

July 19, 1988
**Report on Visit of East German Military Delegation
to North Korea**

Citation:

"Report on Visit of East German Military Delegation to North Korea", July 19, 1988, Wilson Center Digital Archive, SAPMO-BA, DY 30, 2508. Translated by Grace Leonard. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/113202>

Summary:

Report on the visit of a GDR military delegation to North Korea. A conversation with Kim Il Sung is detailed and it is noted that the visit, culminating in an agreement on cooperation between ministries of defense, was a complete success

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Report

On the visit by an official military delegation from the GDR to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in July 1988.

An official military delegation from the GDR, led by General of the Army Heinz Kessler, Minister of National Defense and member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party, visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from 19 July to 23 July 1988. This visit followed an invitation from Vice Marshall O Chin U, Minister of the People's Army and member of the Presidium of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea. The delegation included Colonel General Horst Brünner, Deputy Minister, Lieutenant General Manfred Grätz, and six other generals and officers of the National People's Army.

In Pyongyang the delegation laid a wreath in the memorial grove of fallen Korean revolutionaries and toured the house in Mangyongdae where Kim Il Sung was born, visited the Tower of the Juche Idea, the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum, the Pioneer Palace, construction sites for the athletic center, and Kwangbok Street, and in Nampo the delegation visited the West Sea barrage complex.

The military facilities the delegation visited were the "Kim Il Sung" military political academy, one base for the West Sea fleet (on an island off the coast), and a training center for special reconnaissance forces. The visit to the military forces in the Kaesong area, the building complex for armistice negotiations in Panmunjom, and to special forces, which had been planned for 22 July (originally planned for 20 July), could not take place due to poor helicopter flying conditions (violent rainstorms).

The high point of the GDR military delegation's stay was a meeting with Kim Il Sung, Secretary General of the Central Committee of Workers' Party of Korea and President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on 21 July 1988.

At the beginning of the 70-minute visit, Kim Il Sung asked, "How is my brother and my best friend, Erich Honecker?" Heinz Kessler conveyed to him personal greetings from the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party, praised the manner in which relations between our two parties, nations, and peoples have developed since 1984 in accordance with the assessment of our Party and state leadership, and then had the opportunity to speak for about 40 minutes about the GDR's peace policy (Berlin Meeting for Nuclear-Free Zones in June, Meeting of the Political Advisory Committee of the Warsaw Pact in July), progress of economic and social policy in the Socialist Unity Party (especially with regard to the increase in productivity and the use of key technologies), and security and military policy (including the withdrawal of Soviet missiles from GDR territory ahead of schedule and exercise monitoring in accordance with the Stockholm document).

Kim Il Sung expressed his sincere gratitude for the detailed and informative briefing on the policies of the Socialist Unity Party and on the situation in the GDR. His exact words were, "I greatly appreciate the policies of the Socialist Unity Party, with Erich Honecker at its top, and its efforts to assure peace in the world." He said that the International Meeting for Nuclear Weapons-Free Zones was very important. He was also very grateful that the GDR's Party leadership and state leadership had determined that the delegation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had played such an important and vital role at this meeting in Berlin. He cited this as eloquent proof that their Party and our Party are fighting together for world peace.

He asserted that under the leadership of the Socialist Unity Party, with Erich

Honecker at the top, we are building Socialism well, that they have great appreciation for this and laud it as a success. The fact that we have made such good progress with residential construction and electrotechnology/electronics is a good indication that they can learn much from the GDR.

He said that our two countries welcome the signing of the medium-range missile pact between the Soviet Union and the US. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea welcomes the far-reaching disarmament negotiations between the two superpowers and has high hopes for a positive outcome. However, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is confronted with many nuclear weapons in South Korea that belong to the US. This is why the leadership of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has also already made numerous proposals for the withdrawal of US troops and their nuclear weapons, for ending the arms race, and for reducing the armed forces on the Korean peninsula in stages in order to transform it into a nuclear-free zone of peace.

He stated that the situation in Korea is still tense. The declaration by the South Korean leadership on 7 July 1988 is meant to split the country permanently. Over the past six months the puppets over there have not responded at all to the proposals the President made in his New Year's speech to work intensively for peace and to undertake negotiations for reconciliation between North and South Korea on the broadest possible social basis, to alleviate tensions, and to work on relations between them at a conference of all parties and social classes of the North and South, with a view toward unification.

The stance of the puppets led to mass protests by the young people in South Korea, who demanded that they be able to go to the North and that the young people from the North be able to come to the South.

He said that the proposals made by the South Korean leadership were nothing new. Negotiations by the Red Cross, scientists, and other contacts were broken off precisely because "Team Spirit" and other major exercises were being conducted in the South. Peaceful negotiations were impossible to reconcile with the fact that they were aiming cannons at North Korea and sharpening their swords.

He stated that now new parliaments are being elected in the North and South - as a first step their representatives could get together and hold talks, sometimes in Pyongyang, sometimes in Seoul, on a declaration of non-aggression.

Today at 11:00 a.m. a new letter will be presented to the South Korean side in Panmunjom. If they decline to accept it, its contents will be broadcast by radio starting at 5 p.m. It remains to be seen what the response to this will be.

He said the South Koreans might want to, but the US will certainly oppose it and will prevent them because such an agreement on non-aggression would make it impossible to continue to justify to the world their presence in the South. But then the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would be in a position to expose the statements made by the US and South Korea as mere empty words. Kim Il Sung requested that Erich Honecker be briefed about this situation and its implications.

During the second part of his remarks, the Secretary General addressed economic development in the country. He said that they are currently conducting a major campaign in the building of socialism. This has to do both with the construction of hydroelectric plants and many coal mines and with the building of major plants for vinalon, plastics, aluminum, and potassium fertilizers. "When we have completed this major campaign and have successfully satisfied the third Seven-Year Plan, then we will nearly have reached the level of developed nations."

In particular he praised the 200-day battle for the 40th anniversary of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in which the goals were consistently exceeded. He cited as an example that the daily goal of 4 million kilowatt hours of current was exceeded yesterday with 4.3 million.

Only 3.5 to 3.6 million kilowatt hours were produced in the past. Important accomplishments were achieved in transportation, as well; it was possible to increase the daily performance of rail transport from 300,000 tons to 330 to 350,000 tons. And if energy production and transportation lead the way, the entire national economy will develop well.

Finally, Kim Il Sung expressed his gratitude for the assistance the GDR provided to the Korean People's Army. He considered the visit by the military delegation and also the subsequent short vacation by the Minister to be an expression of the close ties between our two Parties and of the profound confidence the Socialist Unity Party has in the Workers' Party of Korea. He asked that his most sincere regards be passed on to his brother and friend, Erich Honecker, and to the people of the GDR, when we returned. The President then personally awarded General of the Army Heinz Kessler with the Order of the State Banner First Class and the other members of the delegation with further orders and medals of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Subsequent to this visit, which took place in the President's residence at the foot of the Paektusan mountain, a center of the partisan battles against the Japanese, the delegation visited the highest mountain in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (2,744 meters), which is located immediately on the border with China. Minister O Chin U, who accompanied the delegation constantly except for two occasions, also made his way up the steep mountain paths despite problems stemming from a serious traffic accident in 1986.

A spirited meeting of the German/Korean Brotherhood in Arms with more than 6,000 members of the Korean armed forces took place on the afternoon of 22 July 1988 in the Cultural Palace of the Korean People's Army, one of the largest halls in the capitol (speeches by the two ministers enclosed as attachment).

At this point the completely open, comradely, even warm atmosphere that had characterized the entire visit by the military delegation was evident once again. The high esteem in which the GDR and National People's Army are held was apparent everywhere.

After the announcement, the document that we had prepared on the cooperation of the two Ministries of Defense in the coming years was signed.

In conclusion it can be stated that the goals of the Party and state leadership for the military delegation and the expectations linked to it were completely fulfilled.

The embassy of the GDR, the media, and its representatives abroad provided good support to the visit. Reporting in the Korean media was very detailed.