

October 16, 1957

**Notes from a Conversation between the 1st
Secretary of the PRL Embassy in the DPRK with
Comrade Pimenov, 1st Secretary of the Embassy of
the USSR, on 15.X.1957**

Citation:

"Notes from a Conversation between the 1st Secretary of the PRL Embassy in the DPRK with Comrade Pimenov, 1st Secretary of the Embassy of the USSR, on 15.X.1957", October 16, 1957, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Polish Foreign Ministry Archive. Obtained by Jakub Poprocki and translated by Maya Latynski.
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Summary:

Brzezinski Henryk and Pimenov discuss the situation in the Korean Workers' Party and the activities of Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik.

Original Language:

Polish

Contents:

Translation - English

Embassy of the Pyongyang, 16.X.1957
People's Republic of Poland
in Pyongyang [trans. note: stamp]

Secret [trans. note: added by hand]

No. 833/156/2421/57/tjn. [transl. note: most likely short for tajne, secret)

N o t e

From a conversation with comr. Pimenov 1st Secretary of the Embassy of the USSR on 15.10.1957

The conversation had the goal of gaining information about the situation in the Workers' Party in connection with the recent events regarding the Pak Chang-ok [Pak Chang Ok] and Choe Chang-ik [Choe Chang Ik] group.

Pimenov presented this matter in the following way. The Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group took the floor at the August plenum of last year in the spirit of the resolutions of the 20th Congress fighting the cult of the individual, raising the standard of living of the population and so on. This group was standing on the foundation of the ideology of marxism-leninism, on the foundation of cooperation with the USSR and all the countries of people's democracies. The Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group placed its problems within the framework of the party in the discussion at the plenum. Further on, comr. Pimenov told about the course of the August plenum with the escape of the four to China and also the resolution of the September plenum, about which we already informed at the time.

The Hungarian events awakened concern among the leadership of the DPRK and suspicions regarding the further activities of the Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group. An investigation was begun regarding the persons from this group. It was not found that members of the group maintain contacts with one another or conduct some underground activity. In the press and in party work, a widely planned action was conducted against the group. In May and June of the current year, several professors of the Kim Il Sung University in Pyongyang began to declare views close to the August group's with accents of petit bourgeois ideology at the university. This issue stopped in the university's party organization. Students and professors condemned the activity of the abovementioned professors. Those who had been declaring views close to the Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group were excluded from the party and removed from the university. It must be stressed that this whole issue, as comr. Pimenov said, did not go outside the framework of the university, and also did not meet any sort of broader support. In July of this year, a group of mid-level activists, including also some from the Pyongyang party committee, out of fear of repressions planned to escape to China and ask for asylum, similarly to how the four did it last year after the August plenum. This group was arrested. It is believed that these people were connected in some way to the Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group. This event gave rise to anxiety among the DPRK leadership. An investigation and arrests began. The investigation is continuing, so far there is a lack of results and data. Pak Chang-ok, Choe Chang-ik and Go Bong-gi [Ko Pong Gi](an employee of the Ministry of Foreign Trade) have been placed under house arrest. All three remain members of the CC of the party. The outcomes of the investigation so far, about which the Korean comrades are speaking in unofficial conversations with the Soviet comrades, are as follows: the Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group did not intend to achieve a coup by force or fundamental changes in policy, they aimed to gain a majority at the plenum so as to achieve a change in leadership in this way. Comr. Pimenov gave this reasoning as his opinion following talks with Korean comrades. In the opinion of Korean comrades, a certain group of

people joined the Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group, using the same slogans as they had voiced, and intended to make a change in the leadership by force. This group did not promote an ideological program. Some of these people were said to have aimed to bring about a Korean Poznan last year. Probably, as the Korean comrades assert, American and Syngman Rhee's spies joined in this activity. So far, no concrete ties between the Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group and spies and saboteurs have been established.

In Pimenov's opinion, all activity aimed at achieving changes in the government by way of force was and is unrealistic because the active group was very limited in number and had no wider support from the working class or the peasantry.

In August of this year, an action of meetings was begun, and is still continuing, in those ministries where arrests had been conducted or where there had been suspicions toward certain persons regarding ties to the group or their unclear stance on the question of the Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group, and an intensive action of raising partyiness has been carried out. These meetings, according to comr. Pimenov, quite often have the character of moral pressure and unsophisticated criticism. There have been cases of suicides following such meetings. These meetings wrongly fire up the question of the Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group. Recently a campaign was begun in the whole country to raise partyiness and class upbringing.

On the issue of the new composition of the Supreme Assembly and government, comr. Pimenov asserted that the people chosen for it are not ones about whom there were suspicions that they are in any way connected to or have taken an insufficiently clear stand on the question of the Pak Chang-ok and Choe Chang-ik group. E.g.: Kim Du-bong [Kim Tu Bong], who, despite the fact that in January of this year at a meeting of trade employees he cut himself off from the group and condemned all factional activity, was not elected to the composition of the new government; similarly; the minister of communications, who for the past half-year had been acting minister, also did not come into the composition of the new cabinet. At this moment, as Pimenov said, no opinions or comments on the topic of the changes have been made in the new government.

In Pimenov's opinion, and this is what is being said at the Soviet Embassy, the DPRK's party policies and economic activities are correct. The society is supporting the party's and government's policies. A delegation of Soviet correspondents, after returning to Pyongyang from a trip of several weeks around the DPRK, relayed unanimous and universal voices that people are living better than during the Japanese times. Workers and peasants talked about this with the correspondents.

On the issue of this year's crops, Pimenov said that among the DPRK leadership one hears the figure of 3,200,000 t., which means that it is expected that less will be harvested than had been assumed (3.4 million), but enough that there will be no need for import. (350,000 t. have been imported).*

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2 cop[ies] M[inisterstwo] S[praw] Z[agranicznych-Ministry of Foreign Affairs]
Dep[artment] V

1 cop[y] a/a

Brzezinski Henryk

[trans. note: followed by signature]

1st Secretary of the Embassy of
the PRL in the DPRK

* as a comparison, we are giving the figure that the grain harvest in the previous year amounted to 2,850,000 t.