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Memorandum of Conversation with Gi Seok-bok

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Summary:

Discusses the attempts to dispel the rumors that Kim Il Sung's cult of personality exists in DPRK.

Original Language:

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Memorandum of a Conversation with Gi Seok-bok, Desk Officer of the Ministry of
State Control of the DPRK

31 May 1956

I received Gi Seok-bok [Ki Suk Pok], who visited the Embassy at his own initiative.

Gi Seok-bok passed me his letter addressed to Ambassador V. I. Ivanov.

Gi Seok-bok said that he would like to relate an interesting fact conveyed to him by
Kim Seung-hwa [Kim Sung Hwa], DPRK Minister of Construction.

During the work of the KWP Third Congress, Ri Sang-jo [Ri Sang Jo], DPRK ambassador
to the USSR, twice wrote notes to the Congress Presidium with a suggestion that the
cult of personality that exists in the KWP be discussed. However, these notes were
not publicized. After the Congress an important discussion was held with Ri Sang-jo at
the apartment of Kim Chang-man, Deputy Chairman of the KWP CC. The former was
accused of political carelessness and in desiring to mechanically apply the decisions
of the CPSU Twentieth Congress to the KWP.

Ri Sang-jo rejected these accusations and in turn accused Kim Chang-man [Kim
Chang Man] and officials like him of a reluctance to correctly understand the
decisions of the CPSU Twentieth Congress.

Kim Chang-man informed Choe Yong-geon [Choe Yong Gon], [Party Cadre
Department Chief] Pak Geum-cheol [Pak Kum Chol], and Han Sang-du [Han Sang Du]
of this conversation, who favored recalling Ri Sang-jo from the post of ambassador to
the USSR.

Having found out about such an opinion, Ri Sang-jo visited [Chairman of the Standing
Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly] Kim Du-bong [Kim Tu Pong] and told
him the substance of the matter. The same day Kim Du-bong expressed his
disagreement to Kim Il Sung about the proposed recall of Ri Sang-jo and that this step
was in no way justified. Kim Il Sung agreed with this and added approximately the
following: Ri Sang-jo did not make any mistake, he simply openly wrote what he was
thinking.

Only after this, said Gi Seok-bok, was Ri Sang-jo permitted to return to the USSR.

Gi Seok-bok said that the concluding speech of Kim Chang-man, Deputy Chairman of
the KWP CC, at a meeting of the Pyongyang City activists convened about the results
of the KWP Third Congress contained threats against those who continue to talk about
the existence of a cult of personality in the KWP. Kim Chang-man declared, for
example, that whoever does not want to understand that there is now no cult of
personality in the KWP would end up isolated and be repudiated by everyone.

Gi Seok-bok also reported that some days ago he attended a lecture by Jang Guk-il
[Chang Kuk Il], Deputy Minister of State Control, in which he said in particular that
Korea was liberated by the partisan detachments of Kim Il Sung, but Gi Seok-bok said
that this was a gross distortion of history.

Gi Seok-bok was told that his letter would be passed to the ambassador.

FIRST SECRETARY OF THE EMBASSY

/signature/

/G. Samsonov/

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