

December 30, 1963

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

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Summary:

The Hungarian Ambassador in North Korea reports on a meeting between Soviet
Ambassador Moskovsky and Pak Seong-cheol in which the two discussed child rearing,
agriculture, rural conditions, and industry in North Korea.

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On 29 December I met Comrade Moskovsky, who informed me of the following facts concerning his conversation with Pak Seong-cheol.

The Korean government requested approval of its new ambassador to Moscow. Intentionally, they did not react to the request for two weeks, which made the Korean leaders rather nervous. Recently they finally replied to [the Koreans], and he met the Foreign Minister on this occasion. At the same time, Comrade Moskovsky took the opportunity to inform the minister about the December plenum of the CPSU CC. At first the minister made an attempt to evade this, but he failed.

The Soviet ambassador gave a short summary of Comrade Khrushchev's speech, and spoke about the great enthusiasm the report had elicited from the six thousand participants of the plenum. Pak Seong-cheol then asked whether the Soviet government planned a raise in salaries or a cut in prices. Comrade Moskovsky informed him about what had been said by Comrade Khrushchev, who expounded in his closing speech that the leading comrades and CC members had discussed how to increase the living standards of the Soviet workers. Three alternatives cropped up. First, to raise the salaries. Second, to cut the prices. There is also a third solution, and although it is still just a plan, more and more CC members are favorably inclined towards it. For the point is that instead of the above two measures, the state would provide board and lodging for all children. In accordance with this plan, all urban and rural children up to the 8th grade of primary school would live in day nurseries, kindergardens and day-care centers, and all related expenses, clothing included, would be met by the state. Of course, the parents, if they wished, would be allowed to take their children home every evening or on Sundays. This great action of the state would have several advantages; among others, the parents would be freed from all financial burden and partly from the responsibility for the rearing of their children. Another advantage would be that the education of children in state institutions and by trained pedagogues would rear a new generation, the man of Communism. All this took the Foreign Minister by surprise, he was obviously astonished and practically did not know what to reply.

Comrade Moskovsky then put a question to him about the achievements of 1963 and their plans concerning the next year. The minister informed Comrade Moskovsky that agricultural production was approximately on the same level as it had been last year. Industry generally fulfilled its plan, but they have a lot of problems. The backwardness of the Korean villages is a particularly burning question for the time being. While the urban workers get inexpensive flats, heating, lighting and clothing from the state, and enjoy what is provided by the theaters, cinemas, and other cultural institutions, all this is absent in the villages. The Korean peasants work from daybreak until nightfall, they have to pay for everything given to the cooperatives. In addition, the villages pay taxes for the work done by the machine-tractor stations. They pay for the equipment necessary for the cooperatives, they pay taxes for the water needed for irrigation, and they also have a number of other financial obligations to the state. The Korean villages are underdeveloped, there are no community centers or any similar institutions at their disposal. At that time they adopted foreign experiences in the socialist development of Korean agriculture. They have come to the conclusion that this policy did not work in their country, it must be changed [emphasis in the original]. A substantial part of the cooperatives, particularly the cooperatives in the highlands, got into debt to the state. As a consequence of such a great difference between cities and villages, the peasants flee the villages, everybody wants to go to the cities, which is, of course, an intolerable situation, because, for one thing, they do not intend to swell the urban population, and secondly, the food for the country's population must be produced, one cannot feed the people on coal and iron. Practice also proved that resettlement from the cities does not work either. The more disciplined part of the people, the party members maybe remain [in the villages], but the resettled non-members return clandestinely to the cities. As a consequence of all these facts, the party and government leaders came to the conclusion that the villages had to be fundamentally reorganized and the rural policies hitherto pursued had to be changed. They are considering that the same

system which exists in the cities must be established in the villages too. Cultural institutions and state-owned houses have to be built, in other words, all the advantages enjoyed by the urban workers must be extended to the villages too. According to their conceptions, in the new villages, whose establishment is planned, a system of house-rents and all the pre-advantages provided by the state will be introduced for the peasantry too, similarly to the urban workers. They are aware that such a transformation of the villages requires huge investments. The issue of reducing industrial investments was brought up. The question was raised whether it was necessary for them to achieve the planned production of 2.5 million tons of steel and 500 million meters of textiles per year. Instead, it would be more sensible to limit steel production to 1 million tons and textile production to 300 million meters, and to invest the full amount of money saved this way in the villages. They will not set a limit to the exploitation of raw materials, they intend to develop it further, because these raw materials are exported too. Of course, the realization of all this is not just a financial problem. They know from experience that the Korean peasants are accustomed to their small, primitive houses. They were reared and raised there, and they do not want to move into new, modern houses. Of course, this is a subjective factor, but they have to take it into consideration in the plan aimed at the transformation of the villages, the minister said.

József Kovács
(Ambassador)