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SECURITY INFORMATION
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

REPORT NO. []

INFORMATION REPORT

CD NO.

INTELLOFAX 25

COUNTRY Korea

DATE DISTR. 23 Jan. 1952

SUBJECT Relief of PAK Hŏn-yŏng and HONG Myŏng-hi as Vice-Premiers in the North Korean Government

NO. OF PAGES 2

PLACE ACQUIRED []

NO. OF ENCLS. (LISTED BELOW)

DATE OF INFO. []

SUPPLEMENT TO REPORT NO.

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1. In early January PAK Hŏn-yŏng, the North Korean Foreign Minister and the top South Korean Communist in the KIM Il-song government, and HONG Myŏng-hi (洪命憲), Minister without Portfolio, were relieved of their posts as Vice-Premiers. PAK is still Foreign Minister but HONG was relieved of all cabinet responsibility, though he retains his position in the Democratic Front for Unification of the Fatherland. This makes HŐ Ka-i the sole Vice-Premier in the North Korean government.
2. The background of these changes is as follows:
 - a. PAK and HONG were appointed Vice-Premiers by KIM Il-sŏng to demonstrate his desire to have South Korean Labor Party (SKLP) leaders in his government, and to conceal from them and the nationalist Communists in North Korea the fact that he is being directed by the Soviets.
 - b. PAK was trained in the Soviet Union and actively fought the Japanese in Korea. He is more popular with the Koreans than KIM Il-song but he is unable to challenge KIM for party leadership because he lacks Soviet backing. Nevertheless PAK attempted to gain political and military power with the support of the following:
 - CH'OE Yong-tal (崔庸建), former Minister of Justice under the interim North Korean Peoples Committee (NKPC).
 - YI Kang-kuk (李康國), former Chief of Foreign Affairs Bureau and member of NKPC.
 - HONG Nam-pyo (洪南杓), former professor of Seoul University.¹
 - YI Sŏng-yŏp, leader of guerrillas in Korea.
 - KIM Wŏn-pong (金元鳳), former Chairman of the People's Progressive Party in the ROK.²
 - HŐ Song-t'aek, former North Korean Minister of Labor.³

c. The North Korean government overestimated the SKLP potential when they invaded

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the ROK because PAK Hŏn-yŏng advised KIM Il-sŏng that the SKLP could control South Korea when the North Koreans took Seoul. PAK planned to overthrow the RHEE government the moment Seoul fell to the Communists. PAK was able to secure adherents in the armed forces and in the North Korean occupation agencies operating in South Korea. When the Chinese Communists entered the conflict, PAK approached the pro-Chinese Communist clique in North Korea with similar promises, using YI Kang-kuk, KIM Wŏn-pong, and CH'OE Wŏn-t'ak, who were all formerly with the KIM Ku government in China and good friends of the pro-Chinese Communist generals, CH'OE Yŏng-kŏn and KIM Mu-chŏng. PAK played a double game, however, and also approached the Soviets through YI Kang-kuk (sic), Nicholai CH'OE, PAK Nam-un and CH'OE Wŏn-pil, all Communist intellectuals, who attempted to influence the Soviet ambassador.

- d. KIM Il-sŏng was assured of the solid support of the Soviet Union, however, and began cleaning out the pro-Chinese Communist officials in the government and army, relieving KIM Mu-chŏng and CH'OE Yŏng-kŏn of their high positions.⁴
- 3. KIM Il-sŏng plans, in the event of a Korean armistice, to rid the North Korean government of South Korean Communists and nationalists by sending them to the ROK with loyal KIM Il-sŏng men to infiltrate ROK political parties.⁵ KIM believes the ROK government would eventually execute or jail these returning leaders. The North Korean government would thus gain favor with the Communists in the ROK and eliminate the South Korean Labor Party leaders simultaneously. What the North Korean government fears most is that the Communists in the ROK will learn of the split between the North Korean government and the South Korean Labor Party and that they will refuse to cooperate, but KIM Il-sŏng will take this chance and hopes that the ROK government will be blamed for the elimination of the SKLP leaders.

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1. Comment. SKLP leader and Vice-Chairman of the Presidium, Supreme Korean People's Assembly.

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2. Comment. Fled to North Korea in 1949 and became head of the National Inspection Ministry in 1950.

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Comment. KIM Wŏn-pong fled to North Korea in 1947.

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