

February 12, 1955
**Liaison Report from the Romanian Embassy in
Pyongyang to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
February 12th 1955, 550/55**

Citation:

"Liaison Report from the Romanian Embassy in Pyongyang to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, February 12th 1955, 550/55", February 12, 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archive of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Year 1955; Issue 20; Country: the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Obtained and translated for NKIDP by Eliza Gheorghe. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115532>

Summary:

In a report to the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Romanian Ambassador to North Korea describes his travels to Pyongyang and his discussions with Kim Il Sung and various other North Korean politicians about the current economic conditions in North Korea, as well as reconstruction efforts in Mukden (Shenyang) and Andong (Dandong).

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from ROK Ministry of Unification

Original Language:

Romanian

Contents:

Translation - English

On August 28th, I returned a visit to the Ambassador of Czechoslovakia, Comrade Jaroslav Sykora. Knowing that an engineer has been sent to Andong [Dandong] and Mukden [Shenyang] on behalf of the Embassy of Czechoslovakia in order to investigate whether an electrocolor and other construction materials, also of interest to us, can be acquired from China, I took advantage of this occasion to ask him whether the engineer is currently in Pyongyang as I would like to have a meeting with him. In the beginning of our discussion, Comrade Sykora said that "constructing a permanent building is the most reasonable way of proceeding," and that they would have reached the same conclusion had they also thought about this. The construction of these wooden barracks is expensive, and in a few years they will become inoperable since multi-story buildings will surround the site. The Czechoslovaks paid 10% more than the value of the barracks on transport alone, and the total expenses would have been enough to cover a permanent building. They are also currently thinking to begin building a central body of the Embassy and keep the barracks as ancillary buildings.

Having already had a visit scheduled to Comrade Kim Il Sung, Ambassador Sykora was unable to stay until the end of the meeting, leaving me with First Secretary Franz Josef and the engineer. The Ambassador apologized and asked me to wait for his return, however we were unable to do so due to prior obligations. We later received a personal letter in which he apologized for not being able to stay until the end of the meeting. I believe we have very good relations with him and he displays an outstanding honesty.

From the discussion with the engineer I discovered that a part of the construction materials we need do exist in Mukden and Andong, however we would require a specialist to buy them personally since they cannot be acquired from a single place. Regarding the electrocolor, we can acquire it directly from China or place an order, which we should receive within a week. The latter has the advantage that the electrocolor can be custom-made depending on the number of heating elements and the heating capacity we want it to have. Furthermore, all necessary materials can be procured, including water installations and others. What is important is that we can acquire most materials from the People's Republic of China, which saves us a lot of money on transportation costs. The Czechoslovak engineer told me to ask for his help when needed as he would stay in Pyongyang.

On August 31st, having to present the letters of credence, I made a return visit to the PRC's chargé d'affaires Comrade Gan Yetao.

I sought to take advantage of this opportunity to ask for more details on how to procure the construction materials required for the construction of our Embassy from the PRC. He told me that not only would we be able to acquire them, but also that they [the Chinese diplomats] were asked by the government to help representatives of partner countries with building their offices. I told him that, for the time being, we would need 20 tons of concrete to begin the construction works and, if possible, we intend to send 2 specialists to procure these materials.

He responded that they would send a letter to the Chinese authorities to assist with acquiring the concrete. They will also notify the Chinese government through a telegram to take measures in resolving the issue.

Afterwards, he asked whether we experienced any troubles at the border in those cases when Chinese border guards discovered Chinese currency on Romanian comrades, as it happened with envoys from other countries. I informed him that no such troubles had occurred, but regarding the medical team which receives payment for the travels in Chinese currency, we would like them to be paid half in Korean currency and half in Chinese. The Korean money should be used for buying food, whilst clothing should be purchased from China. He responded that we thought well

through the situation given the difficulty posed by the limited possibilities to purchase certain things in Korea, especially clothing.

Finally, I thanked him for his support and the warm welcome. The visit lasted 2 hours and 15 minutes.

On September 1st, I made a visit to the Ministry of Commerce, also meeting with the heads of the Imports and Europe departments. On this occasion, I asked whether the comrades were experiencing any difficulties with the assistance received from the People's Republic of Romania and whether the duties appointed in the treaty were executed in their entirety. The Minister informed me that the commitments agreed upon were generally fulfilled and that the delay of the supplies had been caused by them, after having required a temporary suspension of the deliveries. A major impediment is the very high costs of rail transportation; if petroleum products cost 5 million, transportation costs 7 million. The costs remain high despite the 50% discount for Soviet and Chinese railroads. The Korean officials thought about covering the transportation costs from the funds available for 1954-56, however these funds are small and cannot be used to cover these costs. This is a very difficult issue, presently unresolved. A further impediment is the fact that assistance constitutes the entire basis of imports and North Korea does not have enough foreign currency to cover the cost of transportation.

The Minister asked me to intervene and pledge with the Romanian government to respond to my inquiry whether the People's Republic of Romania agrees to supply tractors and freight cars instead of fishing vessels. So far, the inquiry has gone unanswered, making it impossible for the DPRK to complete the supply plan for 1955.

I asked whether he knew anything about the outcome of the discussions regarding the supply of petroleum products from Romania to the USSR in Europe, and from the USSR to the DPRK in Asia, respectively. He answered he did not know anything concrete, however he believed there were difficulties associated with the situation.

Afterwards, I asked whether the DPRK would assist us in transporting and providing all necessary border approvals if we purchased concrete for the Embassy from the PRC. He assured us that he would send a letter to the DPRK's economic envoy in Andong and Mukden with the request to support acquiring and transporting the necessary materials to Pyongyang.

Finally, I assured him that I would contact the Romanian government in regards to the issues troubling the Koreans in order to solve all hitherto difficulties. Moreover, the DPRK is to contact us with any other further problems so that we can inform our government.

On September 4th, I paid a visit to Minister of Culture and Propaganda Comrade Heo Jeong-suk, together with Comrades Florescu Victor and Neamu Gheorghe. On behalf of the Department of Cultural Relations, Director of the Department Comrade Pak participated in the meeting. The first issue discussed was related to establishing a plan for cultural relations between our countries.

Given the current situation in Korea, I asked that they present a project proposal, based on which we can also draft a plan. She told us to go ahead and draw up the project proposal without thinking about the damages the DPRK has suffered. I informed him that, in case they cannot bear the transportation costs for cultural envoys, our comrades are willing to cover these costs until the economic situation in the DPRK improves. In concluding the issue, she mentioned that these cultural plans will play a big role in strengthening the ties between our peoples and the mutual

understanding between our countries.

The second issue raised concerned the visit of a Romanian orchestra to Korea this year. I want to mention that our embassy's comrades have raised the issue for informative purposes only. She said that she made an inquiry to the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs whether they can receive a orchestra of 105 people in mid-August. The response has been favorable (at the beginning of June). Regarding this issue, I informed the Korean officials that a group of 18 people from the 'Barbu Lautaru' orchestra would end their tour in the PRC, after which they would arrive in the DPRK. I asked whether they had the possibility to provide the orchestra with room and board during their stay in Korea. They answered that they could cover costs such as: hotel, meals and transport within the DPRK. We were then asked if we knew the composition of the group and how long they would stay in the DPRK. Regarding the composition, we answered that we were only aware of their number, however we would look into it and let them know in due time. As for the duration of their stay, the Romanian government told us around 2-3 weeks, however the visit could be prolonged to a month if the Koreans consider it necessary.

Finally, Comrade Heo Jeong-suk noted that the visit constitutes the beginning of our relations and a means of strengthening the cultural ties between our countries. The visit lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes.

On the evening of September 9th the reception hosted by the Minister of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, took place, celebrating their 10th anniversary. On behalf of the DPRK government, the following officials attended the event: Pak Chang-ok, Choe Chang-ik, Kim Il Sung and Chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly Ri Young. Other participants included members of the diplomatic corps, state representatives, representatives of cultural and mass organizations, generals of the People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army. On behalf of our embassy, the attendees were Comrades Anton Tatu Jianu, Florescu Victor, Neamu Gheorghe, Ciocan Nicolae and their spouses. Approximately 250 people attended the event, out of which around 50 were members of the Bulgarian medical team.

Comrade Radenko Grigorov, Minister of the Bulgarian mission to the DPRK, opened the reception with a speech on the achievements of the Bulgarian people, a speech which lasted 17 minutes and ended with a toast for the Soviet Union, Bulgaria's liberator. (The speech was also translated into Korean)

This was followed by a speech from Comrade Pak Chang-ok, who succinctly talked about the importance of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in the struggle for peace, ending with a toast for the Bulgarian government, headed by Comrade Valko Chervenkov. A number of 7 toasts followed.

The reception took place amidst a feeling of warm friendship and ended at half past midnight.

We noted the following: a medallion with the classics of Marxism-Leninism was placed on the stage, exposing Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Georgi Dimitrov. Both the speeches and the toasts were too long, lacked coherence and consisted of several mistakes - for example, a toast dedicated to partner countries omitted the People's Republic of Albania and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

On September 10th, I met with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Comrade Ri Dong-geon [Ri Tong Gon]. Given this opportunity, I handed him the draft protocol for non-commercial payments and the authorization I received from the Romanian government to sign the protocol. I also took advantage of this occasion to ask for a rough quote regarding the construction costs of our Embassy. He promised he will

inquire at the Constructions Committee and subsequently inform us.

Finally, he asked whether we had any observations regarding the performance of the Korean personnel. I answered that they generally fulfill their assigned tasks, however there are several disciplinary issues partly because the staff had not changed, and I believe this issue can be resolved by replacing the two nurses and translator Kim who is slacking off and does not take his work seriously. The Deputy Minister ensured me he will take all necessary measures for the replacement of the nurses and probably the translator as well. Assistant Director of the Third Division Liaison Comrade Pak Ben Do [sic] also participated at the meeting.

On September 13th, we paid a visit to the Chair of the Construction Committee, Comrade Kim Sung-hwa, in order to become acquainted with him, particularly since we require advice regarding the building of our Embassy. He began by introducing us to the organizational chart of the Committee, under which the Communal Households and Technical committees also operate.

This organizational particularity has been partly due to the fact that, after signing the armistice, it became necessary for these three areas to converge under the sole direction of central body that will adequately allocate the few available human resources.

At the end of the meeting, I informed him that we wish to begin preparations for the construction of the Embassy building and we have already submitted to our Ministry of Foreign Affairs an elaborate construction plan. Since the plan heavily draws on the technical research of a Romanian civil engineer in Pyongyang, it is unlikely to undergo major adjustments. I submitted the plan for an approximate quote, which we were promised to receive in a few days' time. He mentioned he has no knowledge of this, but he will look into it and contact us regarding the availability of their staff.

He further mentioned that he spoke with Comrade Stere Nichifor last year, who informed him that prefabricated houses had been shipped from Romania and asked for specialists in order to assemble them. The Chairman has not heard from us ever since in regards to the matter. He believes, nonetheless, he will not be able to provide specialists in all areas required since they are not available in Korea and it will probably be necessary to bring Romanian specialists to supplement. Similar arrangements have also been made with the Soviet Embassy, which will commence the construction works at the beginning of next year.

On September 16th, I met with Comrades Hong Gi-ju, Minister of Justice, and Deputy Minister Pak Yong-suk. The purpose of this visit was to become acquainted with the Ministry of Justice. Given the opportunity, we were informed that they have received the Romanian aviation legislation, which represents a very effective research material for them since the Koreans also want to develop similar laws. The biggest impediment, however, is that the legislation is in Romanian and they inquired whether it would be possible to provide such documents in Russian or English.

We further discussed the organization of the courts in North Korea. The Minister noted that, in the DPRK, there is one court per province. He then asked how we had managed to solve the issue of tribunals as they are also interested in dealing with the problem. I told him about how these institutions are organized in Romania and under whose direction they operate.

Finally, the Minister inquired whether it would be possible for us to provide them with legislation from the Romanian Ministry of Justice, which they could use as research material in order to assist them in developing certain laws. The visit lasted for 1 hour and 15 minutes.

On September 17th, I met with the Chairman of the Pyongyang City People's Assembly. The aim of the visit was to make his acquaintance given that we will require his assistance in certain aspects regarding the construction of the Embassy. Comrade Ten En Phio [sic] noted that they had experienced a series of difficulties with housing development, that he had never been abroad and that everything he did, he did as he saw fit. I explained that in Bucharest, the municipal people's assembly liaised with the populace through deputies. The Koreans have a similar organizational structure, but the contact with the masses is deficient and largely haphazard. A further issue is that, since there are no streets, they were unable to establish street committees despite wanting to do so, and as such the city has been divided into wards. Moreover, the damages are so severe that citizens alone are ill-equipped to handle the situation.

Chief Secretary of the Pyongyang Party Committee Comrade Go Bon Ghin [sic] also arrived towards the end of the meeting and we discussed matters of little importance. The visit lasted for one hour.

On September 18th, the Ambassador of the German Democratic Republic paid me a return visit after first meeting when I presented my credentials. The discussion addressed solely unimportant issues, mostly household- and health-related.

On October 2nd, I received Polish Ambassador Comrade Hji Sedle?ki [sic], with whom I also discussed matters of no importance.

On October 4th, I met with our closest friend, Comrade Susdalev [Soviet Ambassador to Pyongyang]. The aim of the visit was related to my departure for Beijing and I wanted to know when they will move to Pyongyang. He told me that works on their provisional offices had already begun and he hopes to settle in by the end of November. He asked, in turn, about our Embassy building and I informed him that the construction works had not begun as of yet and it was difficult to estimate the completion date. Another issue regarded the arrival of a Romanian orchestra and I inquired whether he would be willing to host an artistic performance at their club. He happily agreed provided that we contact them in due time so as to make all necessary arrangements.

Finally, I told him that, since our governmental delegation is currently in Beijing, I intend to go there in order to discuss several issues. I will probably depart by plane on Friday.

On October 7th, I was summoned at the DPRK's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Third Division Liaison, by Director Toi Hak En who informed me that the North Korean government proposes certain adjustments to Article III of the draft protocol on non-commercial payments and handed us the revised version of the article. I replied that I would contact the appropriate Romanian bodies in regards to the matter at hand.

A second issue was related to the treaty signed between the Romanian and North Korean governments, which did not stipulate whether the expenses of the medical personnel were included in the aid treaty or whether they represented additional assistance. I informed him that, as far as I know, these costs were not included in the treaty. I then raised the issue of the measures that were to be taken for the installation of a heating system in the hospital barracks. I pointed that the delay caused by the lack of equipment would result in the discharge of 400 patients once the cold set in. The best solution would be to immediately begin building brick ovens. The Korean official took it upon himself to notify his superiors of the issue.

On October 5th, I welcomed the governmental delegation that attended the PRC's 5th

anniversary. In addition to the heads of diplomatic missions, government officials and party representatives (Choe Chang-ik, Pak Chong-ae), generals, officers, and representatives of mass organizations also attended.

On the evening of October 7th, the GDR Ambassador organized a reception in the underground hall of the Moranbong Theatre. Pak Chang-ok, Kim Du-bong [Kim Tu Bong], Kim Il Sung, Pak Chong-ae and Nam Il attended on behalf of the DPRK government. Other participants included representatives of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army and the Korean People's Army, heads of production and the peasantry, art and culture representatives and members of the diplomatic corps. From our embassy, the attendees were Comrades Tatu Jianu and his wife, Florescu Victor and his wife, Neamu Gheorghe and his wife, and Ciocan Nicolae. Pak Chang-ok spoke on behalf of the Korean government.

The reception was well organized and particularly enjoyable, as the food arrangements and the pleasant atmosphere compelled the guests to stay longer than usual. We left at half past midnight.

On July 19th, Comrade Florescu Victor met with the Chair of the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. Given that the Minister of Culture had previously informed us that all our problems regarding popularization are to be solved through the Ministry and that our old billboards were placed in less frequented areas, with one being buried in debris during the reconstruction, Comrade Florescu requested two new locations where we can put up permanent billboard frames and change the posters on a regular basis with the help of the Ministry. Comrade Pak, Chair of the Committee, said he will look into the matter.

In order to become acquainted and more familiar with several Korean journalists, Comrade Florescu asked Comrade Pak to recommend us some journalists covering foreign affairs from the central agency, whom we would like to take to a restaurant. (This happened on July 29th and 11 journalists attended.)

Since we do not have a new movie, Comrade Florescu requested that the Ministry of Culture organize a screening of 'The Bugler's Grandsons' in Nampho, during the first half of August. He also asked where the film has been screened thus far. Comrade Pak agreed to have a gala at Nampho and, in regards to the movie, he noted that all our films, along with the Soviet ones, are screened throughout the country. Nevertheless, this is a very lengthy process given that they only have one copy.

Comrade Florescu informed Comrade Pak about our intentions to organize a Romanian art and photography exhibition on August 23rd and asked the Korean official to recommend us a venue, if possible. Comrade Pak said there are several venues available depending on what we wish to display.

Finally, Comrade Florescu inquired whether it would be possible to receive a response in regards to the movie contract. Comrade Pak told him they were experiencing great difficulties, but would try to give us a satisfactory answer.

On July 30th, Comrade Florescu met for the first time with the Counselor working for the Embassy of the People's Republic of Hungary. Following some general discussions, the comrade mentioned they had installed at their embassy a wireless telegraphic device via which they could directly communicate with their Foreign Ministry. He further mentioned, towards the end of the visit, that the Hungarian Embassy agreed to a friendly visit between the Romanian and Hungarian medical staff.

During the visit on August 7th to the Committee of Cultural Relations, after having

informed them of the exhibition materials, Comrade Florescu requested again a recommendation for a suitable venue and, also, a workshop that could execute the frames, showcases and decorations required for the exhibit. Comrade Pak recommended a cooperative focusing on artistic works, which collaborates directly with the Ministry and said he would think about the venue. Comrade Florescu noted that we would also like to commemorate August 23rd with a week dedicated to Romanian music on the radio, if possible. Having been assigned by the CC of the Workers' Party of Korea to attend to the arrival of our orchestra, Comrade Pak then requested all necessary details regarding the matter. He also mentioned that the artistic ensemble of the Bulgarian Army would arrive in Korea at the beginning of November. Comrade Florescu said he would inform Comrade Ambassador of the matter.

During a meeting with Comrade Pak on August 11th, Comrade Florescu inquired again about a venue for the exhibition. Comrade Pak answered that it would not be possible to use the hall of the new Moranbong Theater because the theater directly depends on the Council of Ministers and, as such, a new venue must be found. In response to Comrade Florescu's question regarding the two locations for our billboards, Comrade Pak mentioned that this issue could only be resolved after August 23rd. However, the week dedicated to Romanian music will air on the radio between August 23rd - 29th.

On August 17th, Comrade Florescu made another visit to Comrade Pak in order to solve the problem of finding a venue for the exhibition since the billboards and showcases were almost finished, and to request that Comrade Bodnarus' article be published in Rodong Sinmun. Comrade Pak said there was no other option but to use the underground hall at Moranbong Theater because the drama theater was undergoing restorations. Comrade Florescu noted that the underground hall was too wet and the photographs would develop mold after a few days. Comrade Florescu proposed the recently built Pyongyang Cinema Hall. Comrade Pak agreed after some consultations. He then ensured the article would be published in Rodong Sinmun.

During the meeting with Comrade Pak on August 31st, Comrade Florescu informed him that V. Birladeanu was appointed correspondent of Rodong Sinmun in Bucharest instead of A. Cornescu, and asked him to inquire about the topics the editorial board would like him to cover. He further requested that we received the program during Romanian music week from the Radio Committee, if possible. Comrade Pak assured him he would handle the requests. He then mentioned that one of the billboards we wished to put up would be displayed at the textile factory in Pyongyang, whilst the second was to be displayed on the Stalin Boulevard, although an exact location could not be confirmed yet due to the ongoing constructions.

Comrade Pak also requested the exact details of our ensemble's arrival in Korea because he had to plan the visit.

Comrade Pak further noted that the DPRK wishes to establish plans for cultural collaboration with partner countries for 1955 and, as such, requested a proposal of cultural cooperation between Romania and the DPRK by the end of 1954, based on which they could also draft a proposal pending final approval. Comrade Pak mentioned that this was not about a cultural agreement, but a simple plan for collaboration.

Signed: Ambassador