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Report from the GDR Embassy in the DPRK

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Summary:

Steinhofer addresses the relationship between the DPRK and the Soviet Union as well as other socialist states.

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GDR Embassy to the DPRK
Pyongyang, 1 September, 1975

Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Head of Far East Department
Comrade Helmut Liebermann
B e r l i n

Dear Comrade Liebermann!

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your recent guidance letters. We always evaluate them very thoroughly in the Political Department [of our Embassy].

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Since we want to have a special initiative program to honor the IX [SED] Party Congress, we would like to familiarize ourselves with the program of your department to get additional ideas. Thus, I ask of you to send us at your next convenience, if possible, the commitments you have made [in Berlin].

With this letter you also receive our assessments on positions of the KWP [Korean Workers' Party] and the DPRK regarding the so-called Third World and the Non-Aligned Movement. Responding to your question about the opinions of the Soviet comrades, I can assure you that all relevant information and assessments are reviewed with the Soviet comrades here, no matter whether they are current events or of a more comprehensive character. The opinions of the Soviet comrades are always reflected [in our assessments] here. Comrade Ambassador Everhartz will be able to confirm that.

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The above-mentioned assessment, for instance, I reviewed during the process of writing down the details with a delegate from the Soviet Embassy, Comrade Pimenov, the counselor of the Hungarian Embassy, Comrade Dr. Taraba, and the counselor of the Bulgarian Embassy, Comrade Apostolov.

It would lead to wrong conclusions to measure the intensity of contacts and collaboration here on site by the number of transmitted reports. If you consider it necessary that we write a note for the records about each talk here, we will obviously observe this in the future-even if the contents [of these notes] are already reflected in another record or the talk just served the purpose of a mutual review.

Rest assured that your implicit hint will also serve as guidance for us to undertake all efforts to continuously deepen the cooperation with the comrades from the Soviet Embassy on all levels.

As we noted in our telex about the celebrations for the 30th anniversary of Korea's liberation, there is growing concern among the Soviet comrades about DPRK attempts to differentiate between the individual socialist states. Our own observations fully conform to this assessment. DPRK relations vis-à-vis the Soviet Union are indeed presently very cold. According to Comrade Pimenov, Soviet citizens [in the DPRK] are frequently treated like unwelcome foreigners. At the same time, the DPRK demonstrates a very cordial relationship with the PR China. This is expressed through the wide media coverage and in the exchange of a large number of different delegations.

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In contrast to the Soviet Union, the GDR, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Mongolia, the DPRK clearly applies preferential treatment to Yugoslavia, Cuba, and, to be honest,

Bulgaria as well, in addition to Romania. This opinion is fully shared by the ambassadors from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Mongolia. Concerning Hungary, it is currently very difficult to make a clear assessment [of their relations with the DPRK]. The Polish Ambassador suggested [that we] have a thorough discussion on this issue in a meeting of ambassadors from the close fraternal socialist states once the Soviet Ambassador has returned from his vacation.

We are of the opinion that the presently visibly cool relations between the DPRK and Soviet Union will only be temporary. The long-term design of the DPRK policy rests on the principle of a "balance" and precludes a complete turn towards the PR China. Apparently, we are seeing a misguided [North Korean] attempt to exert pressure on the Soviet Union, which, in our opinion, still requires heightened vigilance and close coordination on all issues.

In the context of the non-materialized Kim Il Sung visit [to the USSR], Comrade Pimenov reiterated that over the last three years, the Korean side has canceled already agreed upon meetings six times on short notice. The Soviet Union could not accept a dictated date (18 to 22 May [North Korean proposed date for Kim Il Sung to Moscow]). In essence, this fact influenced the Soviet position. The Soviet comrades are correct in their position that the struggle to deepen the relationship with the DPRK will ultimately not be successful with a lack of principles.

In June, specialist meetings by the planning organs of the DPRK and the Soviet Union were held. The Korean side asked for the importation of 12 factories with a value of about 1 billion rubles. In the case of an official request from the DPRK government, the Soviet Union is willing to expand the thermal power plant, Bukcheon, and the smelting plant, Kim Chaek, and to deliver factories for the production of phosphorus fertilizer, detergents, and hydraulic mine equipment. Altogether these five factories have an overall value of 200 million rubles. The DPRK proposed to increase its annual exports [to the Soviet Union] of rolled steel to 250,000 tons until 1979, as well as of cement to 600,000 tons until 1976 and to 800,000 tons until 1980.

However, the Soviet comrades doubt whether the DPRK can meet such obligations. On the other hand, the DPRK's requests demonstrate that the reality of socialist construction is forcing the DPRK to collaborate with the Soviet Union.

□□ Korean comrades already told representatives from the close fraternal embassies that our state telegrams for the 30th anniversary of liberation will not get published since they are only a few and the official national holiday is actually the 9th of September.

□□

Our congratulations (business cards) were not answered except for a few. They were sent in by the ambassadors of Czechoslovakia and Mongolia and the acting ambassadors from the GDR, Bulgaria, and Hungary. The DPRK consequently sticks to its announced policy to accept congratulatory telegrams for an occasion like this only from the Soviet Union.

□□ A member from the Department IV in the KWP Central Committee told Comrade Dr. Taraba, Acting Ambassador of Hungary, that no party delegations will be invited to the 30th anniversary of the KWP foundation. If, however, delegations want to visit the DPRK at this time due to other mutual arrangements, they are welcome. The Bulgarian comrades were explicitly told that Comrade Tellalov, Secretary in the BCP Central Committee, might want to visit the DPRK during this 30th anniversary according to a [bilateral] agreement about the exchange of party delegations in the field of international relations.

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□□ The situation on the peninsula appears calm. Apparently both sides do not wish to have any serious incidents occur before the 30th U.N. General Assembly.

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The recent meeting between Red Cross delegations from the DPRK and South Korea ended without results, like all the others before. The DPRK asks for such conditions to realize concrete proposals that they would amount to a change of the power situation in South Korea.

The DPRK is now focused to prepare, in economic regards, for the 30th anniversary of the KWP's founding, which is widely reflected in the mass media.

Finally, I want to inform you that the working process in the embassy is seriously hampered by another failure of the telephone system. We are not able to repair it ourselves anymore. For about two years now, we have been unsuccessful in finding a phone specialist.

I will write another telex to Comrade Mallasch today and ask for his help since the situation is simply unbearable.

The Korean comrades caused, through faulty switching, two major disasters in our transformer house. This has resulted in the complete destruction of two voltage transformers in a high voltage area. The embassy still receives its electricity via an emergency cable.

The constant damages and failures of technical facilities are ultimately a result of the fact that they [North Koreans] do not perform the required regular check-ups by specialists.

I ask for your support on the issue of delegating a phone specialist immediately.

With socialist greetings,

[signed]

Steinhofer

Acting Ambassador