

March 13, 1972

**Note on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of
the USSR Embassy, Comrade Kurbatov, on 10 March
1972 in the GDR Embassy**

Citation:

"Note on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the USSR Embassy, Comrade Kurbatov, on 10 March 1972 in the GDR Embassy", March 13, 1972, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PolA AA, MfAA, C 1080/78. Obtained by Bernd Schaefer and translated by Karen Riechert. <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/110820>

Summary:

During the conversation there was an exchange of opinions on the following questions:
1. The DPRK Position on the Nixon Visit to Beijing and its Influence on the Situation in Korea,
2. Conversation of Comrade Brezhnev with Foreign Minister Ho Dam in Moscow,
3. Some Aspects of KWP Activity in the Communist World Movement,
4. 60th Birthday of Kim Il Sung on 15 April

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from ROK Ministry of Unification

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English
Translation - Korean

GDR Embassy to DPRK
Pyongyang, 13 March 1972

N o t e

on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the USSR Embassy, Comrade Kurbatov, on 10 March 1972 in the GDR Embassy

During the conversation there was an exchange of opinions on the following questions:

The DPRK Position on the Nixon Visit to Beijing and Its Influence on the Situation in Korea

Based on a written draft, Comrade Kurbatov asserted the DPRK reaction demonstrates how the Korean leadership is very content with the result, in particular with the inclusion of the Korea Problem into the [Shanghai] Communiqué between China and the United States. It [Korean leadership] is very pleased with the support of the DPRK Eight-Point Proposal and the demand to dissolve UNCURK. The Korean leaders think that the Chinese maintained a firm position on Korea. As "Rodong Sinmun" writes, the Korean leadership is viewing this as a great assistance "by the fraternal Chinese people". During Nixon's actual stay in Beijing, the Koreans stated how the DPRK position was laid out in Kim Il Sung's speech from 6 August 1971. Nixon would not arrive in Beijing as a victor but as a defeated. This Korean position had been reiterated in the [Kim Il Sung] interview with [the Japanese newspaper] "Yomiuri Shimbun" [in January 1972]. The Nixon visit was interpreted as forced upon the American president. This way the Korean side assisted China's policy and agreed to the discussion of the Korean question in the talks.

In its publications the Korean leadership attempts to hide from its people the parallel interests of China and the United States. It is pursuing its nationalist course and fails to notice the anti-Soviet aspect of rapprochement between the Chinese leadership and the United States. The Korean leadership asserts China is a "socialist power," "stands firm on the basis of proletarian internationalism," and so on. The Korean leadership's position entirely consists of a course of pragmatism. In their policy toward the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, the Korean leaders are increasingly guided by pragmatic considerations. They are eager to achieve Korean unification primarily with Chinese assistance. It became evident that, in preparation for the talks with Nixon, Chinese leaders were not interested in tensions on the Korean peninsula (like, for instance, during the declaration of a state of emergency in South Korea). The Chinese were successful to move the Korean leadership from its entrenched position. The inclusion of the Korean question into the talks in Beijing, which had occurred not without the knowledge of the Koreans, speaks to new elements in relations between DPRK and China and to new aspects in the Chinese leadership's policy towards the DPRK. The Chinese increasingly take matters to solve the Korean question into their own hands.

Kim Il Sung's visit to Beijing-which allegedly did not occur in early February according to the official version-served the purpose of finalizing the exact joint position on the Korean question for the talks with Nixon. Also the stay of a group of Koreans in Beijing in permanent close touch with the Chinese side further demonstrated the increased stability of relations between the two sides. The Korean side denies a visit by Kim Il Sung to Beijing. Yet Chinese diplomats do not express denials but indicate how permanent consultations are possible, and a visit must not have been unusual. It can be assumed that the Koreans and Chinese recently had another exchange of opinions about the Nixon visit. The ["Rodong Sinmun"] editorial of March 4 seems to be an

indication of that. It can be expected in this context that steps will be taken to create a favorable situation for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea. The Korean leadership views such as its main objective in the near future. Information exists according to which the Korean leadership has been continuously informed by secret material about the course of negotiations with Nixon. The talks with him in Beijing proved that China and the United States have common interests and want to resolve Asian and other problems without the Soviet Union. He [Kurbatov] also referred to differing assessments of the Nixon visit by DPRK and DRV [Democratic republic of Vietnam].

I thanked Comrade Kurbatov for his presentation and informed him in turn about the evaluation of the Nixon visit by our Embassy.

Note: A comparison of the text of the [Shanghai] communiqué between China and the United States and the published version in the DPRK press shows that it was printed almost verbatim with only few omissions: The last sentence in the first paragraph, the third paragraph, the term "Republic [of] Korea," and the last paragraph.

Conversation of Comrade Brezhnev with Foreign Minister Heo Dam [Ho Tam] in Moscow

Here Comrade Kurbatov remarked that Comrade Heo Dam told Comrade Brezhnev that the DPRK will assume a new position towards Japan. There are also new elements in Japan's attitude towards the DPRK. Another aspect of the talks with Comrade Brezhnev were Comrade Heo Dam's statements concerning the United Nations. The DPRK, according to Comrade Heo Dam, is expecting from the Soviet Union and the socialist countries to support and defend DPRK position in the U.N. The PR China would stand up and support the DPRK there as well. Comrade Heo Dam continued how it would be positive if the socialist countries will act in the U.N. in a coordinated and identical fashion with China's positions.

The issues of Japan and the U.N. were not included in the "Joint Message" [of USSR and DPRK on the visit]. Comrade Brezhnev just listened to the statements on Japan and remarked about the U.N. that this question warrants close study.

Comrade Kurbatov stated furthermore that currently the Soviet Union is excluding an attack by the South against the North.

On DPRK-PRC relations Comrade Heo Dam noticed the improvement of relations, though they had not occurred at the expense of DPRK relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Moreover, Comrade Heo Dam said in his talk [with Brezhnev] that the Chinese side will be fully informed about what the Korean side expressed in its talk with the Soviet comrades.

Although it is an important question, there had been no [Korean-Soviet] consultations about party relations [KWP-CPSU] on this level [Brezhnev-Heo Dam].

Later Ambassador Sudarikov will inform more extensively about the Heo Dam visit.

Some Aspects of KWP Activity in the Communist World Movement

Based on a written draft, Comrade Kurbatov made the following remarks:

In 1971 and 1972 the KWP continued relations with communist and workers' parties.

It participated in party congresses of several parties and practiced exchanges of delegations. It invited delegations from different parties to the DPRK. As previously, the KWP builds its party relations on a bilateral basis and refrains from multilateral cooperation. It increases its efforts to summarize the ideology of Juche into a comprehensive system and declares Kim Il Sung's Juche ideology as the only basis for party activities. The 5th Party Congress pushed through a petit bourgeois, nationalist line contradicting socialist development. These nationalist tendencies and the strengthening of relations with China have increased some negative tendencies in the communist movement and in KWP relations to the communist and workers' movement. Despite official KWP declarations about the need to build relations with individual parties on the basis of Marxism-Leninism, by its actual activities in the international communist movement the KWP is contradicting Marxism-Leninism with the nationalist Juche ideology, and proletarian internationalism with "autonomy" and "independence."

The KWP leadership does not consider the experiences of the communist world movement, and it does not follow the collectively agreed decisions of fraternal parties. Instead it praises Kim Il Sung as an eminent leader of the communist and workers' movement and praises him as a genius of the revolution. The KWP is guided by his works where he "provided wise analysis of the features in the current international situation." It is guided by Kim Il Sung as "a leader of the anti-imperialist forces" because his ideas "accelerate the demise of imperialism and guide the world revolution on the path of victory." Kim Il Sung's works, his statements during internal meetings with foreign party officials, and his published speeches invite the assumption that he has a negative view of theory and practice of the construction of socialism and communism in the Soviet Union and the socialist fraternal countries. Apparently he sees the path to socialism in the DPRK as the "only correct and exemplary one for other countries". For instance, he declared in a conversation with the delegation of the leftist party of Swedish communists visiting the DPRK that he does not agree with the CPSU course to develop the Soviet Union as a people's state, since in his opinion such leads to a weakening of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

According to Kim Yeong-nam [Kim Yong Nam], Deputy Head of the [International] Department IV in the [KWP] Central Committee, who based his statement on sayings by Kim Il Sung, "individual countries where the proletariat has risen to power cannot ignore the facts of a danger of imperialist aggression and the restoration of capitalism through encirclement by the international capital, before communism will be eventually established on a global scale."

Based on Kim Il Sung's ideas, the Korean propaganda is currently leading a broad campaign that defines as supporters of revisionism all parties which do not agree with positions of Kim Il Sung on questions like personality cult, dictatorship of the proletariat, class struggle, and so on. In this context a couple of embassies from the socialist countries have reached the conclusion that such a campaign leads to the development of camouflaged anti-Sovietism in the DPRK.

All this said and considered, the appeals by the Korean leaders for unity and closeness of the communist movement are just declaratory in nature, dishonest, and they are not corroborated by practical measures. The tendency becomes ever more clear that the KWP leadership does not focus on the unity of the communist world movement but aims at the revolutionary peoples of the world, of which the so-called united front of the revolutionary people in Asia constitutes the core (Korea, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos). This approach testifies to a gradual departure from the class position of proletarian internationalism for a transition towards a nationalist, pragmatic position. In this context internal Korean propaganda has begun to claim that the "socialist countries have lost their revolutionary spirit and therefore can currently serve only as a material base for the struggle of the revolutionary peoples." In public propaganda this position was to be found in somewhat modified form in the "Rodong Sinmun" article "Let us defend the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the

Proletarian Democracy."

As the KWP is counting China among the revolutionary countries, and based on the ideological and political closeness of positions [between DPRK and PRC], we have to conclude that the KWP is on the path to solidify party relations with China. Since 1971 they exchange party delegations. Korean propaganda welcomed the "assignments for the struggle" by the so-called 9th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), as well as the implementation of the so-called "Cultural Revolution." A "Rodong Sinmun" article celebrating the 50th CCP Anniversary claimed, "after the Cultural Revolution, the CCP turned into an even more pure, steeled and strong party."

KWP and PRC have established contacts and organize informational changes. In the DPRK the Chinese journal "Hongqi" continues to be circulated. In pursuing its own goals, the KWP leadership does not pay attention to the anti-Soviet aspects of China's foreign policy. At the same time it comes close to Chinese positions, as it showed in particular concerning the events in Sudan, India/Pakistan and the Middle East.

Recently the KWP has increasingly activated its relationship with the Albanian Workers' Party. So far DPRK efforts have not resulted in desired Korean reactions on the Albanian side, they only activated bilateral relations on the state level. For the occasion of important anniversaries they exchanged congratulations to underline traditional and friendly relations. The most active development of relations is the one with the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) on a nationalist base and under the labels of "autonomy" and "independence" of the parties. Contacts between KWP and RCP are activated according to an agreement from 1971.

KWP participation in the party congresses of the fraternal parties in 1971 (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Mongolia, GDR, Poland, Soviet Union) has not resulted in progress of relations between the parties. The gatherings were used by the KWP leadership as a podium to propagate its special positions in front of the international communist movement, namely to emphasize "autonomy" and "independence" of parties as the base for their mutual relations.

The KWP leadership is departing from an exchange of experiences and delegations with the fraternal parties. For instance, despite respective agreements, there were no party officials sent in 1971 for vacations in our respective countries. The KWP leadership pays close attention to the tendencies of parties that deviate from the documents of [the international communist and workers' parties meeting in] 1969 [in Moscow]. It is anything but coincidence that after the 1969 Moscow meeting certain parties have paid visits to the DPRK (Sweden, Spain, Norway, Italy, Reunion).

In its relations with the parties of capitalist countries the KWP leaders aim at, in our opinion, influencing these parties according to KWP policy and using them as a vehicle to establish diplomatic relations. We must pay close attention-and this is a dangerous phenomenon-that the KWP might establish relations with pro-Chinese splittist groups. For the first time ever, a congratulatory telegram to the KWP was published by the Communist Party of Thailand, which is completely in sync with Chinese positions.

An important vehicle to increase influence abroad is the propagation of Kim Il Sung ideas through dissemination of his works and the founding of circles. Recent observations show that more attention is paid to those circles. They attempt to include communists in them in order to create permanent organizations. The Korean leadership tries to gain increasing ground through ideological infiltration into the international communist and anti-imperialist movement. There are ever more publications of congratulatory telegrams to Kim Il Sung with praises of his personality. Those congratulatory telegrams and messages cannot hide their Korean authors. Among other things, they want to manipulate the Korean people into believing that

the entire world is studying the works of Kim Il Sung.

The slide of the Korean leadership into the nationalist Juche ideology, the proclamation of this ideology's universal character, and its dissemination abroad, creates an ever growing danger for the socialist community of states and the communist world movement. It requires us to pay increasing attention and to hold consultations between our parties how to approach and deal with these KWP activities.

I thanked Comrade Kurbatov for his statements and expressed that we are in agreement about the assessment of KWP activities in the International Communist Movement.

Note

A public demonstration of DPRK-PRC relations are facts like how the PRC Embassy in France organized a friendship meeting when on 25 February the DPRK "Mansudae" Ensemble visited France (telegram of 29 February 1972). When the ensemble arrived in Geneva on 8 March, it was welcomed at the train station by, among others, the Chinese Ambassador to Switzerland and employees of the Chinese Embassy. In the evening of the same day the Chinese side hosted a reception in Geneva in honor of the ensemble (telegram of 10 March 1972).

60th Birthday of Kim Il Sung on 15 April

At the end of our conversation, Comrade Kurbatov asked whether the GDR will give a present to Kim Il Sung or wants to award him an order. This is a very problematic question and the [Soviet] embassy has so far not reached a result in its discussions. Here I remarked that so far I only know that we are preparing a congratulatory letter. My personal opinion: A present should have symbolic character, if a present will indeed have to be given.

Comrade Gensicke, attaché of our Embassy, also attended this conversation.

Merten

Acting Ambassador

CC

1x Far East Department [Foreign Ministry]

1x Central Committee, Department IV

1x ZID [Foreign Ministry Central Information Service]

1x Embassy, Political Department

