

August 11, 1975

Voluntary Liberal Democratic Party MP North Korea Visit

Citation:

"Voluntary Liberal Democratic Party MP North Korea Visit", August 11, 1975, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Obtained for NKIDP by Kyungwon Choi (Kyushu University) and translated for NKIDP by Ryo C. Kato. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/118698>

Summary:

A report on visits by Japanese parliamentary delegations to North Korea.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

Japanese

Contents:

Translation - English

Voluntary Liberal Democratic Party MP North Korea Visit

Showa 50 (1975) August 11
Northeast Asia Division

The LDP MP volunteers delegation (9 MPs from the House of Representatives, 4 MPs from the House of Councilors, total of 13. List provided for reference below) lead by Member of the House of Representatives Tamura Gen (LDP Asian-African Affairs Research Group, North Korea Sub-Committee Chair) visited North Korea from 22 July [1975] to the 28th. The following is a summary of the statements made by chief of delegation Tanaka Gen, Director General Shionoya Kazuo, and MP Ishii Hajime's to Vice-Director of the Asia Bureau Nakae Yosuke and Director of the Northeast Asia Division Endo Hokuto regarding what the delegation saw and heard in North Korea and their discussions with North Korean Officials.

Record

I. Chief of Delegation Tamura Gen

1. What was seen and felt in North Korea

(1) Agriculture

One can tell that Kim Il Sung has put effort into agriculture [illegible] it is fantastic. [illegible] that I saw from the plane that [illegible] was established (The density of which may have been the most dense in the world). Many reservoirs were dug and irrigation channels connected each reservoir.

The rice yield seems to be on the level of Japan. They harvested 7.4 million tons of rice (Reference 1), but they believe that they will harvest 8 million tons this year. They said they export their rice to Indonesia. They seem to produce more corn than our country, and there seems to be the possibility of exporting corn to Japan.

The scale of poultry and pork production was also quite large.

In all, we saw that North Korean is self-sufficient with food production.

Furthermore, the land was not state owned, and farming was conducted using collectivist methods.

Reference 1: The goal of the six-year plan was for 7~7.5 million tons of grain (of which, 3.5 million tons if unhulled rice). They have announced that they have reached their goal in 1974 with grain production of 7 million tons. This places into question the 7.4 million tons of rice harvested that was listed above. We surmise that corn production was good.

(2) Industry

Light industry has not been prioritized in the past, and is below the standard of Japan, but they have begun to place more effort in this sector. On the other hand, their heavy industry is terrific. However, because they are not a party in the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property, they have the advantage of freely reproducing imported foreign machinery, for instance. However, North Korea is lagging in terms of computer use.

(3) Education

Things are terribly thorough. It may be the most thorough education in the world. It feels to be far beyond China, at least. However, because the worship of Kim Il Sung is so thorough, I wonder whether this system produces template people.

(4) Daily Life

[illegible] is far richer than China. Of course, it is lower than in Japan, but I felt that North Korean live a fulfilled life. I felt that the people's spirit were stable. Regarding their spirit, their expressions were bright. North Korea and Taiwan may be tied for first-place in this respect.

The average North Korean monthly wage, converted to Japanese yen, is 15 thousand yen (there are no taxes). There is no difference between genders. However, daily necessities are inexpensive. A 4DK (4 rooms, Dining, Kitchen) family residence in Pyongyang for 5 people (humble by Japanese standards) is the norm. Rent for housing is under 1% of wages. A kilogram of rice is between 10~15 yen. Chicken is inexpensive, but beef is expensive. A television is approximately 2 months worth of wages.

The priority of clothing, food and housing seems to be: foodhousingclothing.

The women wear make-up and vibrantly colored chimachogori. The men's fabric was not good (possibly staple fibers), but they are wearing suits.

Pyongyang is undergoing remodeling as apartment complexes eight to ten stories tall line up and the unbelievably wide streets are constructed. Furthermore, there was a subway that didn't exist when I (MP Tanaka) visited Pyongyang ten years ago. The streets were calm, and we barely saw a troop presence. We stayed in the reception hall intended for state guests that was quite far from the city. The North Koreans did not seem to want us to go into the city. For things such as shopping, they arranged the time and place.

(5) Miscellaneous

Regarding the issue of military spending as a ratio of total finances, it is officially announced at 17% or 280 billion yen (Reference 2). No matter how high one estimates, the true number cannot be more than two-tenths this amount. Considering their territory, population, and basic social investments, North Korea could not invest in such large-scale military spending.

Reference 2: North Korea announced that National defense spending in 1975 was 16.4% of the budget at 1.8 billion won (approx. \$921.4 million). It is guessed that it is not actually below 30% of this.

2. Discussions with Kim Il Sung and other North Korean Officials

(The records of the proceedings, together with photos taken in North Korea are to be sent to the Director of North Asia Division)

(1) Relations with the North

They strongly opposed anything that would make the "Two Koreas" permanent, such as simultaneous admission of North and South Korea to the U.N. or cross-recognition of the Koreas. (However, they said that practical, specialized U.N. organizations are exceptions). They said that they it would be a confederate Korea with two representatives to be admitted to the U.N is be a possibility.

North Koreans want to reject great power intervention, and first collaborate to advance towards peaceful unification.

While the US and Japan actively supports South Korea, because the Soviet Union is cold-hearted towards North Korea (Relations with the Soviet Union does not seem good. They did not say disparaging things about the Soviets, but they were very cynical) and China is too weak, I feel that North Korea cannot keep up with South Korea. This may help explain their wish for reduced tensions on the Korean peninsula.

The North wishes to speak with all South Korean parties, including the Republican Party (however, they said they wanted to exclude Park). They said the they are making proposals to the South in order to consider policies that mutually lend Northern underground resources with Southern labor. However, they said that the South would not lend them an ear.

(2) US-North Korea Relations

It does not seem that contact between the US and North Korea is b being carried out. They seem to be wanting to improve relations with the US. They did not seem to be asking for Japan to help as a go-between.

(3) Relations between North Korea and Japan

[illegible] We explained that that Japanese bureaucrats (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of International Trade and Industry) are starting to put effort in [illegible] with the North, but politics (pressure from Pro-South Korea factions) is interfering. The North Koreans (Kim Yong Nam) said that among previous Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Kimura was the best, but that Miyazawa is 'Old Light.' Additionally, they said that the separation of politics and economy in Japan-North Korean relations is unlikely, and that a trade representative is not necessary at this time.

The delegation responded by saying that in reality there are 2 countries on the Korean peninsula, Japan has diplomatic relations with South Korea, and that it is impossible for Japanese policy towards the Korean peninsula or towards North Korea to change rapidly. We must conduct our relations with North Korea with patience. We expressed that we do not want North Korea to dogmatically attack Japan. They seem to have understood.

(4) Miscellaneous

(1) Impressions of Kim Il Sung

In North Korea he is an omniscient and omnipotent god. Anyway, he has a bright personality and is very talkative. My impression of him was that se is very intelligence, as if PM Tanaka and Ota Kaoru had been added then divided by two.

(2) The issue regarding MP Ishii Hajime's article submission to the Yomiuri Newspaper

MP Ishii, who was on the delegation that visited North Korea, wrote in his article submitted to the Yomiuri Newspaper, "...I am hesitant to completely reject the threat from North Korea." This portion was reported on in South Korea, and caused an uproar in North Korea (Southern broadcasts can be heard in the North). Our host the North Korean Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries received protest from all over North Korea. Our delegation also took pains to remedy the situation, spent a tense night, and I [illegible] as the chief of delegation, [illegible], and the things came neatly to a close. ([illegible] MP Otaka Yoshikos' presence was very valuable to lubricate [illegible]. Calling her "Li Xianglan," Even Kim Il Sung seemed to feel nostalgic.)

(3) How Japan's North Korea Policy should proceed henceforth

I am opposed to bringing two Koreas into Japan. It is necessary to pursue a balanced policy towards both North and South; therefore it is necessary to know both North and South. If given a formal invitation of "welcome" from the South Korean government, personally, I would like to gather some of the members of the North Korea visit delegation and visit South Korea. I certainly hope for the LDP delegation (MP Mori Matsuhei's name was given as an example) visiting South Korea to visit North Korea. Because I am not in position to recommend such a thing, I would be grateful if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs acted as a go between. I would be more than happy to mediate the North Korea voyage.

II. Director General Shionoya Kazuo

1. Impressions of Kim Il Sung

Personally (Shionoya), I went with the preconception that Kim Il Sung was a charismatic being, however, he was quite different once I met him. I got the impression that he is an intense, popular contemporary politician of the greatest caliber with a sense of politics, international affairs, and the posture of a leader. I have met Zhou Enlai before, but I felt an affinity more for Kim. It is as if former PM Tanaka, Chairman Ikeda of the Soka Gakkai, and Ota Kaoru were combined in one person. In any case, he is a terrific person.

2. Threats from the North

I feel that, if they are preparing for a Southern Invasion under the appearances I saw, then that is quite a considerable accomplishment. Kim Il Sung also stated that 'at the moment we are focusing on building our economy. Because of this we have no surplus to put towards any other task. Pyongyang exists as if in the middle of a park. I did not have the opportunity to come into contact with them directly, but I did not get a sense of urgency from the populace. However, Kim Il Sung did say regarding the military equipment, "The North Korean military is equipped as equally as the US military. Therefore, we are far better equipped than the South Korean military." Personally, I have no intention of doubting Kim Il Sung's thoughts on "No Southern Invasion" or "No Northern Threat." There is nothing to do but to believe him. I also do not believe that Kim Il Sung will do anything thoughtless. I believe that Kim Il Sung's intention is the liberation of South Korea. South Korea is mixing up Southern Invasion and Liberation.

3. Aggression towards the Third World, Rejection of Great Power Intervention

The things that supports Kim Il Sung's confidence is North Korea's agricultural success, and their foreign policy towards the Third World and the support that North Korea receives from them. Kim Il Sung said, "North Korea absolutely cannot become

the victim of great powers (Such as, Japan, US, China, and the Soviet Union). US, China, the Soviets, and Japan should not meddle in our affairs. Leave the issue of unification to the Korean race. In the future, North Korea will stand ascendant in the international community with the backing of the Third World. Because the July 4th Joint Statement is getting us nowhere, appealing to the opinion of the world is the only way to prevent war. From my point of view, Kim Il Sung is like a leader of the Third World.

4. Thoughts on South Korea and Japan-South Korea relations

Kim Il Sung said, "Currently, those connected to the Park government does not exceed 10 thousand. There is no support from the populace. Even if we do not do anything, there will be a revolution. South Korea will cease to be an issue in the international community. The United States will eventually leave as well. Compared to North Korea, anti-Japanese sentiment is much higher in South Korea. In North Korea, we do not do anything to stoke anti-Japanese feelings. Japan must recognize this situation. Japan has grown fat after providing aid for South Korea's security. Under a similar policy towards North Korea, imagine for how many years Japan can profit." Party Secretary for International Affairs Kim Yong Nam said, "There may be another coup d'état at the hands of another military man. The Park government is most threatened by this.

When asked what he thought about Kim Dae-jung, Kim Il Sung responded that he is "nice." I felt that Kim Il Sung is more interested in nationalism rather than the asserting some ideal.

Furthermore, Kim Il Sung said, "Why doesn't the Japanese people get mad about Secretary of Defense Schlesinger's comments on the use of nuclear weapons. Regarding US actions such as these, the Japanese people ought to rise up in opposition.

The delegation emphasized that we must proceed gradually while considering the fact that Japan and South Korea share diplomatic relations, and, regardless of right or wrong, we are a capitalist and democratic state.

5. US-North Korea Relations

Kim Il Sung said, "In our country we, use American imperialism as a negative learning tool in ideological conflict. Our relations with the US will be unlike the 'all of a sudden, one day' of US-China relations. We will continue to compete with the United States in the international community."

6. Foreign Debt

Kim Il Sung said, "Because our country has only little freight space and our port facilities are weak, we are backlogged despite having export products. Although debt is a problem now, we hope for you to take a long-term view. We believe doing so will be in Japan's interests." We responded by saying, "business is business." They seemed to give off the attitude that said "I am beaten."

They seem to have settled talks with Iran on economic cooperation.

III. MP Ishii Hajime

1. Kim Il Sung's cult of personality and character, and the Kim Il Sung system

In movie theaters, hotels, schools, and kindergartens, Kim Il Sung's portrait is adorned everywhere. When speaking of him various honorific terms are used, much more intensely than with Mao Zedong. This gave me a sense of unease. However, when I met Kim Il Sung, I felt that he was dressed simplistically and when he spoke he was quite churlish, and that he was quite the considerable human being. I believe this is due to his confidence from that fact that: (1) he was able to fight to that extent against the US in the Korean War, (2) his construction of a socialist state has progressed quite well (I believe it is because of their self-sufficiency with food, their population, their territory, and the fact that they are relatively compact), (3) he receives public support from frequently conducting the so-called on-site guidance, and (4) because the gap between the rich and poor [illegible].

I felt that Kim Il Sung was too far above from his Number 2.

Populace sentiment is calm. Rather than having given up on the system, they seem to have happily embraced it.

2. Discussions with North Korean officials

We ate with Kim Il Sung at a location 1 hour away from Pyongyang, and in total talked with him for over 4 hours. Although he dominated the conversation, what he was saying held water and was logical in his own peculiar way.

We also held two 3-4 hour discussions with our counterparts, the Korean Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. The chairman of the Committee (Kim Gwan Sik) seemed to be at the vice-ministerial level, but Secretary for International Affairs Kim Yong Nam seemed to hold real power. We discussed the following: (1) tunnel, (2) North and South Korea's simultaneous admission to the U.N., (3) Japanese women currently residing in North Korea. Their answers to the following were: (1) illegible (there seems to be a weakness in their answer), (2) they were opposed to the idea because it would lead to the permanent separation of Korea, and (3) we will receive a list of names and investigate the matter. All the people listed are no longer Japanese nationals, but North Korean nationals. They said there has been no illegal management of the issue.

We mentioned the culprits of the Yodo-go incident. The North Koreans answered that because they cannot become North Korean nationals, they cannot give them any land. Therefore, they are not being made to work.

When we probed them on Sino-Soviet relations, they said that they are not receiving assistance from the Chinese or the Soviets, and that they are using the money they earned to buy goods from them. We did not pursue the issue further.

They boasted that North Korea has no taxes and that medical care, education, and housing are free. Although I cannot understand why such a rich country cannot repay its debts, but explained that it is only because their shipping capacity is low and that things will get better soon.

Regarding the Chosen Soren, they said, "we hear from the Chosen Soren that they have been very much in your favor. We sincerely hope that this will continue in the future."

3. Issue regarding article submission to the Yomiuri Newspaper

I thought I had written the article after having carefully chosen my words, but

because the South Koreans quickly broadcasted it, the North Koreans said, "this is an act of concerted treachery, our citizens will not concede to this." They went as far as saying that they will "expel the attendant press group." We had the thought of returning home at that point. They even asked us to do a press conference. I would not have imagined that they would get so angry about a comment such as that. Regarding the threat from the North, if the North and South came to blows, given the North's political system, Kim would give one order and that would be it.

However, things would not go as simply in the South given the existence of internal dissent and rebellious elements.

We cannot discount the possibility that the North will mount a precipitous Southern Invasion. It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that South Korea's instability offers an opportunity to North Korea.

4. Miscellaneous impressions

(1) Compared to South Korea, anti-Japanese sentiment may not be as bad in North Korea. "Imperial America" is the scapegoat, and posters depicting the defeat of the American military are put up all over the place. It seems that Japan is only criticized for being a follower of "Imperial America."

(2) They disregard South Korea as a "Puppet of the American Empire." They believe that the Park government is on its last breath, and that only if the US military withdrawals and if Park is defeated (they said they can talk with Kim Dae-jung) the great majority of the populace will rise up and make unification possible.

(3) They may have only shown us good places, but between Pyongyang and the Panmunjom, the rural villages seemed better established than the ones in the South. The impression I got from the public buildings we visited as that the industrial and agricultural pavilion and department store were meager; the People's Economics University was like a vocational school; and that there were reception halls all over the place. We did not visit any factories.

5. North Korea Policy henceforth

(1) I did not get a sense of urgency from North Koreans regarding diplomatic relations with Japan. They seemed content with the arrangements as is.

(2) It is a mistake to think of Kim Il Sung as a communist. He may be more of a nationalist.

(3) It would be desirable to take just one step forward from the cease-fire agreement, and have both sides limit their arms and enter into a peace treaty or non-aggression agreement. However, the question remains that Kim Il Sung can be trusted. Additionally, would the Confederal Republic of Goryeo work? (Regarding this we - Bureau Vice-Director Nakae and Division Director Endo - pointed out that the withdrawal of US forces is a prerequisite for the Confederal Republic of Goryeo, to which MP Ishii raised doubt as to whether or not the US will be able to station its forces in Korea forever.)

(4) (To Bureau Vice-Director Nakae's question whether the North Korea would accept a visit from members of the Japan-Korea Parliamentarians' Union) Considering that they responded in such a way to my careful and prudent comments, I do not think they will allow them to visit.