

**December 8, 1967**  
**Letter from Ambassador Brie of the GDR in the  
DPRK to Deputy MFA Hegen**

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**Summary:**

East German Ambassador to North Korea Horst Brie reports on the growing number of incidents at the Demilitarized Zone between North Korean forces and South Korean and U.S. forces. Brie offers his own analysis of the military situation in Korea while highlighting the different views of officials from Czechoslovakia and Poland.

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German

**Contents:**

Translation - English

The Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary  
Ambassador of the GDR in the DPRK  
Pyongyang, 8 December 1967

To:

State Secretary and First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Comrade Hegen  
102 Berlin  
Marx-Engels-Platz 2

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Dear Comrade Hegen!

You asked me repeatedly about the current situation at the armistice line and the reason for the increase in incidents. At the same time, it is necessary to answer the question whether the current situation in Korea implies an acute danger of war. Since the experience of aggression in the Middle East provides us with reason to focus on these questions, I have attempted to present my view in this letter by making use of, among others, information from the Polish and Czechoslovak commissions.

There are some differences in the tendencies of the information and opinions from the members of the Czechoslovak and Polish commissions. While the Czechoslovak commission, and especially the ambassador, Comrade Holub, is crediting the aggravation of the situation exclusively to the DPRK, the Polish comrades are expressing the opinion that though the majority of incidents were caused by the DPRK, currently all three parties, that is to say, the DPRK, the U.S., and South Korea, are interested in a tense situation at the armistice line. In my opinion, the estimation of the Polish comrades corresponds more fully to the real situation.

1. On the situation at the armistice line:

□ Never, since the end of the Korean War, have there been so many and such severe incidents at the armistice line as in 1967.

□ Besides more serious incidents, which left wounded [men] and casualties, mutual exchange of fire by guns and artillery became an almost daily phenomenon at certain parts of the armistice line.

□ Incidents at sea are occurring more and more, in the course of which fishing boats are being seized.

□ Incidents with casualties and wounded happen almost exclusively on South Korean territory. The U.S. regularly offers its help in investigating the incidents on the spot. Except for one incident, when four soldiers of the KPA [Korean People's Army] were killed, the Korean side did not suggest such, or rather rejected U.S. suggestions in

this respect. (Since 1953, the time of the armistice agreement, there have been only two cases when the Korean side has agreed to inspections on the spot, or has suggested them.)

□The U.S. side argues that the dead, the wounded and the equipment prove their theory that the incidents were caused by the DPRK (at the same time there is a willingness to hand over the dead).

□North Korean side is arguing in their version that the incidents at the armistice line have been caused by the U.S., with the caliber and number of projectiles fired onto the territory of the DPRK, recorded statements of agents, and with the old type of weapons allegedly used by the agents (The guns are exclusively of an older type, that is to say, from the time of the Korean War.)

□The composition and attitude of the U.S. Delegation in Panmunjeom have changed in comparison to 1966 and early 1967. While until early 1967 the command had been in the hands of officers who saw their duty mainly in tough anticommunist propaganda against the DPRK and the PR of China, the U.S. representatives currently in command are typical high-ranking military cadres of the Pentagon. The Commander of the U.S. side is now Rear-Admiral Smith. He had been commander of a MTB brigade [Schnellbootbrigade]; at that time [his] father had been commander of the entire Pacific Fleet; then [he was] vice commander of the operative division of the U.S. Marine Corps and, before his current post in Korea, [he was] liaison officer of the staff of the U.S. Navy at the Committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. forces.

□The U.S. side now negotiates with great prudence and avoids to a large extent any propaganda against the DPRK and the PR China.

□Since 1967 the South Korean side has been represented by high ranking officers of the Tiger-Division.

□While in 1966 and early 1967 the head of the DPRK delegation stood for an objective handling of all incidents and accused the USA of using Panmunjeom as a means for anti-communist propaganda, currently the DPRK delegation is focusing on unmasking the role of the USA in Korea and Asia.

□U.S. has installed a very expensive electronic system along the armistice line in order to prevent incursions into South Korea. The costs for the installation of this system are said to be about 25 million dollars for the area of one division. In the opinion of the Czechoslovak and Polish comrades, this system creates extraordinary difficulties for infiltrating Korean cadres to the South by land. (The installation has been almost completed along the entire line).

□In the past the DPRK has again infiltrated cadres to the South. We cannot evaluate to what extent the USA claim is correct that the number of infiltrated cadres increased after the party conference of October 1966. The Czechoslovak comrades hold the opinion that the assertions of the USA are basically correct in this respect.

The Polish comrades say that there has been a certain increase, but certainly not to the extent that has been alleged by U.S. propaganda.

□In my opinion the increasing armed incidents in the southern part of the [armistice] line are also due to more effective security measures by the USA and South Korea than they had in the past. Even in South Korea itself, tightened security measures have been implemented. Seoul has been surrounded by a security zone, street patrols increased and all strategic, military and industrial sites placed under protection.

□The rigid security measures already existing in the DPRK have been intensified. People are not allowed to go more than two kilometers away from their homes without official permission. Also, street patrols have been intensified. According to unconfirmed information, the evacuation of parts of the population of Pyongyang has begun out of military considerations. 200,000 to 300,000 inhabitants are said to be affected (The total number of the population, according to Korean sources, is about one million, according to our estimation it is 800,000 to 900,000).

□For the future it must be expected that the incidents will occur increasingly in the coastal areas and at sea. Incursions of cadres into the South by land will be very difficult in the future, and the DPRK will try to do this by sea.

□The USA and the South Korean side have also taken measures in this respect, and now they employ faster and more modern coastal patrol ships (special motor torpedo boat brigades and radar stations on the coast) in order to secure the sea front.

□In my opinion, the incidents will continue in the future. Their scope and severity will be influenced to a large extent by the current political events.

□As all sides involved respond to any incident with military means, there might be the potential danger of a temporary local conflict. The latter might become more extensive, though, in my opinion, without any of the sides involved presently wanting to start a war.

2. Which are the causes of the current incidents and to what extent is there an imminent danger of war in Korea?

A) Attitude of the USA

In order to realize their global strategy, the USA is increasingly utilizing the extremely reactionary South Korean regime for their political and military plans.

□In my opinion the USA is currently interested in a tense situation at the armistice line, but not in an outbreak of war.

□The USA makes the most out of the tensions in order to justify the role of their

troops in South Korea and to enable them to act as defenders against the expansion of communism in Asia. This attitude is directly linked to the current politics proclaimed by Johnson that, as in Europe after World War II, the USA has to erect a shield against communism. The USA saved Europe from the expansion of communism, and today the USA and its soldiers accomplish this in the interest of "the free nations of Asia." The USA attempts at the same time to exploit the tense situation at the armistice line in order to maintain the status of their troops under the flag of the United Nations. Among those nations who formally participate in this contingent of troops, there is increasing resistance to further engaging politically and militarily in Korea 15 years after the armistice. A number of representatives have uttered this openly during confidential talks in New York with diplomats of socialist countries.

□ The following reasons account, in my opinion, for the fact that the USA is currently not interested in the outbreak of a war in Korea:

□ □

□ The USA is primarily preoccupied in Vietnam.

□ The aim of the USA [is] to increase the discrepancies between the PR China and the Soviet Union. Attacking Korea would immediately touch upon the interests of the Soviet Union as well as of the PR China. War in Korea could force the PR China to seek joint action with the Soviet Union to defend the DPRK and to protect its own interests. In any case, those forces in the PR China fostering the normalization of the relationship with the Soviet Union out of national interests would possibly be emboldened.

□ The USA cannot currently count on the same international support as in 1950 for an aggressive war against Korea, and the USA is in general very isolated due to the aggression in Vietnam.

□ □

## B.) The Attitude of the South Korean Regime

The South Korean regime is one of the most reactionary of the regimes in Asia whose policies are broadly determined by the USA.

□ Despite a certain political and economical stabilization in South Korea, according to the scarce data available to us, there are serious internal conflicts between various groups. There is also opposition to the deployment of troops to South Vietnam.

□ The Park Chung Hee regime attempts more and more to educate the entire population in accordance with a bourgeois-nationalistic anticommunist ideology. Currently there is a particularly strong anticommunist movement in South Korea aiming at suppressing any oppositional currents. In order to justify this reactionary anticommunist propaganda, the South Korean side is interested in a tense situation and in the aggravation of incidents.

□ Despite certain remarks by the Park Chung Hee regime at official occasions about the reunification of Korea via the United Nations, the real concept of the South Korean regime is to conquer North Korea by military means. Even the Park Chung Hee regime [however] seems to be conscious of the fact that this is currently impossible.

□The USA is eager to maintain and expand South Korea as a crucial strategic base. However, the USA currently cannot risk South Korea unleashing a local war without becoming actively involved.

### C.) The Attitude of the DPRK

□The attitude of the DPRK is expressed in the documents of the Party Conference, the article in "Rodong Sinmun" from 16 November 1967, and partly also in talks with our military delegation.

□The DPRK tries to portray the situation as if an attack by the USA is imminent, in order to justify their positions domestically and externally.

□At the same time the DPRK tries to practice its policy of dealing U.S. imperialism blows from the outside and to convince other socialist countries and leaders of the national freedom movement to adhere to a similar policy. This is also in close correlation with the current policy of Cuba (as far as my material justifies such an opinion).

□According to my handwritten notes, which I took during the three years of my work here, the leadership of the DPRK recognizes three possible solutions to the national question:

□ □

□□ in the context of a major revolutionary uprising of the people's masses in South Korea;

□□ utilizing a coup d'etat by military leaders against Park Chung Hee (and in the context of the temporary disorganization having been caused by this coup);

□□ utilizing an aggravated international situation that committed U.S. forces to such an extent that they cannot support the South Korean regime.

□□

Currently one can assess that the DPRK has totally given up the idea of a peaceful and democratic unification of the country. Also one does not seem to believe any more in the possibility of a broad revolutionary development in South Korea; therefore remaining are only the two latter adventurous variations, which they seem to be increasingly aiming at.

Despite this opinion, I currently do not believe that the leadership of the DPRK plans any activities for a forceful solution of the national question in the near future. The following reasons may explain my opinion:

□The modernization of the KPA and the mastering of modern arms technology will take another two to five years. It is not possible to predict an exact time frame. On the one hand, the subjective opinions of the military leadership concerning the time needed for mastering modern arms technology cannot be evaluated from our side. On the other hand, the speed of arms deliveries from the Soviet Union will certainly

depend on the political attitude of the DPRK, [and] on the assessment of the general situation.

The Korean leadership, especially Kim Il Sung, knows at the same time that a conflict with the USA is currently impossible without major support from the PR China. On the one hand, the willingness to provide such support is questionable in light of the domestic situation in China and the attitude of the Chinese leadership towards the USA, and on the other hand, Kim Il Sung will have to fear that a longer intervention by the PR China in case of a war might lead to his fall from political power.

Summarizing I would like to express the following opinion:

The incidents at the armistice line will continue in the future. Their scope and severity will mainly be determined by the political intentions of all three parties involved. Severe incidents will happen in particular when one of the parties involved is interested in an aggravation of the situation. The extremely tense situation does not exclude the option of larger local, temporary conflicts. I currently consider an immediate outbreak of war improbable, however I fathom the potential danger of the outbreak of a future war in Korea, taking into account the aforementioned political attitudes of the DPRK leadership, the Park Chung Hee regime, the U.S., and also the policy of the Mao faction. Therefore we have to follow the situation extremely closely. Also for the reasons mentioned, there is, among others, the need to devote highest attention to the relation between the GDR and the DPRK, the SED and the KWP, in order to further positive tendencies and to counter those tendencies that are adventurist and dangerous for the socialist world system.

I have insufficient information at my disposal to elaborate on this opinion. For that reason alone a miscalculation cannot be precluded. Notwithstanding that, I thought it would be appropriate to make the attempt and outline my opinion in light of the international situation as well as the situation in Korea.

With socialist wishes

[signed]

Brie

Enclosure