

August 20, 1976
Telegram from New York to Bucharest, SECRET,
Urgent, No. 060.387

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Summary:

The Romanian Mission to the United Nations in New York reports on developments related to the Panmunjeom or "Axe Murder" Incident at the UN.

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Regarding: Korea

1. On August 20th, the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations Organization, Ambassador T. Bennett, relayed a detailed report, on behalf of the Unified Command of UN Troops in Korea, to the President of the Security Council of the United Nations, about the incidents which took place on August 18th in the demilitarized zone in Korea. The report describes the incidents and assigns the entire blame on the North Koreans.

The report is written in a relatively sober, moderate tone, compared with the public speeches of the United States on this matter.

The report is meant to inform [the president of the Security Council] and does not comprise a request to summon the Security Council or to have the United Nations undertake any sort of action.

2. In a casual discussion, the Japanese ambassador, who is the president of the Security Council this month, made the following remarks on the incident in the demilitarized zone in Korea:

The action of the North Korean armed forces was premeditated. His assertion is based on many facts, including on the absence of president Kim Il Sung from Colombo; the coincidence [of the incident] with the high-level meeting of non-aligned states and the inclusion by surprise, two day prior to the occurrence of the incident, of the Korean matter on the agenda of the forthcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly. Anyway, the Japanese ambassador said, the Koreans wanted and still want to take advantage of the electoral campaign atmosphere in the United States.

This incident and the consequences it may have will raise serious issues in the relations between Japan and the People's Republic of China, and with countries in Indochina, given that Japan has an alliance treaty with South Korea.

He said that there had been a danger that the Americans reacted violently to this incident, given that it had occurred on the day of President Ford being sworn in. He also said that the US reaction was cautious but that if such incidents occur again, it is not impossible that the United States brings the matter to the attention of the Security Council.

It is to be expected that the United States consults with the USSR and China and asks them to exert pressures on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to compel it not to repeat such actions.

His personal opinion was that the Chinese are not happy at what happened in the demilitarized zone, because the tension and a potential conflict in Korea would ruin their plans regarding their relations with the United States and regarding the balance of power between the three superpowers.

A certain degree of discontent can be noticed in Soviet [officials], caused both by the

aforementioned incident as well as by the fact that the [North] Koreans registered the Korean matter on the agenda of the General Assembly without consulting with the [Soviets] beforehand.

[People] in the UN Secretariat believe that the August 18th incident will be exploited both by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to prove the necessity of US troops withdrawing from South Korea, as well as by the United States, to justify its proposal regarding the summoning of a conference on Korea.

Signed: Ion Datcu