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Korean Affairs Report

(FOUO 12/80)



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KOREAN AFFAIRS REPORT

(FOUO 12/80)

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S. KOREA/POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

LETTER FROM ROK DESCRIBES TENSE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN SOUTH KOREA

Tokyo AKAHATA in Japanese 28 Sep 80 p 3

[Reprint of a letter from a Japanese born Korean woman living in South Korea to her Japanese friend who is a school teacher in Tokyo: "A Letter From a Woman in Korea Who Lives Under Chon Tu-hwan's Dictatorship"--original paragraphing not followed]

[Text] Recently, a woman school teacher, S (age 29), in Tokyo received a letter from the ROK, the country run by Chon Tu-hwan like a "prison without bars." The letter was written by a Japanese-born Korean, who recently married in Korea and is a close friend of S. It is commonly said that there is no freedom of communication in Korea and that letters are opened regularly, but this letter arrived, perhaps dodging the censors.

Soldiers on Midnight Raid

Pardon my impudence for beginning like this, but I must ask what in the world is happening in South Korea, where I now reside. Based only on the strange things that are happening around me, it is difficult to understand what is happening to the entire country. I have taken the pen to let you know how I am doing, and wishing at the same time that you can answer my questions.

In this country, all meetings and rallies are naturally prohibited; it is even impossible for three persons to have a conversation. I cannot inadvertently talk about things that are political in nature in my own home. This is because I never know who is listening and where the listener is. Yes, it feels as if the walls have ears, and the paper sliding doors have eyes. We are surrounded by a network of spies. My neighbors are fearful and cannot talk about anything.

It happened just recently. There was a spy-hunt in my neighborhood. The soldiers raided at midnight and carried [the suspect] off in a truck. But I haven't the slightest idea where he was taken or why he was arrested. In Korea today, if someone points a finger at you, that's the end for you. The phones are tapped, letters are opened; it is as if the only thing left for people to do is to close their lips and hearts, and do their best making money....

Armed soldiers guard school gates, pitch tents in schoolyards, and act as if they own the place. In the vicinity of newspaper buildings, many soldiers are stationed permanently on the lookout.

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"Spying" on the Bus Is Encouraged

I have been in Korea only a little while. This, coupled with my anxieties as an inexperienced housewife, makes the Seoul's atmosphere extremely oppressive. As a diversion from daily routines, I play cards with wives in the neighborhood. It is an ordinary card game, but we have secretly named it, the "Chon Tu-hwan game." We play under the rule that when someone yells "Chon Tu-hwan!" all the rules are by-passed and that person can demand any card she needs. I think it sounds a bit childish, but....

These days I really detest going out. It's the posters I see on my walks, plastered everywhere, encouraging people to turn in the spies. They show rewards that vary according to how [the names] are reported--whether, for example, its voluntary or through an informant. The rewards range from 5,000 won to 100,000 won. I suppose one won is about 0.4 yen now. It seems that the rewards are ranked and handed out accordingly. On buses and subways, there is the constant reminder that says, "If you know a spy, let's report him." It is unbearable.

Mass Media Praises the "New Era"

Speaking of mass media, a campaign is now underway to elevate Chon Tu-hwan as the new leader for the new era. A few evenings ago when I turned on the television, there was a program that appeared like a strange prayer meeting. When I looked closely, I realized that the man seated in the center was that man. It turned out to be a prayer meeting to extol that man (Chon Tu-hwan). The newspapers, of course, carry articles praising that man, but next to these are articles on the people who have been arrested in the name of "regional purification" or "school purification," as well as on college presidents and professors who have been relieved of their posts.

Private Lessons, and "Cram Schools" Prohibited

I am dissatisfied with still another thing; it's something personal. Under instructions of the authorities, all private lessons, private "cram schools" and part-time work for college students have been banned. Although the authorities explain that all of this is "for social purification," it's totally beyond me why they have to intervene in these areas. But one gets into terrible trouble if he does what is prohibited, so I too have discontinued my calligraphy lessons. Besides, my in-laws here have also suggested that I stop....

I spend my days not knowing what to do with myself. I hope you will understand.

Well, till next time....

With the letter in her hand, S spoke to us: "I don't know if I'll ever receive a letter like this from her again.... Today, the [Japanese] news again reported how Kim Tae-chung and others are bravely fighting the military tribunal. But.... From her letter, I can get a glimpse of how the nameless and the poor are living in Korea, not knowing what's happening to their own country. Must they be forced into silence and endure it forever, she and the others...."

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N. KOREA/POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

KIM YONG-NAM CLARIFIES KIM'S REMARK ON ARMISTICE AGREEMENT

Tokyo MAINICHI SHIMBUN in Japanese 15 Sep 80 p 1

[Dispatch by special correspondent Kawauchi, 14 Sep 80, Pyongyang]

[Text] New Development Concerning Unification With U.S. Troop Withdrawal From the "South"

Kim Yong-nam, director of the International Department of the Korean Workers' Party [KWP] (member of the KWP Political Committee) met with Japanese reporters accompanying the visiting delegation of Liberal Democratic Party's Asian and African Problems Research Society [AA Research]. Regarding President Kim Il-song's statement made on the same day to the visiting AA Research delegation, "At the time a peace treaty with the United States is concluded, military alliances with the PRC and the USSR will be dissolved," Kim Yong-nam explained that it was a "restatement of the original DPRK policy" and represented the fundamental position of the DPRK (North Korea).

International Department Director Kim stated, "It was made clear when the DPRK and the USSR concluded the Friendship and Mutual Assistance Treaty, that if Korea became unified, the said treaty would be abrogated. The same was true with the PRC."

When the reporters asked "Aren't the conclusion of a peace treaty with the United States and the unification of the North and the South different?" Department Director Kim replied, "If a peace treaty is concluded between the DPRK and the United States and U.S. troops withdraw (from ROK), there will be a new development toward independent and peaceful reunification. If that happens, the military agreement between the South and the United States will be nullified and there would be no need for the DPRK to maintain military pacts with other countries."

Furthermore, regarding the influence that the inauguration of ROK's Chon Tu-hwan regime will have on North-South dialog, Department Director Kim commented, "It is hard to say exactly whether Chon Tu-hwan and ROK authorities will begin to seek talks with a sincere attitude favoring unification and not division. The outcome of the present North-South contacts must be calmly watched."

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N. KOREA/POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

JAPANESE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW ON KIM'S REMARK ON ARMISTICE AGREEMENT

Tokyo MAINICHI SHIMBUN in Japanese 15 Sep 80 p 1

[Text] View of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Regarding President Kim Il-song's statement that, "If the Armistice Agreement, presently concluded between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the United States, is replaced by a peace treaty, the DPRK is willing to cancel the military alliances with the PRC and the USSR," Japanese Foreign Ministry [JFM] sources commented on 14 September 1980 that North Korea had been up to now advocating the switch from Armistice Agreement to a peace treaty as part of its peace offensive, and it is not a new development. While so stating, JFM sources considered it noteworthy that for the first time, the DPRK commented that if a peace treaty is concluded, military alliances with the PRC and the USSR may be dissolved.

As its background, it can be pointed out that faced with the deep-rooted confrontation between the PRC and the USSR, the DPRK is sensitive to both [countries] and in order to maintain the balance, "its position is such that it must be mindful of both countries in the conduct of its diplomacy" (JFM sources). For this reason, the DPRK is beginning to show in its recent attitude its "desire" to become neutral vis-a-vis the PRC and the USSR.

In other words, the recent Kim Il-song's announcement indicates, on the one hand, a desire to shift to a peace treaty, i.e., a peace offensive against the ROK, and on the other, to dissolve the complicated tortuous relations with the PRC and the USSR, which are a heavy burden on North Korea. In analyzing the significance of Kim Il-song's statement, JFM sources believe that it intends to "kill three birds with one stone." The interesting point is the revelation of North Korea's true intentions of wanting to keep a certain distance from both PRC and USSR.

However, the existence of the ROK is not clearly indicated in the Armistice Agreement. According to JFM sources, the aim of the DPRK in switching to a peace treaty is to conclude the treaty without regard to ROK's existence and to assert unilaterally its advantageous position. Therefore, North Korea's assertion is from the standpoint of gaining leadership over international conferences to unify the Korean peninsula and over elections held for unification purposes through this peace treaty.

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N. KOREA/MILITARY AFFAIRS

JAPANESE REPORTERS VIEW MILITARY DEMARCATION LINE FROM NORTH SIDE

Tokyo MAINICHI SHIMBUN in Japanese 16 Sep 80 p 2

[Article: "What We Saw From the Tense Military Outpost"]

[Text] "Do you want to see our military outpost at the military demarcation line?" In the afternoon of the 13th, I get into the car, jumping at the invitation of the Panmunjom district commander of Kaesong's Korean People's Army (KPA). It is the first time a group of Japanese reporters is shown the military encampments of the outpost. The destination is the observation post nearest the military demarcation line on a nameless hill about 35 kilometers east of Kaesong and Panmunjom where the armistice talks were held. Just outside of Kaesong and at the entries and exits of every village, there are checkpoints and crossing gates, and guards at each crossing.

Nearing the destination, the road narrows and the pavement changes to a muddy road. The car passes through a ravine 200-300 meters above sea level. The car is a Benz sent over from headquarters. Trenches from the time of the Korean War still remain here and there. Perhaps there are honeycombed underground defenses in these mountains. Intentionally there are no bridges over two rivers along the way--one about 8 meters wide, the other, 5 meters. The Benz splashes in and drives across. There is easily a ton of granite piled up along both sides at places where the road has been cut through; the road can be closed at any time.

We pass through fields and ravines where oxcarts and charcoal-driven cars still remain; then suddenly, at a curve where human habitation has vanished, two steel-helmeted, completely equipped soldiers armed with rifles come rushing out.

"Stay With the Soldiers"

"From here on is the outpost. Stay with the guards." The KPA lieutenant riding with us cautions us. He is exceedingly affable, but he has keen observing eyes and his hands are swollen with calluses from karate. The nameless mountain of our destination is about 25 meters above sea level. It is a mountain of boulders and red clay covered with shrubs. We get out of the Benz and walk a few minutes. Large barracks where a unit of about 300 men can be stationed have been built at the foot of the mountain in a thick forest, making use of the opposite slope of the mountain. Perhaps nothing can be detected from air reconnaissance.

The soldiers are all young and energetic. The KPA is a volunteer system; it is a 2-year military service after graduation from a people's higher middle school

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(17-18 years of age). Everyone was saying, "I want to go to a university with a military recommendation after my military service is over." From the barracks to the top we climb a zigzagging communication trench for about 5 minutes. The trench, covered with cogongrass as a camouflage above our heads, turns at right angles here and there like a road in an old castle town; it is like a maze of a puzzle. At the top, an observation post about 4 meters wide and 15 meters long has been built, and the top is covered with camouflage net; large high-powered telescopes have been placed in three locations. The ravine down the slope ahead is the military demarcation line. The top of the hill rising above it is South Korean territory.

"It is 3.8 kilometers by straight line from the U.S. armed forces' position to here. The reason why it is 3.8 kilometers is because the American imperialists broke the armistice agreement that 2 kilometers north and south of the military demarcation line would be demilitarized, and invading about 200 meters on this side, they built a concrete wall." The explanation of the major of the battalion protecting this place is smooth and unflinching because he has served as guide many times. However, a straight line from this position to Seoul is about 40 kilometers. That is about 1 hour's distance by tank. The Pukaksan, the mountain in back of Seoul, can be clearly seen. One could feel how militarily strategic this place is. It is exactly within hailing distance.

"Look at that. The American imperialists and their puppet forces (South Korean army), after the Panmunjom poplar incident of 1976, built a concrete wall 12 meters wide and 5 meters high along the 240 kilometer east-west military demarcation line in order to make the division of North and South permanent. The reason is to prevent our advance into the South. But it can be seen that that is not true from the fact that there are steel doors in the wall here and there. The doors are 4 meters high and 3 meters wide. That is just the size of a tank. It is clear that they would use them for sorties. It doesn't mean they built the entrances for our tanks." The major explained very sarcastically, pointing to the south slope. Indeed, like the Great Wall of China, a concrete wall runs from east to west parallel with the rolling mountains like a belt. Here and there, there are encampments centering around observation towers, and the flags of the Korean army and the flags of the UN forces are illuminated in the afternoon sun. There are many barbed wire entanglements about 200 meters in front of the concrete wall. Naturally, this is prohibited by the armistice agreement, but forceful reconnoitering skirmishes and contacts have not ceased.

"When the necessity arises, we are prepared to destroy it in one stroke. All our fire power is aimed at it; breaking through would be simple. It is the same as with the T'ang who could not be protected with the Great Wall of China." The lieutenant acting as guide threw out his chest full of pride. I asked the major about tunnels for an advance into the South. He laughed it off and said, "Do you still believe what the South says? The puppet government of the South says we will make an advance into the South, but if that is true, we have had many chances. In 1960, when Syngman Rhee fell; last year, when President Pak was assassinated; and this year, at the time of the Kwangju incident... If we have hands for digging tunnels, we would dig anthracite coal. Isn't the shortcut to unification advancing the establishment of a socialist peace?" However, both the North and the South are confronting each other 27 years after the armistice. Understanding everything about the situation of the other party means that they know all the movements of

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this side. It is not at all strange that the more both sides confront each other at the supply encampments, the stronger the temptation to dig tunnels for an underground war.

Passing Off Misery

Two kilometers behind the concrete wall, there is a village of about 200 Northern European styled homes with blue and red roofs. The construction of these houses are different from those around here. "That is the American imperialists' village of freedom. They are deceiving us by [showing] how good life is in the South. But no smoke comes out, and the lights all go on at the same time and go off at the same time. It can be seen at a glance that it is uninhabited."

The lieutenant speaks lightly of it. Conversely, in the North near Panmunjom, there is a "peace and cooperation agricultural village." Here also, as is said in the South, is a uninhabited village. Is it perhaps the arbitrary viewpoint of this visitor of 1 week that the misery is being passed off and charged with humor when the tension is this high? If one stands 3.8 kilometers on the opposite side in the South, perhaps he will hear an explanation 180 degrees the reverse of the explanation heard here. Not only in Kaesong, but everywhere in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, there will be a great harvest this year. The corn is rustling in the wind and the rice plants are hanging heavily. However on the other hand, this 4 kilometer wide demarcation line is disrupting exchanges, even exchange of letters between families in the North and the South. And this extreme tragedy is deeply and harshly tearing apart the heart of the same people.

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N. KOREA/SOCIAL CONDITIONS

JAPANESE JOURNALISTS REPORT ON LIFE IN NORTH KOREA

Tokyo MAINICHI SHINBUN in Japanese 28, 30 Aug, 2, 4, 5 Sep 80

[Article by Kunio Hayashi and Akira Ishikaiwa: "In the Outskirts of Pyongyang"]

[28 Aug 80, p 1]

[Excerpts] Studying Daily To Become "Nation's Cadres"

It is not often that one sees two young people huddling close in Pyongyang. We see young men and women but they are more often found in groups of the same sex.

The Kim Il-song University is located on the hills situated to the north of Pyongyang. There is a cool pine forest on the way to the Natural Science Department building from their proud 22-story Social Science Department building. There are many benches in the area, and several groups of male and female students were carrying on discussions or reading quietly.

The Kim Il-song University, which consists of 13 departments and a student body of 12,000, was in the middle of summer vacation. The campus was rather deserted because many students were working in the villages. Nevertheless, the library was crowded with many students, including students from Africa and Laos.

Although today there are more than 150 colleges and universities all over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), the Kim Il-song University is an elite among the elites. The students there are full of pride and study very hard to become the future "nation's cadres" by pursuing a 5-year social science curriculum or 6-year natural science curriculum.

I met and talked with a few students. They talked about their dreams--a third-year female student majoring in foreign languages expressed her desire to do translation work on chuche ideology which is concerned with thoughts centering around human beings; a third-year male student majoring in economics expressed his desire to contribute to the development of the economic relations with Japan.

Before parting, one of the students straightened himself and spoke solemnly: "we are living very comfortably. Please be sure to pass on this information to the youths and students who live under oppression in South Korea. Unification of our nation is our goal."

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[30 Aug 80, p 1]

[Text] Music To Encourage Increased Production

The sound of music filled a spacious production site of an electric locomotive plant. When this reporter visited the Kim Chon-t'ae Factory in Pyongyang, over 10 workers were blowing their horns looking very serious. "The members of our propaganda unit are playing the music to encourage our workers to win the 100-day battle," O Chun-kun, a deputy manager of the plant explained.

In socialist countries, a campaign to increase production is often likened to a "war." In the neighboring China, terms such as battle or engagement are often used to establish goals that are appropriate for the period. The goals of this 100-day battle are for the Sixth Korean Workers' Party Congress to be held in October.

Soldiers fight with unity and cooperation in the face of an enemy in the battle field. A soldier ends up losing his own life if he neglects his duty by thinking for example of unfairness of the pay. Having everybody perform his task in production just as if he were in the battle field is the idea behind this "combat style production." "We want everyone to understand the significance of increasing production before this party congress," said a responsible functionary of the factory. He said they were achieving significant results there.

Still, man's desire to work cannot continue by spiritual stimulation alone. Unless there is a system for adequate compensation for work to meet the actual condition, the shout, "battle," will fall on deaf ears. In North Korea's heavy industry, wages are categorized from grades one to eight. The Deputy Manager O said: "The average wages paid at our plant to a 36-year-old, an average working age, is 90-100 won (1 won = 150 yen approximately). The wages reflect the quality as well as the quantity of work." One can surmise that the "piecework" system has probably been adopted.

The 100-day battle was not only confined to the production site. We saw banners with the "battle" slogans strung across the streets everywhere in the city. As part of their lessons during summer vacation, elementary and middle school pupils were studying "the party congress and the significance of completing the 100-day battle." In the square, rehearsals of the mass games that will be played at the opening of the party congress were being held...and news concerning the progress of the 100-day battle were reported every day by newspapers, radio and television. Amidst all these, the sound of "music of encouragement" flowing from every factory can well be said to be a scene that gives a glimpse into the present condition of North Korea.

[2 Sep 80, p 1]

[Text] Old Fashioned Pleasures Are Vanishing

Citizens of Pyongyang are serious and polite. For more than 10 days since I have been here, I have never seen a street fight or people trying to be first on the bus. This was probably attributable to the successful political lessons, but my first impression was "it was too well done."

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However, no matter what the political system may be, a society probably cannot exist if no "breathing spell is permitted." Article No 37 of the constitution of the DPRK states: "We uphold and protect the heritage of our national culture and oppose the infiltration by the imperialist culture and the reactionary tendencies...." This is the major premise of their cultural policy. Thinking how oppressive [this rule is] as I stepped into a theater, I was more than surprised to find that the atmosphere was very relaxed.

The film that was shown was a classic drama "The Tale of Ch'unhyang." There were people who wept with compassion for the fate of the lovers who came from different social classes, and there were people who in the last scene shouted with joy when the lovers were united. Although upon visiting the studio, I was told that "the film was produced in accordance with the phase of the socialist construction," I felt after viewing this film that great respect has been placed on national traditions, its customs and tastes. When I visited a worker's home, a housewife told me that "her enjoyment is television, then movies...."

The amusement park situated inside the Taesongsan castle having enormous grounds becomes crowded with families on Sundays. In spite of this, the park is surprisingly orderly. Almost everything one sees in a Japanese amusement park, including jet coasters, can be found here. What was most interesting was the fact that adults as well as children were laughing and shouting and were enjoying themselves. A healthy outlet of energy.... Such scenes of family togetherness were also seen at the zoological and botanical gardens adjacent the amusement park. However, the "old fashioned pleasure" of "drinking, singing, and dancing on a straw mat spread out on the ground" was no longer seen.

"Amusements have also been modernized," said a functionary concerned. In the recently constructed huge health center are many facilities including mass sauna and family sauna. A large number of people use these facilities and the range of leisure activities is growing. This is another profile of North Korea striving to achieve modernization.

[4 Sep 80, p 1]

[Text] Subway 30 Kilometers Long; Fare 15 Yen

I rode the Hyoksin line subway which brought me to Taesonsan amusement park where the zoological and botanical gardens are located. It was Sunday and there were many families and groups of children. Unlike scenes often seen in Japan, there were no children who ran around inside the train making noise as if they owned the train. Children as well as adults were all very well mannered. Inside the train there were box seats and it was spacious because of the broad gage track. Of course there were no advertisements to be seen. The melody of a Korean folksong drifted from the speaker.

This Hyoksin line (completed in 1978) and the Chollima line (completed in 1973) run north-south and east-west across the city. There is a plan to build a loop line which will encircle the city. At present, the total length of the subway system is 30 kilometers. There is a train every 5 minutes, and every 2 minutes

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during the rush hours. It runs from 0600 till 1300. Approximately 200,000 people ride the subways every day. The fare is 10 sen (15 yen) and free for students of the people's schools," Yi Tok-su, my guide and the station master of Hwanggunwon station explained unhesitantly.

Subways in Pyongyang run at the depth of from 180 to 200 meters. The underground stations accessible by high-speed, steep escalators are truly "underground palaces." Domestic marble is used lavishly. Huge murals and sculptures on display at every station, depicting the themes of the achievements of Kim Il-song or the revolution or the socialist construction, are the pride of the city. The station names such as "Sungri [Victory]," "Tongil [Unification]," "Kwangmyong [Glory]," "Kwangbok [Restoration]," and "Kaeson [Triumphant Return]" also tell the story of the path North Korea has trod as well as its future direction.

That which serves as the legs of 400,000 citizens of Pyongyang more than the subway is the trolley bus system. There are three trunk lines of trolley bus system from which regular bus routes stretch out like the tentacles of an octopus.

Automobiles consist mainly of trucks and buses, and there are very few privately owned cars. Consumption of imported oil is discouraged while development of the public transportation system supported by the abundant electric power is being pursued aggressively. One also clearly saw their effort to become economically independent by solving their energy problem.

[5 Sep 80, p 1]

[Text] From Quantity to Quality, Daily Stability

The average wage earned by a worker in the DPRK is approximately 90 won (1 won is approximately equal to 150 yen), equivalent to 13,500 yen a month.

It is quite wrong, however, to try to measure the life in North Korea using a capitalistic ruler and say "so little a month?" Because, in this socialist country, in addition to the labor wages (called "livelihood pay" in North Korea) there are many other forms of pay including pay in the form of actual goods, and daily necessities are usually priced very low.

Take rice in North Korea for example. The price of rice is 60 sen per kilo when the government purchases it from the cooperative farm. Rice is then sold to the worker at a price of 8 sen per kilo. Therefore, the government shoulders the "difference" in the form of subsidy amounting to 560 won a year for each working household.

As to education, the compulsory education (11 years) is completely free. If one enters college, he is entitled to a scholarship. Medical care is also free. The rent including light and heat is also held down to 2-3 percent of the "livelihood pay." Since there is no tax, living expenses can be quite small.

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An average family can live very well on 70-80 won a month. Besides, in most families, both husband and wife together work for a living so that they can live quite comfortably.

I visited some of the nationally operated stores and stores belonging to the cooperative farms. Although there was not a great variety of general merchandise, clothes and materials, and school supplies were adequately stocked. The prices of electric products are more expensive: electric washer, 250 won, refrigerator, 300 won..., but the daily necessities such as fresh food are very cheap.

Eggplants, 7 sen; tomatoes, 15 sen; watermelons, 40 sen; kimchi, 20 sen...-- these are the prices per kilo found at the nationally operated stores along the Chollima street. The prices of meats are (per kilo): duck, 3.2 won; chicken, 3.4 won; and pork and beef, 4.5 won.

Everywhere I went I was told that the emphasis is shifting "from quantity to quality." Although it cannot be described as abundant, at least everything is adequate for a comfortable living.

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