

May 28, 1962

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

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Summary:

A North Korean official presents an assessment of newspapers and the media in South Korea to a Hungarian diplomat.

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Contents:

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At the Czechoslovak reception on 9 May, Comrade Fendler, while having a conversation with Comrade Cho Byong-hui, the Deputy Head of the Press Department, asked him for information about the character of the major South Korean newspapers and news agencies [...]. Comrade Chong, an employee of the Press Department, received Comrade Fendler on 24 May, and informed him in detail (enclosed please find the evaluation of each newspaper).

[...] At the reception on 9 May, Comrade Cho Byonghui referred to the fact that certain South Korean newspapers, while beginning their articles with appreciation of the policies and [...] efforts of the government, cautiously pointed out that "there are still some shortcomings." The tone of the provincial newspapers is more dissenting than that of the metropolitan press, because in the countryside, particularly in the southernmost provinces, economic conditions are worse (the uprising of April 1960 also started in Masan), and the national feeling of the intelligentsia is also stronger in the countryside. Nonetheless, articles containing veiled criticism pass the censor time after time, considering the isolation of Park Chung-hee, which is substantial enough in any case, and international public opinion.

The conversation took place in a friendly atmosphere, and finally Comrade Chong, on his own initiative, stressed that they would be ready to inform the Embassy at any time, and referred appreciatively to the relationship between the Korean Embassy in Budapest and the Press Department of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry.

[...]

József Kovács
Ambassador

Appendix 1

Characterization of major South Korean newspapers:

1) Han'guk Ilbo [...]

The newspaper is owned by a stock company representing capitalist commercial interests, and it is solidly funded. It frequently publishes reviews, summaries, and long editorials. This newspaper was of an oppositional character as early as under Syngman Rhee, and at present it also criticizes the military government and the USA, though not consistently. Its circulation once exceeded one hundred thousand, but it has somewhat decreased since the coup.[...]

2) Kukje Sinmun [...]

It is published in Pusan, one of the largest seaports in South Korea, owned by a stock company, and firmly funded; in terms of size and influence, it is equivalent to the metropolitan newspapers, and its circulation is one of the widest.[...]

Its editorial staff is very talented [...]. Under Chang Myon's government, this newspaper was the one that demanded the unification of the country most actively, and at present it is also the strongest critic of the "military government," it published several anti-US articles. It set forth, by and large, Comrade Kim Il Sung's proposals of 15 August 1960 (confederation), and valued them highly.

3) Ryongnam Ilbo [...]

A newspaper of oppositional attitude, it was founded in October 1946 in the city of Taegu. It published news, which revealed the policies of the "military government" and the present South Korean situation, and it recently called upon the other newspapers not to humble themselves before the government. It happened several times that it rated the guerrilla struggles of the 1930s highly, and demanded the peaceful unification [of the country] on the basis of revolutionary traditions. Its negative side is that it disseminates "Yankee culture" in the same way as the other newspapers do.

4) Pusan Ilbo [...]

A Japanese newspaper before liberation, it was refashioned in 1946. Originally a mouthpiece of the Pusan commercial circles, it has gradually turned to politics. It is a many sided and interesting newspaper, and in recent times it has published oppositional news more than once. Its finances are low.

5) Tonga Ilbo [...]

One of the oldest newspapers in Seoul, its first issue appeared on 1 April 1920. Under Japanese rule, then under Syngman Rhee, it was repressed several times; it was banned during World War II. Owned by a stock company, it is firmly funded, and its circulation is around 150 thousand. It was a mouthpiece of the former Democratic Party and the landowners, and as such, it attacked the former Liberal Party of Syngman Rhee, it was a competitor of Seoul Sinmun. Its critical tone has become faint since the military coup, it expresses the interests of the landowners, and it deals with the inflow of foreign capital from this angle.

6) Kyonghyang Sinmun

A Catholic newspaper in Seoul, it was founded in the autumn of 1946 with moderate funds. It criticized Syngman Rhee, for which it was once suppressed. Under Chang Myon, it was a mouthpiece of the government, at present it has an anti-Communist disposition. Park Chung-hee aspires to make it, together with Seoul Sinmun, a government newspaper.

7) Choson Ilbo [...]

Founded in 1920, it is a newspaper with meager funds and a narrow circulation. Under Syngman Rhee, it had been neutral as a rule, in recent times it has cautiously criticized the "military government" time after time. It had been the official newspaper of the Japanese Government-General, then of the regime of Syngman Rhee, and for this reason its editorial office was set on fire by the people in April 1960. The newspaper of Park Chung-hee in recent times, it is firmly funded, but its influence is insignificant. It is a reactionary newspaper, but it is afraid of public feeling.[...] It appears in 100 thousand copies. [...]