

September 10, 1956
**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to
Hungarian Foreign Ministry**

Citation:

"Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to Hungarian Foreign Ministry", September 10, 1956, Wilson Center Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j-Korea-1/c-007230-1956 2.d. Translated by József Litkei. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113383>

Summary:

Report from Ambassador Károly Práth to Budapest on the unusual circumstances in the run-up to and during his first meeting with Kim Il Sung.

Original Language:

Hungarian

Contents:

Translation - English

The Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic.

96/7/Top Secret. 1956. I/3.

Presenter: Lajos Karsai

Top Secret.

Pyongyang, 10 September 1956.

Subject: Visit to Comrade Kim Il Sung.

Since presenting my credentials (on 10 August), we have made five requests to the protocol department of the F[oreign] M[inistry] to be received by Comrade Kim Il Sung. Later I decided-and this decision was confirmed by the opinion of Soviet Ambassador Comrade Ivanov (See my report no. 96/8 top secret 1956)-not to make further requests.

I talked about this issue with the Comrade Soviet Ambassador on 20 August. After this, I indeed did not urge the above-mentioned visit, but on the evening of 2 August [sic.], at the reception organized at the Romanian embassy for the 12th anniversary of Romania's liberation-where Comrade Kim Il Sung was not present-Comrade Nam Il personally informed me that the next day, 24 August, Comrade Kim Il Sung would receive me at 12 p.m. At the same time, Comrade Nam Il asked me to be at his office at 11.50 a.m., because he would accompany me.

In my opinion, after the conversation with me, Comrade Ivanov raised the question to Comrade Nam Il whether Comrade Kim Il Sung had already received me, and if not, then why. That they can discuss such questions is the more likely since at every reception Comrade Ivanov talks only to Comrade Nam Il and vice-versa; moreover, their conversations can last a very long time. It happened several times that they arrived together in the same car to a reception. (For example, Comrade Nam Il and Ivanov arrived together in the same car to the reception we organized in honor of the "Járóka" ensemble. After the reception, they left separately in their own cars.)

But no matter how much the comrade Soviet ambassador did or did not help [us] (which is, of course, only an assumption), and moreover, no matter how definitely Comrade Nam Il stated the evening before that on the next day Comrade Kim Il Sung would receive me, in reality he did not do so. On the appointed day, the morning of August 24, the FM [Foreign Ministry] protocol department informed me that due to his illness, Comrade Kim Il Sung was unable to receive me that day. I accepted this. In the evening, when I was at the dinner organized by Comrade Deputy Foreign Minister Li Dong-geun [Li Dong Gun], I expressed my regret that I had not yet been able to meet Comrade Kim Il Sung since presenting my credentials and [my sympathy] for his illness. I asked Comrade Li Dong-geun to forward my best wishes to Comrade Kim Il Sung and to wish him a speedy recovery.

On 1 September, the FM protocol department informed me over the telephone that Comrade Kim Il Sung was ready to receive me at 12 p.m. that day. He asked me to be in front of the FM building at 11:50 a.m., but they could not yet tell me whether Comrade Nam Il or Comrade Li Dong-geun would accompany me to the visit.

At the appointed time, I went first to the building of the FM accompanied by Comrade Karsai, where an official of the protocol department escorted me to Comrade Nam Il. Here Comrade Nam Il told me that the reason why Comrade Kim Il Sung has been unable to receive me was his illness and his being occupied with the work of preparing for the CC's August plenum. Comrade Nam Il also briefly mentioned that Comrade Kim Il Sung participated in the work of the CC Plenum despite his illness, and that unfortunately he is still sick, and he still does not feel entirely well. I immediately responded to this that if I had known this before, I would have suggested postponing the meeting to a later point of time when Comrade Kim Il Sung feels better, and I firmly requested not to disturb Comrade Kim Il Sung now. Comrade Nam Il responded that his illness was not so dangerous and in any event, this was a kind of official visit that did not need to last long-so there was nothing strange in my visiting him now, especially since he was waiting for me.

At 12 p.m. exactly, I appeared in Comrade Kim Il Sung's reception room in the Cabinet (Council) of Ministers building, where Comrade Kim Il Sung was indeed waiting for me.

Besides Comrade Kim Il Sung and myself, Comrade Nam Il and Comrade Karsai also participated in the conversation, the latter acting as interpreter on behalf of the embassy.

Comrade Kim Il Sung received me with apparent cordiality. He came up to the door that opened into the reception room to [greet] me, but the way he offered me a place to sit was interesting and for me somewhat unusual. The reception room, which was rather a hall, was a rectangular room. There were small tables along the two longer walls with comfortable leather armchairs behind them. The hall was approx. 5-6 meters wide, with an empty space in the middle covered with carpet. [Kim Il Sung] offered places to me, comrades Nam Il, and Karsai at one end of the hall, while Comrade Kim Il Sung took a seat alone at the other end of the hall. There was a distance of 2 to 3 meters between us, and this is how we conducted our conversation. It seems that this is the custom here.

[The following paragraphs deal with the conversation, which touched upon issues such as life in Pyongyang, the problem of constructing a new building for the Hungarian embassy, and plans for developing Pyongyang. The conversation did not address political issues.]

When I left, Comrades Kim Il Sung and Nam Il escorted me to the door of the room.

signature
Ambassador Károly Práth