose there are correlations. [I suppose we will reach] Political cooperation enabled through economic cooperation..... Assuming that we

proceed successively taking the material correlations into account, when do you expect we will be able to be reunified, Premier?

North (KIM): We can right away. We can reunify even within a month. Only if we are determined, we are able to reunify right after this moment. [We will] Invoke a martial law one after another..... We are afraid of nothing.

South (CHANG): How long do you project it will take presuming that we have a successful transition from economic cooperation to political?

North (KIM): If President Park and I have our wills put together, it can happen in a day. It's because President Park and the people in power are suspicious of us. We should all leave the doubts behind.

South (CHANG): A new form of federation will also require some time to fully unify as a country.

North (KIM): Frankly speaking, I don't want to become the chairman when we reunify. I want to write philosophy. I haven't even finished writing books [on the ideas that I have in mind]..... We should dismiss thinking about who will control over whom from our minds and unite as a nation. If we think negatively and behave reluctantly, it is impossible for us to reach solidarity. It all depends on your understanding. Without being concerned about time, let's have lunch together, hold proper discussions and leave after signing the treaty in the afternoon.

South (CHOI): There can't be a treaty between us. It should be [called] a statement.

North (KIM): Please convey my messages to President Park that we are not impatient. It's been a year since the Red Cross Conference and half a year since the Joint Statement. It is time for us to show some achievements externally. Let's start with cooperation. Let's start with economic and cultural cooperation.

South (LEE): Since President Park has similar thoughts, the methods will be quite simple.

North (KIM): Let's cooperate. Military issue..... We should cut down on the expenses. There is an excessive burden upon military expenses. Decreasing the military burden is related to the increase in political trust.

South (LEE): In fact, it is the possibility of a military conflict that brought about the current state. The South and North mutually agree on the need to reduce military expenses. However, in the South there is no such word as "cooperation (hap-jak)." I understand what you intend. We can promote cooperation of your intent in various fields including economic, culture and society. We ought to pour our efforts in promoting such cooperation.

We, the assistants to President Park, will discuss the matter with your assistants, Premier, and have the issues to come as soon as possible (trans. note--i.e., seek to resolve the issues as soon as possible).

North (KIM): Why did you schedule your visit for such a short time? Is it all done when you publish documents and make announcements? You should stay longer so that we have sufficient time for conversation and to connect.

South (LEE): My job as the head of the KCIA is to arrest ex-communists. The KCIA is a

crucial government agency responsible of national security. I determined to visit because I believed reconciliation between South and North is as important as arresting communists, in pursuit of national security. It is a disgrace for our nation if we closed the door after we once opened it. We need to widen the door to raise our nation's dignity.

North (KIM): I fully trusted you, as you are the one who arrests communists. I may distrust Mr. Chang and Mr. Choi. I have greater trust and respect for you Director Lee, since the person who captures communists visited to cooperate with the communists. Director Lee has tremendous responsibility in our nation's reunification and it is an honor for our nation's future.

That is why I called you a hero. I could give you the honor as a part of the people of this country. Kim Yeongju, Director of Organization and Guidance is suffering from Vegetable Neurological Disorder and it seems it is not cured easily Kim Yeongju intended to visit Seoul to meet with President Park and hold discussions when he recovers..... He will be better by December or next New Year. Director Kim Yeongju is planning on a visit as a courtesy. I could certainly send my brother to the South since Director Lee visited us. He's [sick that he is] unable to do his work. I will send him to the South to meet with President Park.

It is best that we cooperate. By the way, I heard someone named Shin Sang-cho speaking to the media. He argued we should not reunify. He said, if the South and North reunify, we have to kill 5 million each. Then asked how we can unify considering such casualties. Thus, I called the chief of general staff and asked how many casualties we expect. He answered that the number is definitely less than five million. Many people want to interrupt our reunification. We both have to avoid those journalists. If we want to cooperate, we shouldn't be against communism. We will offend each other and eventually fight against each other. We will be repeating the confusion during Rhee Syngman. We shouldn't make any anti-communist movements. Since Director Lee expressed the initiative, please visit us often. We may not have a lot to provide hospitality but we can share a bowl of rice. The foreigners are going to be astounded if we cooperate in fishing and developing underground resources.

South (LEE): Thank you for your time whenever I visit Pyongyang.

North (KIM): Let's speak frankly if there is any misunderstanding. Why shouldn't we?

South (LEE): I'd be happy to see more people developing understanding through a successful organization of the Coordinating Committee. It is better than my delivery of your thoughts.

North (KIM): Bring more company when you visit next time. I'm very pleased to have Director Lee who is in charge of arresting communists. That means you have a strong will for our reunification. Please speak frankly if there is any misunderstanding. It is time we cooperate instead of merely talking.

South (LEE): President Park and Premier Kim have a very similar philosophy. The theme of the thoughts is almost identical.

North (KIM): We should cooperate in fishing and mining underground resources.

South (LEE): What is your price for iron ore in the international market?

North (Kim II): It's 5 pounds per ton.

North (KIM): When the congressman from Japan's Liberal Democratic Party visited, I told them we have nothing for sale to you. The iron ore and hard coal (anthracite) we have..... We do not wish to be your resource provider or consuming market. We want one-on-one trade. During Khrushchev, we were asked to join the COMECON but we turned down the offer. If we merely export resources, we'll only be left with abandoned mines. You must import our machines. We want machine versus machine and resource versus resource trade. That is why we didn't join the COMECON. If they don't import from us, then we won't trade. The Soviets still purchase thousands of machines from us. We told them, you are the college students and we will be little children still growing up in kindergarten. We trade with the Soviets under the condition that we export machines and resources and import coal, coke and petroleum. China buys iron ore from us and brings us coke.

South (LEE): In the North, the chemical industry still runs by coal. We run the industry by petroleum.

North (KIM): Petroleum access is highly limited to us. Carbide has some electricity losses but we can produce it independently. We extract synthetic fiber from coal and carbide.

South (LEE): Wouldn't that raise the cost... production cost?

North (KIM): What's bad about having a slightly higher production cost, as long as we produce with what we have..... We have expanded the current vinylon capacity from thirty thousand tons to fifty thousand tons.

South (LEE): Coal, limestone and synthetic fiber sounds like a significantly high production cost.

North (KIM): The production cost may be high. However, we are completely self-sufficient. We produce with our own resources... Lunch seems to be ready. Allow me to guide you to the dining area.