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Korea

KOREA: A LARGE ABSOLUTE MAJORITY SUPPORTS THE NEW GOVERNMENT

According to Moscow, the elections on 25 August resulted not only in an almost unanimous vote for the pro-Soviet candidates in northern Korea, but also in a large majority vote for the comparable group in southern Korea — so that the picture of popular support for the "people's" candidates in Korea as a whole, is truly overwhelming. Pyongyang gives the northern vote for the candidate as 97%. In every major respect, the description of this election parallels the standard pattern for describing elections within the Soviet Union itself. As for southern Korea, it is claimed that during the weeks preceding 25 August a large majority of the people actually voted for the "Congress of Representatives of the People of Southern Korea," in spite of "brutal persecution and terror" by the Syngman Rhee Government. Then, on 25 August, this body in turn met in Keisu, "with tremendous emotion, in a solemn atmosphere," to cast ballots for the southern Korean delegates to the Supreme People's Assembly.

The two keynotes of the campaign, as represented for example by Kim Il Sung's final speech and by the resolutions of the Congress in Keisu, were unity and "democracy." The stress on national unity is quite comparable, now, with the Soviet stress on it in the German context.

a. "All Civil Rights; ... Elections Equal, Direct, and by Secret Ballot":

Moscow itself does not publicize the elections very heavily in monitored broadcasts. The only two available transmissions are a Linetsky commentary on both elections and a TASS report covering only the events in South Korea. Linetsky also gives primary stress to the latter; after describing at some length how in the south the elections were held under conditions of "persecution," he contrasts these conditions with those in the North: "How different the conditions under which the elections were held in Northern Korea! Here the people enjoy all civil rights. This is why the elections to the Supreme Popular Assembly have been general, equal, and direct, and by secret ballot." In other words, he attributes to North Korea the same civil rights—even apparently in a western sense of the word—which are occasionally also attributed to elections within the Soviet Union itself. And, as in radio discussions of Soviet elections, he never attempts to discuss or explain away the seemingly paradoxical fact that there was only one list of candidates.

Pyongyang, on the other hand, is voluminous in its comment on and reporting of the elections; and here too there is a striking parallel with Soviet election-reporting. It is asserted that more than 99 percent of the eligible voters cast their votes, and that more than 97 percent of them were cast for "the candidates." As in the USSR, the elections were held "in the midst of tremendous emotion and joy. There was "great patriotic fervor." And, just as Stalin is always elected unanimously in the districts privileged to vote for him, so Kim Il Sung is said to have received literally 100 percent of the votes in his own district.

b. Seven Million (out of 8.6 Million) Voted in the South: Moscow and Pyongyang do not quite agree as to how great a majority of the southern Koreans voted for the Congress of Representatives, but they agree that the majority was overwhelming. According to Pyongyang (in Korean, 30 August 1948) 6.7 million out of 8.6 eligible voters "bravely and fervently" participated, in defiance of official "terrorism." According to Moscow (perhaps only rounding the figure) the number was 7 million. (TASS, in English Morse to North America,

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26 August 1948) In either case, the number is impressive in view of the "barbarous violence, suppression, terrorism and massacre" which, according to Kim Il Sung, characterized the official opposition to the voting. The Korean people "rose in unison in the underground elections."

c. "A Central Korean Government, in the Name of the Thirty Million Korean People": Kim Il Sung practically claims in so many words that the new government set up by these methods will govern all of Korea:

"Thus, the true, legitimate representatives of the thirty million people, elected in such a manner by an absolute majority of the eligible voters of South and North Korea, will create a true, legitimate supreme Korean legislative organ, form a central Korean Government, and then in the name of the thirty million Korean people, shouldering the destiny of the fatherland and the people, with all the Government powers of the fatherland held in the hands of the Korean people, will protect the rights and interests of the fatherland and the people."
(Pyongyang, in Korean, 23 August 1948)

Strong words are also used in the slogans issued for the Supreme Korean People's Assembly: "Let us smash the anti-popular, reactionary puppet government fabricated by the South Korean reactionaries under the control of the American imperialists." (Pyongyang, in Korean, 30 August 1948)