

January 7, 1970

**Memorandum on a Consultation about Repatriation
of Koreans Living in Japan, Provided to Comrade
Herrmann by Comrade Kim Gwang-su, Member of
the Presidential Board of the Central Committee of
the Red Cross, on 29 December 1969 at 4:00**

Citation:

"Memorandum on a Consultation about Repatriation of Koreans Living in Japan, Provided to Comrade Herrmann by Comrade Kim Gwang-su, Member of the Presidential Board of the Central Committee of the Red Cross, on 29 December 1969 at 4:00", January 7, 1970, Wilson Center Digital Archive, MfAA C 155/75. Translated by Karen Riechert. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/116732>

Summary:

On a consultation with Herrmann, Kim Gwang-su informed him of ongoing situation on repatriation of Koreans living in Japan.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

GDR Embassy in the DPRK

Pyongyang, 7 January 1970

- Memorandum -

On a consultation about repatriation of Koreans living in Japan, provided to Comrade Herrmann by Comrade Kim Gwang-su [Kim Kwang Su], member of the presidential board of the Central Committee of the Red Cross, on 29 December 1969 at 4:00 p.m. in the building of the Cultural Committee.

Comrade Jarck, first Secretary at the [GDR] embassy had been asking for such a consultation probably since the end of 1968. Present were also Comrade Pak, interpreter at the embassy, and a person taking the minutes (this woman was introduced as a member of Department IV of the AASK [Afro-American Solidarity Committee] in the context of the AASK delegation's stay in the DPRK).

The consultation had the character of an official information as written material was provided.

Comrade Kim stated he could explain only some aspects of this problem, and then elaborated accordingly: „The Koreans were forced into emigration since they were oppressed in Korea [during Japanese rule]. The Koreans living in Japan are those abducted with force [by the Japanese] and their children. They were mistreated, exploited, and did practically not enjoy any rights. The Korean Workers' Party and the government of the DPRK protect and defend the rights of their compatriots. Comrade Kim Il Sung personally devotes great attention to the 600,000 Koreans living in Japan. For example, he has transferred already 8.51344 Billion Won in Japanese currency for educational purposes.

Comrade Kim Il Sung is also concerned about repatriation. Since December 1959, altogether 88,000 people have been repatriated to the DPRK on board of 155 ship journeys.

The repatriated received apartments and everything for their vital needs. They receive hospital treatment without charged, and the kids get tuition-free education. Thus they are treated as everybody else in the DPRK. Repatriation is of utmost political importance. They are returning from a capitalist to a socialist country, and therefore they prove the superiority of the DPRK.

Japanese militarists and South Korea are eager to foil this repatriation. From the beginning of the first negotiations, Japan attempted to disrupt them. Oppression of the national rights of Koreans living in Japan has been growing enormously over the years.

On 24 August 1945, 3,700 Koreans from Japan attempted to return home by ship. The Japanese made the ship explode on sea.

During the first negotiations about repatriation Japan negotiated at the same time with South Korea for all Koreans living in Japan to obtain South Korean citizenship. People who objected to this were brought to special camps. There they were tied up and a mask was placed on their mouth in order to prevent them from talking.

The then-Japanese Foreign Minister declared that the issue of repatriation has to be solved politically through negotiations between Japan and South Korea.

During the first negotiations, Japan also demanded that all Koreans living in Japan, one person at a time, need to be interviewed whether they actually want to repatriate although they had already expressed this desire.

Furthermore they wanted to get the International Red Cross involved in the negotiations-in order to stop them.

On 13 August 1959 the agreement on repatriation was signed in Calcutta. As a result, the United States mobilized rowdies to destroy the repatriation headquarters by bombs and to abduct Korean officials.

Among other things the agreement stipulates: If those who applied for repatriation cannot be repatriated within one year, the agreement will be extended for one more year at a time.

This means, Comrade Kim explained, that the agreement would be automatically extended as long as there is a desire for repatriation. He furthermore elaborated: "Since August 1967 the agreement has been violated. The repatriation offices have been closed down and their work has come to a halt. At the end of 1967, the Japanese side has unilaterally called off the repatriation.

In August 1967 new negotiations about repatriation were taken up in Moscow between the Japanese and the DPRK Red Cross (see information by the embassy of 27 November 1967). The North Korean side suggested to continue repatriation and to adhere to the Calcutta agreement without any changes. The Japanese Red Cross proposed to suspend negotiations and attempted to justify their point of view. Then the Japanese unilaterally terminated negotiations without any explanation.

In November 1967 negotiations took place in Colombo (see introduction of the short information by the embassy of 2 June 1969). "The North Korean side came up with more suggestions. The Japanese delegation was actually supposed to support them since it is not the Koreans' fault that they are staying in Japan.

In Moscow the Japanese came up with a so-called financial question. In Colombo the DPRK delegation responded to this with the following proposal:

1. The 17,000 compatriots who have already applied for repatriation will be treated according to the agreement.
2. For those filing a new application the costs will be covered by the DPRK.
3. The logistics of repatriation will have to be handled by the Japanese side. But if they are not able or unwilling to do that, this job will be taken over by the General Association of Koreans living in Japan.

However, the Japanese delegation stated they will not sign anything in Colombo since they would have no authorization to do so. Again, they left the negotiations.

Since then Japan is increasingly fighting against repatriation. After Colombo, the Japanese side tried to split up the process of repatriation between the 17,000 and those having filed a new application, in order to disrupt repatriation in general. The reason for this was that the DPRK is not able to accommodate the number of 17,000 repatriates within a few months; the Japanese, however, declared they would put an end to the repatriation program if this could not be managed.

In Colombo the Japanese delegation had promised to make sure a delegation of the DPRK Red Cross will be allowed to enter Japan in order to help with repatriation, as it had repeatedly been the case in the past. Now they want to shift this assignment to the International Red Cross. Again, the aim is to foil repatriation as such.

Until today, Japan does not display any further efforts to continue repatriation.

17,000 Koreans are ready for repatriation. They have sold their houses, packed their belongings, and therefore they are in a difficult situation now. The Central Committee of the DPRK Red Cross has continued every effort to move on with repatriation. The Central Committee of the DPRK Red Cross issued a declaration on 8 December 1969, again explaining its point of view on repatriation.

"We are grateful to the GDR and the Red Cross of the GDR for the support we have always received in our struggle for the repatriation of our compatriots. We have forwarded this declaration also to the Red Cross of the GDR and hope that this material will result in new measures of support."

The declaration of the DPRK Red Cross Central Committee of 8 December 1969, as well as a memorandum of 15 December 1966, were provided to us; they will be attached [not part of the document, KR].

I thanked for the information given. In my opinion, the [Korean] comrades had taken too much trouble with this. The GDR embassy just wanted to get informed about some questions of the negotiations in Colombo and the chances for a resumption of negotiations during the following period, in order to effectively support the struggle for repatriation from the side of the GDR. The GDR views the return of the Koreans living in Japan as a deeply humanitarian issue but also as a political problem. It will continue to support this struggle according to its abilities.

In my opinion, the consultation-which lasted 1 1/4 hours-provides some new facts about negotiations in Colombo (proposals on financial issue). It explains the strategy to follow through with repatriation in any case, and not only for one year. In practical terms this means that repatriation will continue on the basis of the Calcutta Agreement. The declaration [the Korean comrades] handed over could not be translated or analyzed so far, for reasons of time and because of other important obligations.

2 attachments

[not part of archival document]

Signed:

Herrmann

3rd secretary

CC:

1. Foreign Ministry, Section Korea
2. 2x Department of International Relations
3. Embassy, Foreign Policy.