

**April 13, 1955**  
**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the  
Hungarian Foreign Ministry**

**Citation:**

"Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry", April 13, 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 7. doboz, 5/f, 006054/1955. Translated for NKIDP by Balazs Szalontai.  
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**Summary:**

Report from Dr. László Keresztes, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim at the Hungarian embassy in the DPRK, which talks about a conversation he had with Soviet Counselor A.M. Petrov. Keresztes sharply criticizes the secrecy and force that is utilized by the North Korean government and talks especially about the unreasonable economic conditions which exist in the DPRK.

**Original Language:**

Hungarian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

On 12 April [...] I paid a visit to Soviet Counselor A.M. Petrov. [...] I told him that I dealt with issues of internal politics, and since there were some issues I did not see clearly, I asked for his advice. These issues were the following: the absence of criticism and self-criticism in Korea, the unchanged personality cult, and secret-mongering. [...] In his view-he emphasized that this was his personal opinion-criticism was directed primarily downwards, there was barely any criticism directed upwards [emphasis in the original]. They speak about it, but they do not practice it, or rather it seems that it is only Comrade Kim Il Sung who practices it. The criticism that is heard is not public but exclusive. [...] In his view, it is a serious error that Comrade Kim Il Sung is surrounded by boot-lickers and careerists [emphasis in the original]. They exploit, and rely on, the successes of reconstruction, which undoubtedly exist. Whatever is said by the leader, they accept without any dispute. Thus, the mistakes are not revealed openly, only in private and belatedly. No one has ever been held responsible for them.

The personality cult has not changed at all, and it is a primary and decisive factor in every mistake [emphasis in the original]. They do not even speak about this question. In many respects their plans are not realistic but exaggerated [emphasis in the original]. For instance, the grain crop target for 1955 was 4 million metric tons, which was almost double as much as the 1954 crop had been. They wanted to achieve it without any particular investment. When they were reminded of that, they gradually lowered the plan target, and now it is 2.7 million, which is more or less realistic.

An even greater mistake was made in the appraisal of the 1954 crop. On the basis of embellished and false reports, the crop was estimated at 3 million metric tons. [...] In effect, as they recently admitted, the crop had been just 2.3 million metric tons. Nevertheless, it is possible that this figure is not correct either. As a consequence, in many places they took as much as 50 percent of the poor crop, instead of the 23 to 27 percent tax in kind enacted by law, from the peasantry by brute force. Thus, the peasantry was left with barely any grain reserve. Moreover, plan targets for compulsory deliveries, set on the basis of the high estimates, were also exaggerated. Private grain trade came to an end, only state organs took over grain at very low state prices. As a consequence of all this, public feeling rapidly deteriorated. In the countryside, one could already hear strongly dissenting voices [emphasis in the original] among the peasantry. Hostile elements took advantage of the public feeling, and intrigued. In addition, a number of suicides occurred. Following this, the situation was discussed in private in February, and a number of measures were taken. Grain was purchased from China and the Soviet Union. (As far as we know, they purchased 200 thousand metric tons [of grain].) Compulsory deliveries were halted at once. A part of the delivered grain was given back to the peasantry as a loan. A decision was taken about the establishment of new machine-tractor stations. These measures eased the problem, but they have not fundamentally changed the situation.

The pace of cooperativization is also far too rapid [emphasis in the original]. In just one year, 30 percent of the peasantry joined [cooperatives]. [...] In a few cases they admitted that force had been used in the organization [of cooperatives] (probably there were many more such cases).

The plenum of 1-4 April was also held in private, the reports and debates were not published.[...]

Then Comrade Petrov spoke about the undeniable success of reconstruction. The unfavorable side of the latter is the extremely low standard of living [emphasis in the original]. The average monthly wage of a factory worker of undistinguished performance is 1500 won, whereas a meter of linen costs 300 won, and a necktie 3 to 500 won. They [the workers] get nothing else on ration but rice [emphasis in the original], only a very narrow stratum gets anything else. They expect foreign countries to give them everything [emphasis in the original]. In place of a part of the equipment to be sent within the framework of the one billion ruble aid program, the

Soviet Union offered to give them consumer goods. The government of the DPRK rejected that, and insisted on sending equipment [emphasis in the original]. Nor do they utilize the local sources of raw materials and the secondary products of heavy industry to produce consumer goods.

[...]

There is also a very great shortage of leading cadres and technical experts. Nevertheless, a new generation is certainly emerging.

[...]

Dr. László Keresztes  
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim