

April 5, 1962

**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the
Hungarian Foreign Ministry**

Citation:

"Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry", April 5, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 13. doboz, 27/a, 0025/RT/1962. Translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/113487>

Summary:

Report from Hungarian Ambassador József Kovács on criticism of Soviet revisionism from within the Korean Workers' Party and the increase of institutional paranoia in North Korea, especially of foreigners and foreign-born Koreans.

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

[...]

The Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party discussed the 22nd Congress of the CPSU on 27 November, and on the evidence of Kim Il Sung's speech, which was also published in the newspapers (probably in an abridged version), they considered the issue (the cult of personality, the Albanian question, and so on) as practically closed, although, in our view, public opinion was greatly interested in it. The so-called "Tae'an instructions" of Kim Il-sung, and the reorganization of industrial management (which has not yet been completed), occurred after the November plenum, then the members of the Political Committee visited the most important industrial plants in order to guide the reorganization. According to very confidential information we received at the end of December (from a party worker in Hamheung), Com. Kim Chang-man—a member of the Political Committee and the vice-chairman of the CC, who otherwise deals primarily with ideological work—visited the Hamheung artificial fertilizer factory in connection with the "Tae'an reorganization". Before an invited audience of Hamheung city and provincial party leaders, Kim Chang-man declared that the leaders of the CPSU had adopted a revisionist point of view regarding peaceful co-existence, proletarian dictatorship, and so on. According to our informant, he did not approve the openly anti-Soviet outbursts of the Albanian leaders, but emphasized that in the debate, "the CPSU is not right in every respect either." [...]

To our knowledge, in February and March similar lectures were delivered in the party organizations of the capital and of the more important provincial centers. In some places they spoke about the revisionist threat just in general, whereas in other places they made concrete references to the leaders of the CPSU. At the end of February, the issue of the revisionist threat suddenly appeared in the press as well [...].

With regard to the food shortage, statements like "we have no apple, because we must export everything" are made, although they failed to ship even the minimal quantity the USSR had contracted in 1961, and the USSR canceled the arrears.

Although at the plenum held at the end of November Kim Il Sung declared that the cult of personality and the Albanian question must not be discussed in the Korean Workers' Party and in Korea, the relevant statements of the 22nd Congress, albeit not always in their entirety, became quite widely known. It was obvious that the aforesaid objections were essentially attributable to the issue of the personality cult. From the end of January on, a certain tension was already noticeable; in the last two months, quite substantial (and, in a number of cases, sudden) replacements took place in the ranks of the middle-level (party and state) functionaries, which affected low-level employees as well. [...] a number of people have been transferred to the countryside, or simply sent to the mines. Surveillance of foreigners has been greatly tightened up, they are often shadowed, and those Koreans who have contacts with the Embassies here are particularly watched. [...] in early February, everywhere in the capital meetings were held in the institutions, enterprises, etc., in order to warn workers against having contacts with foreigners; they were told that no one was permitted to visit any Embassy without the previous consent of higher organs, and such a visitor would be obliged to give an account of his visit. At several universities and colleges, students were warned against corresponding with foreign (fraternal) countries. Korean subscribers, even in institutions, receive Pravda and other Soviet publications very incompletely, and in several places the local party organs got them to cancel their subscription "voluntarily." Several of our acquaintances were also "exiled" for their contacts with foreigners [...].

At the very beginning of March, Com. Kulaevsky [Pravda's correspondent in North Korea] and Com. Fendler had interesting talks with [...] a Soviet Korean who repatriated in 1946, and on the basis of his chance remarks, [we learned that] he will travel to Tashkent on the way back from his holiday in order to "visit his relatives", and he may not even return home. These circumstances presumably "loosened his tongue" to a certain extent.) Com. Kim depicted the internal situation of the DPRK in

the following manner:

In the wake of the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, a rather tense situation has developed in Korea. The objections to the line of the CPSU are rooted in the personality cult.[...] He remarked that the slogan charyok kaengsaeng—"regeneration through one's own efforts"—is also of Chinese origin, and-in his personal opinion-the juche slogan has little to do with "the application of the principles of Marxism-Leninism to the Korean reality," it is in essence a manifestation of subjectivism. There is also an intense distrust of Koreans of Soviet origin. (This is also confirmed by other sources.) Finally, Com. Kim stated that the Korean internal situation was rather delicate (shchekotlivo), a great number of people were thinking about the effects of the 22nd Congress[...], but "they have shut everybody (including the F[oreign] M[inistry]) up," and this is why people kept silent.

According to the informant of ours who is employed at the party committee of Hamheung, "political control" has been tightened up with an iron hand in the last months. Local party organizations must regularly prepare reports about the mood of the population, and in these reports they must constantly watch what the masses know about the aforesaid problematic issues (the Albanian question, etc.). Of those Koreans who had visited foreign countries or lived in the Soviet Union, the names of the "more suspicious" ones were recorded. Simultaneously with the political tension, he said, there were also difficulties in the economy, particularly in industry and the supply of goods. The so-called "Tae'an reorganization" is going on, but it is dubious whether it facilitates solving the basic economic issues[...]. Living standards have declined, the prices of several textile products were raised, and [...] maize, barley, etc. is substituted for 30 to 50 percent of the rice ration. With reference to that, anonymous letters were sent to the Central Committee, and the issue was also discussed at the exclusive meetings of the party action committees. Women are complaining more and more often that there is nothing to buy. There is a general weariness among the people due to the rapid pace and rush which has been going on for years and which now became even more intense because of the introduction of compulsory physical work (one day per week). In March, the institutions and offices in Pyongyang switched over to a 5 day work week; employees perform physical work on the sixth day of the week, and, in addition to the daily political programs which last for two hours, there is compulsory collective political study on Sunday mornings. For instance, the F[oreign] M[inistry] does not operate on Saturdays.

[...]

József Kovács
Ambassador