

May 17, 1955

**Report from B. Ponomarev and I. Shcherbakov to
the CPSU Central Committee**

Citation:

"Report from B. Ponomarev and I. Shcherbakov to the CPSU Central Committee", May 17, 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI fond 5, opis 28, delo 314. Translated for NKIDP by Gary Goldberg. <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/116318>

Summary:

Ponomarev and Shcherbakov report on North Korea's current food and economic situations.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from ROK Ministry of Unification

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

TO THE CPSU CENTRAL Committee

[handwritten notations on the bottom of the first page: "to Cde. B. N. Ponomarev
[[illegible signature]] 20 May 1955. Archive. [[illegible signature]]. V. Gorbunov. 7
June 1955. I. Shcherbakov"]

The CPSU CC Department for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties has received records of conversations between Soviet Embassy officials in Korean and local Korean officials. The conversations were held in March and April of this year. In connection with the fact that the conversations are of interest from the point of view of an assessment of the current situation in the DPRK a brief summary of these conversations is presented.

In a conversation with Embassy Counsellor Cde. Petrov on 31 March I. D. Pak, Chairman of the People's Committee of the province of Jagang and a member of the CC of the Korean Worker's Party, said that an unhealthy atmosphere of sycophancy and servility has developed in the CC of the Korean Worker's Party and DPRK Cabinet of Ministers, big mistakes in work are being concealed, and the state of affairs in the country is being sugarcoated. As a result of this the CC and government have recently made a number of serious mistakes in practical work, especially with respect to the peasantry. In Cde. Pak's opinion, "the majority of senior officials view the practical policy of the KWP CC and government as mistaken".

In Cde. Pak's opinion, the situation that has developed in the countryside is alarming. The majority of leaders of provincial committees have reported inflated data about the harvest of rice and other grain crops to the CC and government. The plan for procurement and purchase of grain crops was set based on this inflated data. According to law the tax in kind from the peasants should be 27% of the harvest for rice and 23% of the harvest for other grains. In fact, more than 50% of the harvest was taken from the peasants as the agricultural tax in kind in connection with the incorrect, inflated determination of the yield. In addition, the plan for grain purchases in the amount of 50% of the tax in kind reached each family. The grain purchases were conducted in an atmosphere of great administrative pressure on the peasantry. The majority of peasants in a number of provinces were left without food and seeds, which caused serious discontent. Pak noted, "there were times during the grain purchases when a threat of a widespread action against the grain purchases by the peasants was created...The peasants' situation was such that they were ready to start an uprising". In Pak's opinion, the mistakes committed during the grain purchases will be negatively reflected in the spring planting. The peasants have lost interest in expanding the planted area and increasing the yield, and the seed loans they have received are being used for food.

According to Cde. Pak's report, at the CC plenum held in April, Kim Il Sung sharply criticized members of the KWP CC Political Council Cdes. Pak Chang-ok and Kim Il for submitting unverified data about the 1954 harvest to the CC which, as has now been established, was about 2.3 million tons instead of 3 million tons.

Cde. I. D. Pak and also Song Jin-hwa, editor of the journal "Novaya Koreya [New Korea]", noted that the food situation in the country is serious. Pak says "It is impossible to buy bread and other foodstuffs. Trade in grain at commercial prices in state and cooperative stores has essentially stopped. Workers live only on one food ration consisting of 600-800 grams for manual laborers and office workers and 300 grams for family members. No other products are being issued by ration cards. There are also very few manufactured goods in the stores... Manual laborers and office workers are very discontent with the deduction of one-day's food ration per month for a so-called fund for peasants suffering from a bad harvest". Cde. Song Jin-hwa said that "A considerable number of the urban population have been left without means of

sustenance in connection with the abolition of private trade in grain products and the 15% reduction of the managerial staff conducted at the start of this year. About 90% of private Korean cafeterias and eateries have been closed".

Cdes. I. D. Pak and Song Jin-hwa shared their impressions of the CC plenum of the Korean Worker's Party held in April. According to their information in the report and closing speech, Kim Il Sung sharply criticized a group of former members of the Chinese Communist Party headed by Pak Il-u, Kim Ung, and Pang Ho-san. He pointed to the incorrect, essentially hostile, actions of this group, which tried to set the work of the Soviet military specialists against the Chinese military command during the period of the Korean War. Cde. I. D. Pak noted that, "Pak Il-u has very great authority among senior DPRK military officials and also among the Chinese military leadership. Pak Il-u's removal from military work provoked discontent among individual military officials of both the Korean People's Army and the military leadership of the Chinese volunteers. During the period of the Patriotic war Pak Il-u occupied the post of Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Korean People's Army and was in very close contact with General Peng Dehuai, the Commanding General of the Chinese volunteers, now Minister of Defense of China".

Cde. Song Jin-hwa noted in conversation that at the plenum Kim Il Sung sharply criticized the shortcomings in the work of Party organizations. As Kim Il Sung said, bureaucratism, arrogance and a negligent attitude toward the people are widespread among senior officials; officials of state enterprises behave like Japanese bureaucrats, MVD officials like Japanese policemen, and officers of the People's Army like Japanese officers.

The issues of strengthening the economic and government apparatus, and combating waste and embezzlement were especially discussed at the plenum. In Pak's words, Kim Il Sung declared that theft and embezzlement had taken on enormous dimensions. Approximately one-third of all resources and materials is incorrectly spent and also embezzled at all levels of state and cooperative economy.

Records of the conversations with Cdes. I. D. Pak, Song Jin-hwa, and Ryu Seong-hun are attached.

Chief of the CPSU CC Department for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties [signature] (B. Ponomarev)

Chief of a sector of the CPSU CC Department [signature] (I. Shcherbakov)

17 May 1955

Nº 25-S-999

3kk