



December 22, 1967
Letter from GDR Embassy in the DPRK to State Secretary Hegen

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Summary:

The German Ambassador in the DPRK discusses domestic and foreign policy developments within the DPRK, including the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung and North Korea's relationship with China.

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Contents:

- English Translation

**THE EXTRAORDINARY AND AUTHORIZED
AMBASSADOR
OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
TO THE
DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

Pyongyang, December 22, 1967

**State Secretary and
First Deputy of the Minister
For Foreign Affairs**

Comrade Hegen

102 Berlin

Marx – Engels –Platz 2

Dear comrade Hegen,

Our embassy's analytical work and report for 1967 has dealt primarily with the following issues:

- The economic development of the DPRK
- Domestic developments since the party conference (especially after the plenum in June)
- The KWP's attitude towards different aspects of the world Communist movement
- The DPRK's relationship with the PRC, Vietnam, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other European socialist states
- The intensification of tensions along the line of demarcation and the reasons [for the intensification]

In December, the Far Eastern department suggested to work out a prognosis for the development of the DPRK and the relationship between the GDR and the DPRK. The goals and structures of such a prognosis have been sent for approval to the Far East department and thus to the administration of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Due to the embassy's extensive way of reporting, an exact report of the domestic and foreign policy of the DPRK by the GDR embassy is no longer necessary. If the administration needed such a summary, it could be compiled due to our section reports.

As a final analysis of my work done this year in the DPRK, I want to express my opinions regarding several aspects.

1. In the areas of domestic and foreign policy, the conflict between the tightened nationalistic outlook of the KWP and the government of the DPRK has increasingly intensified. Based on this tightened conflict, an oppositional movement in the party leadership has developed regarding the stance on domestic policy. In my opinion, this opposition in the party leadership does not show an essential change of the nationalistic centralist policy, but rather

a certain modification of the contemporary policy can be seen. It seems that this opposition mainly argued for a more realistic economic policy (also an increase of living standards) and a more flexible policy regarding the national question. Regarding the foreign policy, they seemed to have argued for a policy which is more based on the actual potencies of the DPRK. There are no signs that this opposition wanted to connect a modification of policy in a putsch against Kim Il Sung. Obviously they strived to achieve such a modification by his help in acknowledging his executive position. Doubtless Pak Geum-cheol [Pak Kum Chol] and Ri Hyo-sun [Ri Hyo Sun] were in the forefront of this opposition. Furthermore, there are no signs that these oppositions worked with the help of foreign forces such as the PR China. In my opinion, it is generally wrong for the evaluation of contemporary and prospective developments of the DPRK to assess certain persons to be pro Soviet or pro Chinese.

2. The changes in the leadership of the party and of the state reflect two important tendencies:
 - At the congressional party in October 1966, the leadership of the military cadres was strengthened. In 1967, this process continued and resulted in same changes taking place at the supreme discussion (OVV), the government, and their governmental institutions.
 - There was a wide regeneration of the party – and the state cadres were developed under the leadership of Kim Il Sung. He was also responsible in their advancements. This regeneration of the party cadres, in some cases, resulted in a nomination of functional capable comrades. On the other hand, it also brought some incompetent nationalistic careerists.
3. The year 1967 was significant in tightening the nationalistic centralist policy of the DPRK and the KWP. This process was mostly seen at the ideological level.

The cult personality of Kim Il Sung degenerated in dimension as it is comparative to the contemporary cult of Mao. But in my opinion, it is impossible to put the political assessment of this cult personality in par with the development of the PR China. The enhancement of this cult will have negative domestic aftereffects, such as in terms of ideology as well as in strategy and administrating the national economy. In regard to foreign affairs, this cult concerns mostly the claim of leadership of the Maoist – group. Furthermore, this cult is certain that in part it will contribute to the contemporary development of the PR China. (Shielding against the influence of Mao as a revolutionary world leader, and particularly against Mao as the leader of the Korean revolutionary forces.)

4. Regardless of the DPRK's ambitions in having normal relationships with the Soviet Union as well the PR China, due to the Maoist group, the relationship with the PR China hit rock bottom at the end of 1967. This was expressed, among other things, in a harsh protest that the deputy secretary of state, Heo Seok-tae [Ho Sok Thae], also mentioned in November of this year. Protests were towards the charge d'affaires of the PR China, Wang Peng, concerning the offenses against the person of Kim Il Sung and the policy of the DPRK.

I want to emphasize one more time, that in my opinion, the DPRK still endeavors to have good governmental relations with the PR China as well as with the Soviet Union in the future. The DPRK does not strive in making a commitment to governmental political relations.

5. The relationship to the socialistic countries in Europe continued to improve in 1967. In certain circumstances, the DPRK was prepared to discuss essential problems in which they are most interested. Beyond this, they seriously attempted to improve economical relations with most of the socialist countries in Europe.
6. Aspects such as the visits to the GDR by leading DPRK personnel, improvement of foreign trade relations, the willingness to reach long-ranging agreements with the GDR, and endeavoring new forms of a technical and scientific cooperation, have all been areas where the DPRK worked towards the improvement of relations between our countries. In my opinion, this process will also prevail on the governmental level. In the field of relations between the parties, the reluctance of the KWP towards the SED and other Marxist – Leninists Parties will continue. The position of the DPRK and the KWP towards the GDR is, in my opinion, influenced by following aspects:

- In the eyes of the DPRK, GDR is an economically developed country with the most stable economy. Regarding cooperation with the GDR, the DPRK wishes for efficient economic support. Thereby the DPRK expects a certain amount aid from the GDR.
- For the leadership of the DPRK, our party is an especially self –contained, stabile, ideological strong party, which has an important influence towards the international communist movement, and also in part towards the national liberation movement.
- The consequent and resolute position of the GDR in the conflict with the American and West German Imperialism and the big political and material support of Vietnam have been positively assessed.
- The DPRK has some provisions against our strategy and tactic in the national question, in terms of the policy of the European security and against a tight confraternity between the SED and the CPSU, the GDR and the Soviet Union and in the economical cooperation.

7. It is certain that during the next months the cooperation of the embassy within different governmental and political places of the DPRK will get more difficult and complicated. On the one hand all cadres of the party- and state machinery have obviously been instructed to behave notably cautious and proud towards all foreign representation. Presently this arrangement mainly concerns the Soviet embassy, to which the Koreans are behaving, in spite of the amount of military and economic help, especially discriminatory. To some extent they are also behaving in a similar manner towards us and other embassies. Beyond this the cooperation will get more complicated because of the political insecurity of the new cadres and their missing motivation to exchange opinions.

One important tactical question is how we should react towards the cautious behavior of the Koreans. In the context of this concluding letter I want to be essentially responsive to this. From my point of view it is necessary to think carefully about this aspect and not to jump to conclusions.

For characterizing the behavior of the Koreans, I am accenting now several examples.

The soviet ambassador formulated the request to transfer a movie about the stay of the delegation of the OVV to the member of the delegation. In addition to the transferring it was also allowed to show the movie.

The Korean foreign minister responded that they suggest that a member delivers the movie to the record department.

For the disposal of notably important army transfers, like missiles, aircrafts, modern tanks etc., the Soviets suggested to accomplish it in a ceremony. But the Koreans didn't show any willingness towards this. Finally the disposal found place in a small room with tea and cigarettes.

The Koreans urgently requested help from the Soviet Union, due to the fact that their production of steel would disrupt without an immediate shipment of additional coke. Five days after the Korean request help, comrade Novikov personally phoned the ambassador comrade Sudarikov. He advised Sudarikov of the willingness of the immediate delivery of an additional amount of coke. Further he asked him to clear just one question with the government in order to start the deliveries immediately.

While I was present at an event, the Soviet ambassador asked Kim Gwang-hyeop [Kim Kwang Hyop] for two minutes time in order to solve the above mentioned question. The chief of records came back from Kim Gwang-hyeop only with the information that the Soviet ambassador should call the foreign ministry the next day in order to ask for an appointment. Thus he would get further information.

Just a few Korean comrades arrived at the departing ceremony of the Soviet [military attaché](#) (degree general), and the main guests came 30 minutes too late. The main guest was a general

responsible for the execution. (At the departing ceremony of our military attaché there was a high attendance including the deputy chief of the general staff and a very high Korean attendance.) The Korean representatives were not even present at the train station during the departing ceremony of the Soviet attaché.

As another example, the Soviet ambassador has been waiting nearly four weeks for an important conversation with Kim Il Sung, regardless to the fact that the Korean ambassador in Moscow never has to wait more than 48 hours for a meeting with Kosygin.

The Soviet ambassador arranged a cocktail party on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic service of the Soviet Union. In addition to ambassadors, [chargé d'affaires](#) and other diplomats, the deputy of the foreign ministry of the DPRK and many other comrades have been invited. The highest Korean guest was the assistant conductor of our national department.

At the opening of a huge book exhibition by the Soviet ambassador on December 12, approximately 30 Korean comrades were present. At our opening one year ago in the same accommodation, there were around 150 Korean comrades.

I have discussed these aspects already elaborately with comrade Sudarikov. Thus I asked him, if, due to the fact of such different behavior, the party and government of the Soviet Union will not draw any conclusion and change their policy towards the Korean comrades.

Comrade Sudarikov answered: With calm and factuality we have to try now for some duration to work insistently in gaining the confidence of the Korean government. It is important that the Koreans recognize that we, that is the Soviet Union, simply have the best intentions towards the DPRK. He (comrade Sudarikov) could assure me, that the Soviet Union would not make any rash reactions towards the contemporary behavior of the Koreans.

From my point of view, we should not react too rashly to the party's impolite attitude towards us. This attitude expresses itself during the long moment of waiting for the announcements at the foreign ministry, repeated queries about topics, and so on.

Regardless to the fact, that our Korean partner is speaking in conversations in the style of newspaper articles, we should strengthen in the year 1968 the endeavors in the embassy, to explain our policy not only in the foreign ministry, but also in other governmental institutions. . Further we should use all protocol possibilities to speak out on invitations in the embassy.

(Correct) To accomplish this method of working in the embassy in a determined way, which is mainly urgent due to the staff decreases, concerning the low political value of talk compared to the effort of time, the endeavors in keeping up and deepen the relations with the Koreans.

There is a constant discussion in our embassy concerning the right proportions between events with other diplomatic representatives and Korean personalities. We always had to face the fact that these events developed in proportions to the disadvantages of the Korean personalities.