

December 21, 1955

Concerning the Self-Confession Movement in the DPRK

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Summary:

The letter and memorandum are both addressed to the chief of the Far East Department of the Soviet Foreign Ministry Ivan Kurdyukov. The contents primarily concern the "self-confession" movement in North Korea, which encourages confession to criminal acts against the state. Also covered are finance and accounting in North Korea.

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in faded stamp:
270-?nd?
13 January [[195]]6]

TO THE CHIEF OF THE USSR MFA FAR EAST DEPARTMENT

Cde. I. F. KURDYUKOV

[faded handwriting partly
off the left margin]

We are attaching to you a memo, "Concerning the self-confession movement in the DPRK."

In our opinion it would be advisable in a conversation with the leadership of the Korean Worker's Party to recommend limiting the "self-confession" campaign to a certain period and only with respect to crimes committed in the past. In the future guilty parties are to held responsible in accordance with the law.

Attachment: the aforementioned, 11 pages.

SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN THE DPRK [signature]
(V. IVANOV)

[number off the page] copies printed

- Cde. Kurdyukov
- Cde. Solodovnik
- to file
- Cde. Okonishnikov
- Cde. Sarychev

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[date off the page] December 1955

[additional addresses
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in the lower left-hand corner of
the title page:

to Cde. Sur?ganov?

to Cde. Vereshchagin

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I. Kurdyukov

3 January]

Secret
Copy N° 1

CONCERNING THE "SELF-CONFESSION" MOVEMENT IN THE DPRK

(memo)

The 10th KWP CC Plenum held in April 1955 examined the issue of strengthening austerity measures, financial discipline, and control of the consumption of materials and intensifying the struggle against waste and theft of state and cooperative property.

The need to raise this issue is caused by the wide proliferation in the republic of cases of waste and theft of national wealth, and the lack of strict state control of the maintenance of financial discipline and correctness of record keeping and accounting. In the words of Deputy Minister of Justice Kim Taek-yong in the first half of 1955 the total amount of identified theft and waste of money, food, and materials was four billion won. The fact that 6.1 billion won are budgeted for the government apparatus indicates the magnitude of this amount.

The 10th KWP CC plenum promoted the task of fighting waste and theft of government and cooperative property as a Party-wide, government-wide, and national task.

The plenum stressed the need to put record keeping and accounting into strict order, and to strengthen the control of the expenditure of money and material, and to intensify the campaign against cases of waste and the theft of property in every possible way.

In implementation of the decisions of the KWP CC April plenum government and Party organizations have carried out a series of measures to strengthen the role of control organizations. In particular, the DPRK State Control Commission was turned into the Ministry of State Control, the management of which has been entrusted to people having experience in this field of work.

From August to November 1955 the Minister of State Control was Ri Hyo-sun, who was previously acting Chairman of the KWP CC Control Commission. In November of this year Kim Ik-seon, former Chairman of the DPRK Supreme Court, was appointed to the post of Minister of State Control in connection with the transfer of Ri Hyo-sun to work in the CC staff.

The DPRK press, on whose pages these issues received wide coverage, was enlisted to combat occurrences of waste and theft and to strengthen austerity measures and financial discipline. The materials of the KWP CC April plenum are being studied in all Party organizations.

MVD organizations, courts, and procurator's offices have increased the fight against theft and the squandering of public property by holding thieves and embezzlers strictly criminally liable.

The steps taken have had a positive influence on strengthening financial discipline, austerity measures, and control over the waste of money and material.

However, the tasks assigned by the KWP CC Plenum with regard to protecting and rationally using money and material valuables remain totally unsolved, and weak

financial discipline continues to occur. Proper order in record keeping and accounting has still not been imposed at enterprises and institutions. Plundering of public property still continues to be widespread. According to data of the groups to help agricultural cooperatives, the following losses were identified in summer and autumn of this year in 4,520 agricultural cooperatives constituting 38% of the total number of agricultural cooperatives: losses of grain - 172 tons, including 42 tons stolen; losses of money - 49,500,000 won, including eight million won misappropriated; losses of cattle - 2,002 head, including 213 stolen; losses of pigs - 8,488, including 320 stolen.

As the newspaper Rodong Sinmun (Rodong Daily) noted in the lead article of 7 December, in spite of the favorable results with regard to carrying out the decisions of the KWP CC April plenum, there are cases when individual senior officials permit waste, and do not vigorously fight theft and embezzlement of the national wealth. The paper wrote, Party and government personnel are now faced with this issue as a first-priority task.

An important measure prescribed by the 10th KWP CC plenum decisions in order to fight theft and embezzlement of public property is the organization of a "self-confession" movement throughout the entire country. According to the plenum decisions a "self-confession" movement should be organized on the basis of the following principles: with regard to people who admit crimes, mild measures of punishment ought to be taken or [they] should be completely free of punishment; with regard to people who conceal their crimes, the most severe measures are to be taken.

In the first months after the plenum Party and government organizations did not have detailed instructions which had been developed about organizing this movement and were guided by Plenum decisions where the issue of launching the "self-confession" movement was formulated in general terms. Hence there were a number of ambiguities in the work to organize the "self-confession" campaign and the campaign itself was launched slowly. According to information available to us it came down to calling for people suspected of misconduct being presented with demands to "self-confess." Those who confessed to theft and wasting state and cooperative property were not punished.

"Self-confession" campaign locations began to be more widely launched at the grass roots beginning in September of 1955 after commissions were created to fight theft and embezzlement in Pyongyang, provincial and district capitals, and cities which were charged with the main responsibility for organizing the "self-confession" movement.

The central commission to fight theft and embezzlement is headed by Choe Yong-geon [Choe Yong Gon], Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Defense. It includes the chief of the KWP CC Organization Department, the Minister of State Control, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Minister of Finance, the General Procurator, the Chairman of the KWP CC Control Commission, the Chairman of the Pyongyang City KWP Committee, the Chairman of the Pyongyang City People's Committee and the Deputy Minister of Justice. Representatives of local government and Party bodies are being respectively appointed to provincial, district, and city commissions. An instruction about questions of conducting the self-confession campaign have been send to the grass roots in the name of the Central Commission to Fight Theft and Embezzlement. The instruction defines the rights and responsibilities of the commissions to fight theft and embezzlement and contains regulations by which the commissions are to be guided when examining "self-confession" cases.

In accordance with this instruction commissions deciding issues relating to people who have self-confessed should be guided by the following regulations:

Punishment is not used in the event that the theft of state or cooperative property is less than 50,000 won and the person who committed this crime admits his guilt.

In those cases where the theft of state or cooperative property is between 50,000 won and 300,000 won and the person who committed this crime admits his guilt forced labor work from six months to a year is used as punishment.

In those cases when more than 300,000 won worth of state and cooperation property have been stolen and the embezzlers are speculators or people acting in collusion, the case of theft is handed over to a people's court.

The instruction makes a number of exceptions to these rules.

In those cases when the theft of national wealth is between 50,000 won and 300,000 won and more than 300,000 won, but the crime was committed once as a result of fraud by another person, regardless of the size of the amount embezzled the guilty party is released from forced labor work and other punishment if he admits his guilt and if the public considers it possible to forgive him.

In the event the violation of financial discipline and expenditure of public funds is for unintended purposes, guilty parties who admit their mistake are not punished.

The instruction prescribes as a general rule that when guilt is established the degree of punishment cannot be based only on the amount of the money stolen. Services in the country's struggle for liberation and freedom, especially during the war of liberation, ought to be taken into account: activity in postwar construction; the reasons which drew [the guilty] into crime; the nature of the crime; participation in the fight against theft and embezzlement; and other circumstances.

People who are not punished as a result of self-confession continue to perform their responsibilities in [their] previous place. In the words of Korean comrades in this event KWP members are also not held accountable to the Party. Only a corresponding entry is made in the personnel files of such KWP members.

People sent to forced labor work for six months to a year are not placed under guard and are not deprived of political rights.

The enterprise to which people are sent for forced labor work and the working conditions of such people are determined by the provincial committees.

The manager of an enterprise which receives people to perform forced labor work is obligated to involve them in political life the same as the entire collective.

At the end of the term of forced labor work the guilty party is to be restored to [his/her] previous position with the previous rights.

According to established rules, the families of those performing forced labor work are to be supplied with food, shoes, and clothing under previous terms.

Severe measures are prescribed for speculators who harm the state; they are to be brought to justice [with] confiscation of property. However, according to the instruction, both merchants and entrepreneurs who collude with government and administrative officials, give them bribes, and make an attempt [to steal] public property are also permitted to be released from punishment if they sincerely admit their guilt to the government and actively participate in the fight against

embezzlement.

On the basis of the above one could think that the commissions to fight theft and waste in which representatives of government and Party bodies participate have been endowed with limited punitive functions.

At the forefront of the "self-confession" movement is the fight against vestiges of the old ideology, primarily by education.

Right now the "self-confession" movement is basically being launched in managerial staff and administrative organizations. At the instruction of decision-making bodies it is also being extended to the Army and MVD. All officials of state institutions, trade and economic organizations, industrial and consumer cooperatives have been familiarized with the conditions of the "self-confession" movement and the rules of the commission to fight theft and waste.

According to information available to us a large number of people have already confessed during the last three months. In the district of [Pyongsan] of North Hwanghae province alone about 30 people have confessed to misconduct and the theft of state and cooperative property.

In an industrial cooperative of the province of North Hwanghae with 1,450 members 181 confessed to theft and waste of cooperative property, that is, 12% of all members of the cooperative. The members of the industrial cooperative did not suffer any punishment and are working at their previous positions, of which six are as leaders of guilds. The total amount of the losses these people inflicted on the industrial cooperative was 1,410,000 won, that is, an average of 7,800 won for each person who "self-confessed."

On the basis of conversations with Korean comrades it has become obvious that, as a rule, those who self-confess have committed relatively minor thefts and are firmly convinced that they will not suffer any punishment.

Inveterate embezzlers of the national wealth are not deciding to reveal themselves and they are identified for the most part by audits and on the basis of the confessions of others who are self-confessing.

As a rule, prosecutions for theft are for those people who committed crimes in the postwar period, that is, after 1 August 1953. But in a number of cases people are being prosecuted who also committed theft or embezzled property during the war. In view of the fact that the instruction to conduct the "self-confession" campaign contains many exceptions in the cases of people who have committed large-scale theft, different decisions are being handed down beginning with release from punishment all the way to handing the case over to judicial bodies which hand down strict sentences.

In an 11 December article in the newspaper Rodong Sinmun it cited cases when government officials were removed from work who had conscientiously confessed to misconduct. The newspaper characterized such cases as "dangerous events distorting Party policy, which has a lenient attitude toward those who admit their mistakes."

The "self-confession" movement which was mainly launched four months ago is being viewed by the Korean comrades as a lengthy process of fighting such vestiges of the past as the theft and waste of national wealth. In the above article, written by Chief of the KWP CC Personnel Department Ri [He Sung], tendencies to turn this movement

into a brief campaign are condemned. The "self-confession" campaign is described as lengthy, multi-faceted work to root out the old bourgeois ideology.

In the difficult conditions of postwar economic recovery when even up to the KWP CC plenum proper attention was not paid by government and Party organizations to the problems of organizing strict control over the expenditure of money, the consumption of material, and the observance of austerity measures, the associated occurrences of theft and waste proliferated on a large scale. In our opinion broad repressive measures would be incorrect and could cause undesirable consequences.

It seems to us that the "self-confession" movement should be a temporary measure caused by the situation in Korea. Turning the "self-confession" movement into a lengthy process might have negative results and lead to a growth of minor thefts which in sum total might cause serious harm to the cause of economic recovery.

In our opinion the Party and the population ought to be oriented to the fact that the lenient attitude toward the waste of national wealth is a temporary measure, and that the Party and government are offering for only a limited time to people who have committed misconduct an opportunity to sincerely repent and atone for their crimes with diligent work.

Conclusions

1. The "self-confession" movement organized in the DPRK ought to be viewed as one of the forms to fight such manifestations of bourgeois ideology as theft and waste of the national wealth. Both educational methods and punishment are being employed to fight this public evil. However, methods of educational importance dominate.
2. In connection with the lack of strict state and public control over the protection of public property for a long time, this movement provides the state an opportunity to eliminate existing shortcomings with regard to organizing the protection of government and cooperative property with the help of the working masses.
3. This movement will facilitate an improvement of the personnel structure of the administrative management staff by identifying the plunderers of the national wealth.
4. The "self-confession" movement ought to be pursued as a temporary measure replacing amnesty. A lenient attitude toward crimes against the national wealth for a long time might render ineffective the efforts directed at rooting out such a public evil as theft and waste of government and cooperative property, which are taking on a wider scale.

Second Secretary

of the Embassy

[signature]

(Okonishnikov)

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[typed] from a draft

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