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Report from the GDR Embassy in the DPRK, 'Note about a Conversation with the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Comrade Le Quang Khai, on 5 May 1976'

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Summary:

A report from Ambassador Everhartz on the discussion with the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam about the relationship between the DPRK and China.

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Pyongyang, 6 May 1976

N o t e

Concerning a Conversation with the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam,
Comrade Le Quang Khai, on 5 May 1976 in the GDR Embassy

During the course of the conversation, Comrade Le Quang Khai informed [the discussants] about an article published in the October 1975 issue of the Hong Kong journal from "China" and Taiwan's central newspaper, "New China." This article reported extensively on remarks made by Chinese Foreign Minister, Qiao Guanhua, on August 20, 1975, in the club of the military committee in Tianjin Province. (The Vietnamese Ambassador had a Vietnamese translation of this article with him. We recommend finding out whether we can obtain the abovementioned journal from Hong Kong).

According to this article, Qiao Guanhua also talked about relations between China and the DPRK. When he mentioned the name "Kim Il Sung," there were jeers and heckles in the room. Kim Il Sung was said to have been accused of being a revisionist. Qiao Guanhua commented and said that Kim Il Sung conducted a revisionist policy in earlier years and also worked closely with revisionists. Yet today this charge no longer holds true. The DPRK follows its own independent path on the issue of Korean reunification and does not want any foreign interference. The PR China, Qiao Guanhua stressed, is supporting this policy. If an armed conflict breaks out in Korea, the PR China would only send troops if the United States directly interfered. In the case of U.S. non-interference, the PRC would only morally support the DPRK. Ultimately, the level of assistance depends on the respective existing situation. Overall, China is guided by the policy that there is no fight against imperialism without simultaneously conducting the struggle against revisionism.

According to the opinion of the Vietnamese Ambassador, the PR China attempts by all means, and with an emphasis on increased struggle against revisionism, to influence the Korean side to break its friendly relationship with the Soviet Union.

Overall, Comrade Le Quang Khai rated relations between the DPRK and the PRC as stable. Yet it is hard to overlook that there is a mutual sense of mistrust between them. The DPRK needs the political, moral, and economic support of the PRC in its struggle for the reunification of its country. On the other hand, the PR China is eager to showcase a friendly relationship with the DPRK to the outside world, since China's policies have moved it into a state of isolation from more and more states. The alliance with the DPRK is important to China particularly in Asia, but also in the context of the Third World.

Comrade Le Quang Khai has gained the impression that the DPRK, in its pragmatic policy, is guided by the intention to receive, in case of a military conflict with the South, arms from the Soviet Union and soldiers from the PR China.

According to information held by Comrade Le Quang Khai, economic relations between the DPRK and the PRC in 1975 grew by an additional 40 million dollars compared to the previous year. Overall, the trade volume is said to have reached 240 million dollars.

In 1975 the DPRK imported from the PR China:
1 million tons of coal

1 million tons of oil
50,000 tons of cotton
and other agricultural products like grain, rice (or corn as a substitute), and beans.

In return the DPRK delivered machine tools, ores, and, in part, also non-ferrous metals and cement to the PRC.

In the military field, there was notably closer collaboration between the DPRK and the PRC over the last year (apparently as a result of the Kim Il Sung's visit to the PRC).

The fact that Deng Xiaoping was removed from power was a hard blow for the Korean comrades. Kim Il Sung's visit to the PRC in 1975 and its results were featured in the DPRK [media] with large propagandistic efforts over a long period of time. Even when the campaign against Deng Xiaoping was in full swing in China, Korean television still repeatedly showed images from Kim Il Sung's visit to the PR China. The Korean comrades consider it as most discomforting that the agreements signed between DPRK and PRC during the visit bear the signatures of Kim Il Sung and Deng Xiaoping.

In the context of the campaign against Deng Xiaoping, Chinese politicians who have moved closer towards the top leadership positions were also major protagonists of the Cultural Revolution and also contributed to the confrontation with Kim Il Sung [during the Cultural Revolution].

It is still too early to come to a final conclusion about the course of relations between the PR China and the DPRK. Yet all indications point to the direction that, to a certain degree, relations between the PRC and the DPRK will become colder.

Note:

In general, we agree with the assessment by the Vietnamese Ambassador. Our opinions diverge with regard to his statement that relations will cool down to a certain degree.

As long as Mao Zedong is alive, and for a considerable time thereafter until changes are made to China's top leadership, both sides will be eager to make the relationship closer based on their specific interests.

The Vietnamese Ambassador, Comrade Le Quang Khai, also expressed his thanks and joy about the dignified celebration of the 1st anniversary of the Vietnamese people's victory in the GDR.

He informed [us] how the DPRK declined the request by the Vietnamese Ambassador to speak on this occasion about Korean television. Overall, the Vietnamese comrades are very disappointed about the insufficient reports on Vietnam in the DPRK press, as well as regarding the elections in Vietnam. They explain this fact as such: The Korean comrades are uncomfortable to talk widely about the success of the Vietnamese people, its victory, and the reunification. Apparently they are afraid of negative reactions and doubts about the correctness of their [Korean reunification] policy among their own population.

[Signed]
Everhartz
Ambassador

CC:

Comrade Berthold - Foreign Ministry, Far East Department

Central Committee - Department IV

Ambassador