

**February 23, 1968**

**Excerpt from a Letter of the Acting Ambassador of  
East Germany to North Korea, Comrade Jarck**

**Citation:**

"Excerpt from a Letter of the Acting Ambassador of East Germany to North Korea, Comrade Jarck", February 23, 1968, Wilson Center Digital Archive, MfAA C1093/70, translated by Karen Riechert. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/118659>

**Summary:**

Ambassador Jarck reports his assessment of North Korean intentions in the seizure of the USS Pueblo and the simultaneous Blue House Raid.

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

**Original Language:**

German

**Contents:**

Translation - English

Excerpt from a Personal Letter of the Acting Ambassador of the GDR in Pyongyang,  
Comrade Jarck

[Attachment to a letter of Comrade Hegen, GDR Foreign Ministry, to Comrades  
Ulbricht, Stoph, Honecker, and Mattern; 23 February 1968]

stamped: personal, strictly confidential

---

[...] First to the events in South Korea, as I believe they will be of greater importance for our future work than the incident with the American spy ship Pueblo. Given all the facts that became known here about the events in South Korea, one has to draw the conclusion that it is a carefully planned and long prepared action of the DPRK aiming at the elimination of South Korean President Park Chung Hee. By January 29 twenty-five men had been killed from this group of thirty-one, which had consisted of superbly conditioned and well trained young officers of the Korean People's Army. After his arrest, one of them killed himself and some policemen with a hand grenade. Only one of them was captured alive and gave a statement on the preparation of the attack, the assignments of the group, etc. It can be assumed that there will be serious attempts undertaken from here to liberate South Korea under the pretext of a coup d'etat. Therefore the

recurrence of similar events can be expected. Thus the tensions, which are also created by other factors, will certainly not diminish, but rather will increase.

Concerning the seizure of the U.S. spy ship, there is in our opinion no direct link to the aforementioned events. The only link, though unproven, might be that they used the invasion of such a ship, which certainly didn't occur for the first time, as a pretext to seize it and divert attention from the events in the South. Such a scenario is taken into consideration at the Soviet embassy, although at the same time it is noted that such an aggravation of the situation, as has happened, had not been expected.

There could hardly be any doubt, by applying the principle of international law that defines a bay as part of the territorial waters of the state bordering that bay, that the ship was seized within the territorial waters of the DPRK. There is no doubt whatsoever that the ship was on a spying mission. The subsequent deployment of the American navy, the increase of American air force units in South Korea, the placing of the South Korean army on alert, and the silence here about the further fate of the ship and the crew created an extremely contentious situation. At the moment, emotions seemed to have cooled down after having been running high, but there is still much risk of an outbreak of armed conflict. Primarily I have in mind the possible failure of all attempts to establish direct contact, or the possibility that direct talks between the USA and the DPRK in Panmunjom or at any other location take a course such that none of the parties involved can give way without losing face.

The question of what the DPRK aimed at with this action in South Korea is extremely important. Was it really about reunifying Korea by these means? If that is the case, and one assumes all military preconditions (nationally and internationally) are already set, then the incident with the Pueblo could be a convenient occasion.

The following facts could support the thesis that all those requirements are already in place:

- the correct assumption that the U.S. aggression in Vietnam ties up the majority of the American military potential in Asia
- the beginning of mobilization in the DPRK, which is already ongoing.

These facts are contradictory:

- the DPRK's indication of willingness to hold talks with the USA in Panmunjom and the willingness to send a delegation to the meeting of the Security Council
- that the Soviet arms shipments are not sufficient for a military liberation of South Korea (the opinion of the local Soviet military attaché during a talk with our military attaché).

In this context the attitude of the PRC towards the DPRK is of great importance. There have been indications recently that a certain improvement of relations between the two countries is underway. There are indications within the diplomatic corps that the Romanian comrades disseminated the following opinions of Chinese Acting Ambassador Wang Feng in various conversations:

- China respects the independent policy of the KWP
- the Communist Party of China does not object to the KWP joining the consultative meeting in Budapest
- economic relations are developing normally. Early in 1968 the PRC will meet the 1967 trade agreement despite its own difficulties. (This is also the opinion of the first secretary of the Czechoslovak embassy, who allegedly has checked numbers that he wants to inform me about.)

A Romanian comrade pointed out to us (on December 16) that Wang Feng told him:

- he doesn't expect the South to attack the North or the North to attack the South
- if war did break out, the PRC would help the Korean people, regardless of whether there had been differences of opinion beforehand.

The Romanian military attaché remarked that the Chinese military attaché told him a few days ago that in his view the situation was good. The Korean people wanted to fight against the USA and the PRC would be willing to support the Korean people with everything they want - weapons and people. One would not pay attention to the differences of opinion in political matters. The Romanian military attaché supposedly also has information that the PRC recently has shipped tanks and guns to the DPRK.

The Czechoslovak comrades reported that for some time the Chinese representatives in Panmunjom had been treated preferentially in terms of protocol. At many joint occasions with the Korean, Chinese, Czechoslovak and Polish comrades, they now first translate into Chinese and afterwards into Russian. Previously it had been the other way around.

[...]