

**August 25, 1960**

**Cable from the Chinese Foreign Ministry,  
'Investigative Report on the [North] Korean  
Embassy in Beijing Supposedly Assuming  
Responsibility for the Provision of Essential  
Foodstuffs to Korean Residents of Beijing'**

**Citation:**

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<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/118953>

**Summary:**

The North Korean embassy seeks to provide additional food to Korean expatriates living in Beijing, apparently due to the Great Leap famine.

**Credits:**

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Chinese

**Contents:**

Translation - English

Please convey this memo to Premier Zhou after reading ([Zhang] Hanfu has already seen it)

[Ji] Pengfei

August 25 [1960]

Investigative Report on the [North] Korean Embassy in Beijing Supposedly Assuming Responsibility for the Provision of Essential Foodstuffs to Korean Residents of Beijing

Premier [Zhou Enlai]:

Regarding the issue of the [North Korean] embassy's apparent assumption of responsibility of supplying all staple and non-staple foodstuffs, Beijing Municipal Public Security looked into the matter of the Embassy and learned from a Korean resident of Beijing that the Embassy held a meeting on August 5, and determined the quantity of staple and non-staple foodstuffs required to supply registered Korean expatriates per person per month. The [North] Korean Embassy may begin providing foodstuffs in September and the Embassy would distribute the foodstuffs.

The report shows that the Embassy may well be making these arrangements. After looking into the matter, in addition to looking into how the real difficulties that expatriates face can be solved we also asked the Foreign Affairs Office to consult with the consular section of the Embassy to better understand the situation. Without mentioning the arrangements that are being made by the Embassy or the expatriate association, on August 19th, Comrade Tian Lu of the Foreign Affairs Office spoke with the [North] Korean embassy. The other party said that the Chinese government has been taking care of [North] Korean residents of China. They can't buy anything and don't have money to buy anything. The Chinese government sells them very good rice, we are very grateful. The Embassy is unable to transport any supplies from [North] Korea to Beijing. Some [North] Korean expatriates wanted to get some Korean specialty products from [North] Korea, for example some Korean shoes, but the Embassy has always refused.

According to the report from the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau, [North] Korean expatriates get the same staple food quota as Chinese. Each person gets 27.8 jin, half rice, half machine-processed rice or flour. The great majority get enough to eat and go to the International Friendship Service Department to buy some bread. There are not many varieties of vegetables available. They are used to eating chili garlic and there is very little of that on the market.

We have already asked the Beijing Foreign Affairs Office to contact the relevant units to quickly get information about the food supply situation of expatriates to make sure that they are getting enough staple foodstuffs to eat checked whether they were being supplied with an adequate amount of non-staple foodstuffs.

We also propose that this issue be resolved at the local level according to the results of investigations of local situations. Shortage of staple foods should be suitably supplemented. After all, there are not many expatriates in Beijing, only 570 people. We are fully capable of solving this problem. If we take the initiative to resolve it, we can avoid unnecessary wavering in ideological commitment of expatriates.

More, we propose notifying the foreign affairs offices of Shanghai, Harbin, Guangzhou, Kunming, Urumqi, Tibet and other cities so that they too will look into the foodstuffs supply situation of expatriates in big cities, and similarly find solutions to existing problems.

Please provide your guidance: Approve or disapprove.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
August 25, 1960