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SPECIAL REPORT
16 APRIL 1948

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Korea

KOREA: THE ELECTIONS ARE PART OF AN IMPERIALIST "SCHEME"

Moscow commentators hammer, again this week, at the frequently reiterated charge that the U.N. approved plan to hold southern zone elections on 10 May is undemocratic and an authoritarian move on the part of the United States. Although this has been the primary theme for some weeks, the emphasis this week seems heavier. The familiarity of the theme is paralleled by the familiarity of the arguments used by the commentators.

Pyongyang is primarily concerned with the joint meeting of northern and southern leaders originally scheduled for 14 April. Almost every step preliminary to the session is reported. In addition the Soviet-controlled transmitter broadcasts scathing criticism of the election and of the American occupation authorities. Pyongyang irately denounces General Hodge for his attempt, in a 2 April statement, to assure Koreans that democratic procedures would be followed during the election. It overlooks, with characteristic myopia, Hodge's announcement that civil rights would be guaranteed in the American zone. Moscow omits any reference, even adverse, to both announcements.

a. The Election is Undemocratic: Again Soviet broadcasts decry the election plan. They claim, as they have in past weeks, that the U.S. resorted to pressure first in the formation of the Commission, then in the Little Assembly debate on the preliminary report of the Korean Commission, and now in preparations for the election. These more or less historical charges are allegedly substantiated by quotations from the Report of the Commission. References to this report are found throughout all Moscow comment on the election.

Zhukov, in a PRAVDA review broadcast on 11 and 12 April in Korean and Japanese, quotes liberally from the official resume of the Little Assembly deliberations and his lead is followed by Davydov and Bronin to a lesser degree. Zhukov gives particular emphasis to the Russian claim that the elections will be "unfair" and quotes statements made by various delegates supporting this point of view. For his own part, he scoffs at the desire of the U.S. to postpone the elections--a desire which he naturally attributes to fear of the outcome. General Hodge's claim that the ballots could not be distributed by 9 May is countered with the claim that pre-election papers, such as registration blanks, were distributed in ample time. The American proposal to postpone the election to 10 May so as to avoid the total eclipse is equally scorned. Says Zhukov:

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"It is, of course, difficult to assume that such edifying regard to the movement of heavenly bodies will necessarily guarantee a democratic atmosphere during the elections."

He attributes the postponement rather to an alleged American desire to have balloting take place on a work day, which would presumably militate against maximum voting, rather than a Sunday.

Davydov, in a Korean-language broadcast of 8 April, pays equal attention to the claim that the elections will be undemocratic. He quotes from the NEW YORK TIMES and the LONDON TIMES, as well as from the U.N. Report for supporting argument. The commentator also makes general remarks on the alleged absence of civil rights in the southern zone. Following the Moscow pattern he overlooks General Hodge's 29 March announcement of a decree guaranteeing such freedoms in the American zone.

Other, more specific, aspects of the election with which Moscow is concerned are the plans reported by U.P. to station American ships off Korea and the "expectation" that all U.S. land troops "will be kept ready for action." Still allegedly quoting U.P., Moscow reports that "airplanes are lined up to suppress the leftists and any rioting that might occur."

The tone of Pyongyang broadcasts on the election is characteristically emotional. Commentators are more concerned with the day-to-day situation than with the U.N. Report which preoccupies Moscow broadcasters. They also report specific instances in which American authorities are said to have forced Koreans to register--by withholding rations from those who do not register--and to have jailed two men "on charges of opposing separate elections." They predict that such undemocratic procedures will be carried over to the actual voting and deride General Hodge's attempt to assure Koreans to the contrary.

Reports of Korean opposition to the election are often characterized by a militant tone. For example, on 10 April a commentary declared that "there are now only two ways open for the south Korean people: either sit back and be killed; or stand up, fight, and win."

The broadcasts also underscore the frequently repeated charge that the elections will result in the division of Korea, and the desire to avoid this result is said to motivate South Korean cooperation in plans for a joint session of northern and southern leaders.

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b. The 14 April Conference in Pyongyang: Moscow remains silent on the subject of the 14 April meeting, but Pyongyang enthusiastically fills the void. The resolutions of approval adopted by various southern organizations are reported; preparations in Pyongyang, including election of large numbers of delegates from various northern groups, are announced. The decision to postpone the session "a few days," however, occasions a slight diminution in Pyongyang's enthusiasm.

c. Land Reform in the American Zones: Continuing the precedent set in earlier broadcasts, Davydov in a 9 April Korean-language broadcast derogates the proposal for land reform in the American zone. He claims that the proposal will transfer to Korean ownership only a small part of the total land taken over by the Japanese-controlled Oriental Development Company. Data on land owned by the Japanese is quoted from Grajdanshev's "MODERN KOREA" and Oliver's "KOREA: FORGOTTEN NATION." The discrepancy between the reported total holdings of the Japanese and the acreage made available to Korean farmers is "explained," he claims, by the desire to perpetuate "feudal holdings of landlords."

d. Labor Unions in the Russian Zones: The 7 April congress of labor unions in the northern zone occasions Moscow comment on the advantages accruing to North Korean workers. TASS dispatches quote speeches made by labor leaders in which they accord praise and appreciation to the Soviet Union for its part in the progress achieved by labor unions.

Less matter of fact is a TRUD article on trade unions in North Korea, broadcast in Russian to Soviet Asia on 8 April. The article reports the successes achieved by Koreans in furthering the advancement of their unions and of their economy and their "deep gratitude" to the Soviet Army. The broadcast also includes a brief mention of the distressing conditions in the American zone where persecution of labor leaders is accompanied by "terrorism" against "demonstrators."