

February 14, 1961
**East German Embassy in North Korea, 'Information
on the State of Repatriation of Koreans Living in
Japan to the DPRK'**

Citation:

"East German Embassy in North Korea, 'Information on the State of Repatriation of Koreans Living in Japan to the DPRK'", February 14, 1961, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archive of the German Foreign Ministry, Berlin (MFAA A 6980). Translated for NKIDP by Karen Riechert. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/114976>

Summary:

East German diplomats report that the repatriation of Koreans living in Japan has been suspended.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

GDR Embassy in the DPRK Pyongyang, 14 February 1961

M 948/08

highly confidential

Handwritten note on first page:

On 3rd of May [1961] 56th transport with 1145 repatriates arrived in Cheongjin.
Operation is continuing.

I n f o r m a t i o n

On the State of Repatriation of Koreans living in Japan to the DPRK.

Until the end of 1960, the DPRK has sent 54 repatriation ships to Japan to transport about 53,000 Koreans to the DPRK.

94 percent of them had lived in South Korea before they migrated to Japan. Among them are 700 highly skilled workers, 300 scientists and artists, 3 medical doctors, and one doctor from another field of specialization. In addition, there are 1,500 Japanese among those immigrating to the DPRK (mostly Japanese spouses).

In January 1961 already, unlike in previous times, there were less announcements and reports about repatriates in the DPRK's press and radio. On 3 February 1961 the Japanese Red Cross announced it had received the following telegram by the North Korean Red Cross to its Japanese counterpart: "Due to measures of preventing the flu epidemic in Japan, repatriation transports will have to be suspended temporarily" (information in Confidential Bulletin).

On 8 February 1961, Japanese "International Radio" announced from Tokyo that the Japanese Red Cross had sent a telegram to the Red Cross in the DPRK stating the following:

□□□ Demanding to send the 55th repatriation ship immediately
 . There are 735 repatriates in Niigata, nobody of whom has contracted the flu.
 . Proposal to vaccinate the repatriates prophylactically.
 . Proposal to the DPRK to send doctors with the 55th ship in order to maintain control and do the vaccinations.

□□

According to our information, the reasons to suspend repatriation activities are a result of following causes:

□□□ Due to living conditions in the DPRK, repatriates already staying on DPRK territory have passed on information to those still staying in Japan not to come to the DPRK.

□□

□□□ The DPRK government faces problems with controlling the repatriates. We were able to observe how in particular the younger repatriates banded together in gangs and created visibility, for instance, in Pyongyang. They have their meeting points in the city and, in some cases, act up as "rowdys".

□□

□□ In terms of clothing and individual manners, they immediately attract attention given DPRK society. This way certain elements of their previous lifestyle (portable radios, record-players etc.) seep into the Korean population. It leads to contradictions and complications with overall education of the people, in particular the youth. (The recent Central Committee meeting of the Democratic Youth Mass Movement proclaimed these assignments for the youth: "Solving difficult and complicated problems - youth mass movement must become a fighting movement -, members of youth mass movement must be educated to become 'Red Soldiers of the Party'").

□□

□□ In the so-called Commission Shops (buy-up-centers), there are currently mostly goods on offer which have been brought along from Japan by repatriates, especially bicycles, portable radios, watches, leather jackets, suits, record-players, leather handbags, long-playing records etc. Those items are exchanged by the repatriates for cash to figure as their so-called "material basis". In particular young repatriates live off this money, sometimes up to six months, instead of seeking regular employment. They use their time to engage in business. Therefore one can notice a surge of "black market" activities in the street.

□□

□□ Allocation of repatriates by the DPRK organs across the entire country and to remote villages is undermined by internal migration mostly into major cities.

□□

□□ Also there is disgruntlement among repatriated women. Hitherto in Japan, they were accustomed to find abundant supplies on shelves and in department stores. At this point, this is not yet the case in the DPRK.

□□

□□ So far independent capitalists and owners of former small and medium businesses have adapted most easily and swiftly to DPRK conditions. They were mostly awarded with leading positions in industry and economy. Sales of their brought-along business tools and equipment (machines, spare parts for cars etc.) turned out to be very advantageous. Also, skilled workers and specialists among the expatriates made a good income since they were placed according to their knowledge and abilities. Peasants also mostly improved their fate through repatriation, as they had been part of the most suffering segments of people in Japan (high custom taxes on soil, extremely bad living conditions).

□□

Repatriation also resulted in a wealth of problems for the DPRK in terms of security and vigilance. As the border between North and South Korea is hermetically sealed, the enemy attempts to infiltrate agents and spies mainly via Japan. The large number of repatriates to the DPRK facilitates the intrusion by certain trained cadres of foreign intelligence services. The option for repatriates to carry along personal belongings of all sorts entails also the opportunity to enter into the DPRK technical devices for espionage and sabotage (portable radios as signal transmitters etc.).

In our opinion, all these reasons are causing the current stop of the process of repatriation. There is no mention whatsoever of any of those problems in public. Above listed facts are observations that were also made by diplomats from other representations, and they were corroborated through our talks and conversations with them.

(signed: Rauter)

signed: Schneidewind [Ambassador]

Copies:

1x Comrade Schwab

1x Comrade Florin

1x Comrade Stude
1x Information Division
1x Embassy