

March 12, 1956

Memorandum of Conversation with the DPRK Vice Premier of the Cabinet of Ministers and Member of the KWP CC Presidium, Pak Chang-ok

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Summary:

Relations between S.Filanov and Kim Il Sung are discussed, the internal political oppression of DPRK, the restricted press.

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CPSU CC

Cde. Ponamarev B.N.

I am attaching for your consideration a memorandum of a conversation of the counselor of the embassy of the USSR in the DPRK, Cde. Filatov, with the Vice Premier of the Cabinet of Ministers of the DPRK, Pak Chang-ok from 12 March 1956.

Attached: abovementioned on "12" pages, vkh. No 1288s-dv

From 16.4.56

/I. Kurdyukov/

"27" April 1956

No 615 / dv

[handwritten at the bottom:]

To the archive The issue, stated in the memorandum of conversation, is elucidated in the information prepared for the delegation of the CPSU to the III Congress of the Korean Workers' Party.

I.S. Shcherbakov

7-V-56

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From the diary of Secret Counselor of the Embassy of the Copy. No. 1

USSR in the DPRK

Comrade Filatov S.N.

Memorandum of Conversation with the Vice Premier of the Cabinet of Ministers of the DPRK and Member of the KWP CC Presidium, Pak Chang-ok [Pak Chang Ok]

12 March 1956

Having met at the initiative of the embassy, Cde. Pak Chang-ok indicated that he had long prepared to meet with me to explain his thoughts about the decree of the Presidium KWP CC from 18 January of this year, "About the Future Struggle Against Reactionary Bourgeois Ideology in Literature and Art."

Before sharing my thoughts on the abovementioned decree of the KWP CC Presidium, I would like to say that over the past ten years of working in Korea, that is, from the period of founding and strengthening the people's authority in North Korea, I, of course, had shortfalls and made a number of mistakes. It is now easier to evaluate the path our party has already traversed; to assess the actions of individual party functionaries, hide the shortcomings and mistakes and outline a future course to strengthen the party as a guiding and leading force of the Korean people.

I always admitted to the mistakes that I made in my work, on numerous occasions, I personally revealed them and informed the Political Council and KWP CC Presidium.

It is necessary to point out, Pak Chang-ok said, that in the Soviet Union I was involved in insignificant party work, but in Korea I was pushed into important party and state work. Without the necessary experience, I made a number of mistakes when deciding difficult matters of state. Furthermore, having arrived in Korea, I did not know the country, did not know the ruling officials of the party, and, it must be said, there were few, and when forcing me to take leading roles in work, I was faulted. What's more, it must be said that the situation was complicated in Korea both before and specially during the war. A lot of difficulties continue to exist even now.

What I am going to tell you, Pak said, I have already declared on more than one occasion both in meetings of the Political Council and in the Presidium KWP CC.

Regarding the decree of the KWP CC Presidium of 18 January of this year, I would like to impart to you that I cannot agree with the line of accusations which were made against me in that ruling. First of all, Pak said, I never carried out factional struggle and never came out against the party line. I did not distort the party line in relation to the United Front, did not suggest reconciliation and collusion with enemies. I unselfishly struggled for the party line throughout all of the ten years I have worked in Korea

I asked Cde. Pak Chang-ok how it can be explained that the KWP CC Presidium made such a decision.

He explained that the question of the work of Soviet-Koreans and especially of those who worked in the Political Council and the KWP CC should not be placed first. Even in 1953 after the death of [Former KWP Vice Chairman, Alexander Ivanovich] Heo Gai [Ho Kai; aka Alexander Ivanovich Hegai], a number of local functionaries and especially cdes. [KWP Vice Chairman] Choe Yong-geon [Choe Yong Gon], [Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance] Choe Chang-ik [Choe Chang Ik] and Jeong Il-yong [Jong Il Yong] raised the matter of releasing me and Cde. [KWP CC Organization and Guidance Department Director] Pak Yeong-bin [Pak Yong Bin] from our posts in the apparatus of the KWP CC; but then Kim Il Sung did not agree with them and spoke at the Political Council with criticism of their actions. In spite of this, Cde. Choe Yong-geon sought the dismissal of a number of leading army officers who came from the Soviet Union.

At the start of 1954, the above-mentioned functionaries once again discussed the need to dismiss a number of Soviet-Koreans from leadership posts. Cde. Kim Il Sung did not agree with them—however, after a month and a half he gave the order that a few functionaries from the Soviet Union should be demoted to more subordinate positions and this was done.

As you know, Pak declared, at the start of 1954, [KWP CC Vice Chairman] Kim Il and I served as vice-chairmen of the KWP CC, at the suggestion of comrade Kim Il Sung, we were reassigned to work in the Cabinet of Ministers—Deputy Premiers. At the same time I was confirmed chairman of the State Planning Committee and Kim Il as Minister of Agriculture. This transition did not go too smoothly. When Kim Il Sung spoke during a session of the Political Council with such a suggestion, [KWP CC vice chairman] cds. Pak Jeong-ae [Pak Jong Ae] and [Supreme People's Assembly Standing Committee Chairman] Kim Du-bong [Kim Tu Pong] expressed their opinions about the inexpediency of my and Kim Il's move to positions in the Cabinet of Ministers.

My promotion to the post of deputy premier and chairman of the State Planning Committee brought me closer to Kim Il Sung. All matters related to the rehabilitation of our economy were decided in the government at the initiative of the State Planning Committee. Cde. Kim Il Sung always supported me and demanded that things be put in order in the ministries. I, said Pak, sought to neatly carry out the directives of comrade Kim Il Sung for which he repeatedly held me up as an example. This caused

some stirring among a number of functionaries and especially among [Vice Premier and Minister of Heavy Industry] Jeong Il-yong, Choe Chang-ik and others.

At the start of 1955 I started to notice that Cde. Kim Il Sung began to express dissatisfaction with me and my work. My attempts to determine the cause of his discontent in talks with Cde. Kim Il Sung did not lead to anything. Cde. Kim Il Sung did not desire to discuss this matter. I saw, said Pak, that someone had begun to influence Cde. Kim Il Sung. Furthermore, this influence adversely affected the work of the State Planning Committee.

It must be said that all of the members of the Political Council, with the exception of [KWP CC Cadre Department Chief] Pak Geum-cheol [Pak Kum Chol], negatively related to Kim Il Sung's suggestion about the appointment of Cde. Choe Yong-geon to the Political Council. Cde. Kim Il Sung did not strive to get the consensus of the Political Council in co-opting Cde. Choe Yong-geon into the Political Council and unilaterally went with the proposal to a plenum. It is necessary to mention that the majority of the members of the KWP CC recognized Cde. Choe Yong-geon as the head of a petty-bourgeois party and were surprised by his appearance at a plenum of the presidium.

I think that with his acceptance into the Political Council, the collection of materials against me, Pak Yeong-bin [Pak Yong Bin], and other Soviet-Koreans was started. Cde. Kim Il Sung began to express more and more displeasure with my work, the work of Pak Yeong-bin, and even that of Pak Jeong-ae.

Last August, in my absence, Cde. Kim Il Sung summoned all of my subordinates in the State Planning Committee and ordered them to compile materials about the poor work of the State Planning Committee. Although they carried out his order, the material was so poorly prepared that Cde. Kim Il Sung decided not to even talk with me about the shortcomings in the work of the State Planning Committee.

On 21 November Cde. Kim Il Sung spoke during a meeting of economic advisors with harsh criticism of the work of the State Planning Committee and of me personally. I considered the points of his speech as guidelines and took measures to improve the work of the State Planning Committee.

Prior to the December KWP CC Plenum, Pak said, I was twice called to Kim Il Sung where he made a number of accusations against me.

First of all, he said to me that my attitude toward proletarian authors, including [Minister of Education] Han Seol-ya [Han Sol Ya], was incorrect. I incorrectly supported writers who arrived from the south. He said that after the death of Ho Kai, I did not excuse a number of Soviet-Koreans from their posts who, together with me, composed a group, and all matters were decided like a family.

In response, I told Cde. Kim Il Sung that I did not do anything without the permission of the Political Council and his personal orders. Until the end of 1948, I was involved in inconsequential work and did not have any influence on the work of the KWP CC. Regarding those who came from South Korea, the Political Council of the Central Committee repeatedly made pronouncements demanding that the possibility to work be given to those people [southern Koreans] and that they be supported. Furthermore, you, Cde. Kim Il Sung, repeatedly instructed us and demanded support and correct relations with those workers who came from the south.

Regarding the Koreans who came from the Soviet Union, I did not place them in leading posts. That was done before me. Furthermore, all of them were confirmed by the Political Council and many of the functionaries were nominated to the leading

posts at his, Kim's, initiative.

I directed Cde. Kim Il Sung's attention, Pak said, to the fact that all of the matters which he had raised related to the period 1947-1952, and that discussing them at the present time is hardly constructive, however, if at present a number of members of the Political Council consider that mistakes were made in these matters, then why must I carry all of the blame for these blunders? All of these matters were decided in the Political Council so it means that all of the Political Council should be responsible.

Cde. Kim Il Sung agreed with my thoughts and asked me to remain calm and continue to work actively in the Political Council and Cabinet of Ministers.

In spite of the meeting and agreement with my argument, at the end of the meeting of the December KWP CC Plenum, comrade Kim Il Sung delivered a speech. His entire speech was devoted to the theme of the Soviet-Korean affair. I understood that political accusations were being made and I decided to once again speak with comrade Kim Il Sung and express my thoughts. In a discussion with me, comrade Kim Il Sung once again repeated the now notorious accusations. However, at the end of the discussion in which Pak Jeong-ae took part, comrade Kim Il Sung said you have already been criticized enough, continue to quietly work.

I learned that the speech Kim Il Sung delivered at the Central Committee plenum was distributed by the Pyongyang City Committee, to all primary organizations, and it is being discussed in party meetings.

Pak said [that] on 27-29 December there was an enlarged plenum of the KWP CC in which over 400 people participated. At the initiative of comrade Kim Il Sung, I, comrades Pak Yeong-bin, [Ministry of State Control Desk Officer] Gi Seok-bok [Ki Sok Pok], Jeon Dong-hyeok [Jon Dong Hyuk] and Jang Yul were compelled to deliver speeches admitting our shortcomings. The gathering was prearranged; as I was the first to speak, I was given around 100 questions. I was accused of wanting to become the face of the state, and if not the face, then the second in command. For this, I rallied a number of dependable Soviet-Koreans cadres. Pak Yeong-bin and I, taking refuge in the collectivity of the leadership, put ourselves forward and beseeched the role of the vozhd, Cde. Kim Il Sung. We were, as a number of participants demonstrated, conduits of bourgeois ideology to the Party.

I asked Cde. Pak Chang-ok to describe the character of the speeches of a few members of the leadership.

Cde. Pak Chang-ok explained that the speeches of Im Hae—representative of the Korean Communist Party attached to the KWP, and Han Seol-ya deserve mention.

Comrade Im Hae declared that he has at his disposal materials which describe the factional activities of Pak Chang-ok, Pak Yeong-bin, and other Soviet-Koreans.

Comrade Han Seol-ya said that Pak Chang-ok wanted to become the first person in the state, advanced himself, and by his activities lessened the role of comrade Kim Il Sung. He said that Pak Chang-ok and Pak Yeong-bin did not permit the party and the people to express their good feelings and attitude to their vozhd, etc. Pak stated that all of these accusations I spurned as absurd and baseless.

At the end of the meeting, comrade Kim Il Sung delivered a speech that in an even harsher tone repeated what he said during the December Plenum of the Central Committee. He made a specific reference to 15 functionaries who arrived from the Soviet Union as followers of Ho Kai. His speech, like the previous one, was distributed

to all primary organizations of Pyongyang and the provincial committees and read aloud at party meetings. Once again the Soviet-Koreans were discussed everywhere.

On 30 December, Pak Chang-ok said, I asked comrade Kim Il Sung to receive me and listen to my explanation. Cde. Kim Il Sung invited me to his home and we talked for over 5 hours. He produced the same accusations to me that he had previously. I directed the attention of Cde. Kim Il Sung to the fact that only Soviet-Koreans are being discussed, then what of the mistakes made by local functionaries of which there is no mention anywhere. Furthermore, it has already been over two months that the party leadership and all local organizations have discussed the activities and mistakes of the Soviet-Koreans, distracting us from our primary duties.

Cde. Kim Il Sung argued with me for a long time. Later he invited cds. Pak Jeong-ae and Kim Il. He asked their thoughts on the question under discussion. They essentially agreed with me, and Kim Il Sung agreed with us that all of this needed to stop. He asked me to forget everything and continue to work actively in the post of deputy premier and head of the State Planning Committee.

However, on 18 January I was once again summoned to a meeting of the KWP CC Presidium where I was asked to read a draft decision of the presidium that had already been accepted by the Political Council. Cde. Kim Il Sung suggested that I express my opinion about the matter under discussion to all members of the Presidium. None of the members of the Presidium demonstrated that Pak Yeong-bin and I had carried out factional anti-party activities against the party.

In my speech I did not agree with the abovementioned decision of the presidium but at the end of the meeting said that they should decide as they wish, and demanded that they relieve me from the duties of head of the State Planning Committee and demote me to ordinary work. I made this declaration because I was so worn out that I could not explain to the Political Council and comrade Kim Il Sung about the incorrectness of the line of accusations made against me and other Soviet-Koreans.

Kim Il Sung came out against my suggestion. On another day I once again asked to be relieved from all of my posts. Comrade Kim Il Sung considered my request as unwillingness to agree with the decision of the Central Committee Presidium. I twice raised the matter of being dismissed. The Political Council accepted my suggestion and released me from the posts I had occupied.

Pak explained that I once again asked comrade Kim Il Sung to send me to common work but he categorically rejected the suggestion.

Later, Pak indicated that comrade Kim Il Sung will soon become convinced of the incorrectness of several accusations produced against me, comrade Pak Yeong-bin, and other Soviet-Koreans. He will also be convinced of what a few members of the Political Council are attempting to achieve through the removal of them/him, Pak Chang-ok and Pak Yeong-bin from the Central Committee and Cabinet of Ministers.

A number of functionaries who presently surround Kim Il Sung, I mean, Pak said, Choe Yong-geon, Pak Geum-cheol and several deputy directors of the KWP CC are unqualified, and more importantly, are mean-spirited and un-objective workers.

Two days ago, Pak said, I was asked to visit comrade Kim Il Sung. All of the directors of the departments of the Central Committee were with him. Before them, he assigned me the task of editing a section of a speech on industry to the KWP Third Congress. He ordered all with materials about the work of industry to deliver them to me. However, up to now, they have not given me anything. I informed Cde. Kim Il Sung of this. He promised to take measures.

I directed Pak Chang-ok's attention to the address of Cde. Kim Il Sung in relation to the fact that he, Pak Chang-ok, was on more than one occasion ordered to speak with criticism of his erroneous actions. Pak responded that no one had ever given him such an order. In October of last year during a conversation Cde. Kim Il Sung drew attention to the fact that I had to deliver a speech on the work of the union of writers of Korea. I replied that I am entirely unfamiliar with the literature of Korean writers. On that, the conversation ceased.

I asked Cde. Pak Chang-ok to describe how the party functionaries in the KWP CC and the Cabinet of Ministers study the decision of the CPSU Twentieth Congress, the speech of cdes. N.S. Khrushchev and N.A. Bulganin, and what influences and impressions did they get from the CPSU Twentieth Congress.

Pak answered that the majority of party functionaries were still silent. They are waiting until Cde. Kim Il Sung himself talks about the line of issues, and especially about the personality cult, collective leadership, observance of intra-party democracy, revolutionary legality, etc. All of these questions are of supreme importance to the future work of our party and its strengthening.

The praise of Cde. Kim Il Sung is especially widespread in both oral and print propaganda in Korea, and if anyone comments on this matter, they are subject to punishment. I must acknowledge that what we members of the Political Council did, though feebly and timidly attempt to come out against this, but because of this we were accused of coming out against Kim Il Sung. Recently, since Pak Yeong-bin left from the Central Committee Department of Propaganda and Agitation, the praise of comrade Kim Il Sung has significantly increased, and members of the Political Council "compete" in this action, attempting to outdo one another. Cde. Kim Il Sung sees all of this and relates to it highly. At his command and in consultation with him, preparations are being made for a film about his struggle against the Japanese colonizers. The study of the history of the KWP is conducted through the reports and speeches of Cde. Kim Il Sung. It would be possible to give even more examples characterizing just how far the matter of praising Cde. Kim Il Sung has gone.

The leading members of the party, Cde. Pak said, at the present moment are studying the decision and materials of the CPSU Twentieth Congress; discussions are taking place everywhere on the question of the personality cult, and I don't doubt that the majority of the leading cadres correctly understand all of the matters and attitudes advanced in the decision of the Twentieth Party Congress and reach the necessary conclusions. I also think, he continued, that Cde. Kim Il Sung will largely change the forms and methods of leadership. Without that, the further strengthening of the party and reinforcement of its influence on the masses is inconceivable.

At the end of our discussion, Cde. Pak Chang-ok informed me that he had a hand in the composition of the memorandum which Choe Yong-geon delivered to the Soviet government in February of this year. In this note, the Korean government asks the government of the USSR about the deferment and partial write-off of repayments of credits the Soviet Union had previously given to Korea.

Furthermore, we discussed the question of approaching the Soviet Government with a request to render the DPRK further material assistance. We think, said Pak, that it is necessary for us during the upcoming five-year plan to receive material assistance in the amount of one billion Rubles; we assume that this assistance will be rendered in roughly equal portions by the Soviet Union and China.

During a meeting of the Political Council, Comrade Kim Il Sung said on this matter that it is not necessary to appeal to the Soviet government now with the simultaneous requests for the deferment and partial write-off of repayments of credits and additional material assistance. It is necessary to decide, he said, first the

primary question—the matter of the deferment and partial write-off of the repayments of credits. If the Soviet government complies with our request, then after some time we will appeal to the government of the USSR for additional material assistance. Members of the Political Council agreed with Cde. Kim Il Sung's suggestion.

I thanked Cde. Pak Chang-ok for the information.

The meeting lasted for 4 hours.

Comments:

1. From the meetings conducted with Soviet-Koreans comrades Pak Chang-ok, Pak Yeong-bin, [Vice Premier and Minister of Light Industry], Pak Uiwan, [DPRK Minister of Construction], Kim Seung-hwa [Kim Sung Hwa], Kim Dae-wook [Kim Dae Wook], Jang Dong-hok [Jang Dong Hok], and others, it is clear that Cde. Pak Chang-ok, much like Cde. Pak Yeong-bin, Gi Seok-bok, Jang Yul and Jang Dong-hok admitted to the fabricated charges made against them at the meeting of the Presidium of the KWP CC on 18 January on the grounds of what the KWP CC Presidium passed in the decree "About the Future Struggle Against Reactionary Bourgeois Ideology in Literature and Art."

It is necessary to consider that for over two months the KWP CC discussed the matter in plenary sessions of the CC Presidium and Political Council and also in primary party organs. The discussion of this matter, in point of fact, turned into a discussion of the activities of a number of leading Soviet-Koreans. What's more, coercive methods were employed in the discussions, creating an entirely incorrect public impression surrounding the Soviet-Koreans. All of this led to the abovementioned officials admitting to the accusations made against them.

2. For the past while, Cdes. Pak Chang-ok and Pak Yeong-bin tried to sort out the essence of the question under discussion and visited the embassy with the aim of explaining their thoughts on the well-known decree of the KWP CC Presidium from 18 January of this year. In the conversations they denied their participation in factional and anti-party activities, and moreover in distorting the policies of the party in the realm of literature, art and the United National Front of Korea.

In altering their thoughts on the well known decree of the KWP CC Presidium, in my opinion, there were two influential factors: the historical decision of the CPSU Twentieth Congress and the change in the relations of the Political Council and Cde. Kim Il Sung himself in connection with cdes. Pak Chang-ok and Pak Yeong-bin and other Soviet-Koreans. It is well known that the Political Council repeatedly gave the order to provincial and city committees of the party to cease discussion of the activities of well-known Soviet-Koreans.

3. I think that the abovementioned Soviet-Koreans made a number of serious mistakes. First of all, they incorrectly and arrogantly associated with the local cadres, ignored them and did not promote [them] to leadership posts. Several functionaries such as Han Seol-ya and others were victimized.

However, in my opinion, one cannot accept the correctness of the decree of the KWP CC Presidium from 18 January 1956 in that cdes. Pak Chang-ok, Pak Yeong-bin, Gi Seok-bok, Jang Yul and Jang Dong-hok carried out a factional anti-party struggle against the party and distorted party policies in the realm of literature and art.

Counselor of the Embassy

20 March 1956

S. Filatov

4 Copies sent

1- Cde. Federenko

2- Cde. Kurdyukov

3- Cde. Solodovnik

4- To the files

Composed by Filatov