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Report from the GDR Embassy in the DPRK, 'Note about a Conversation with the Soviet Ambassador, Comrade Kryulin, on 5 May 1976 in his Residence'

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Summary:

A report from Ambassador Everhartz on the discussion with the Ambassador of the Soviet Union about the relationship between the DPRK and China and about the DPRK's political situation. He concludes that the DPRK has moved away from the Soviet camp without getting closer to the Chinese.

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GDR Embassy to the DPRK
Pyongyang, 6 May 1976

N o t e

About a Conversation with the Soviet Ambassador, Comrade Kryulin,
on 5 May 1976 in his Residence

The meeting was arranged according to the mutually agreed weekly exchange of information.

Comrade Kryulin informed [me] that his political analysts have reviewed the state of relations between the DPRK and the PR China based on the current new situation in the PRC.

He said his comrades noted that there was no information whatsoever in the Korean press or in the confidential bulletin about the entire campaign against Deng Xiaoping and the events in Tiananmen Square.

Apparently the Korean comrades are very uncomfortable about all the issues surrounding Deng Xiaoping. Events like that lead to reactions with individual Korean comrades which, even if hidden, show that there are no sincere feelings of friendship between the Koreans and Chinese.

About the Koreans, you can say they are afraid of the Chinese since the latter have already tried once in 1956 to depose Kim Il Sung.

The Chinese attitudes towards Kim Il Sung during the Cultural Revolution have created mistrust of Chinese policy [among the Koreans] as well. In addition, the dubious Chinese policy regarding the issue of Korea's reunification and the related demand for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea have frightened the Korean comrades. Overall, the DPRK is currently in a very tense political situation.

In their endeavor to make gains with the so-called "Third World," a reliable partner for their reunification policy, the Koreans have moved away from us [Soviet Union and allies] without getting closer to the Chinese side.

Actually, due to their own making, the DPRK has no true friends anymore. It is difficult and complicated to live through such a situation. There is only one way left: We (he referred to the states of the socialist community) must close ranks and help the Korean comrades in their search for a way out in order to have them realize who their real and true friends are. Yet, we have to seize the opportunity in cooperation with the closest friends. With this impression he has returned from his [CPSU] Party Congress [in Moscow].

Also, all multilateral and bilateral meetings on the levels of ministers and deputy ministers have to be used to influence the Korean comrades with patience and persistence.

Comrade Kryulin noted that among the closest fraternal friends only Bulgaria has had the opportunity-twice within a short period-to have a meeting [with Kim Il Sung] on the highest level. He voiced his great hopes that towards the end of the year, maybe in October, Kim Il Sung will come for his visit to Moscow. He was convinced that such a visit alone will be a major step forward for us.

My own assessment about the relations between the DPRK and the PRC was confirmed by Comrade Kryulin. He emphasized the following facts as being especially relevant:

The Chinese have always supported the Korean policy of "self-reliance," which now turns itself more and more against the Chinese themselves. Examples for this are DPRK positions on Chile and Angola. The recall of the Korean advisers [from Zaire] also must be seen as a move directed right against Chinese interests and the policy of DPRK military support for Zaire, as it was previously agreed by China, Korea, and Zaire.

Also, demonstrative participation by high-ranking DPRK delegations in party congresses of fraternal parties (Soviet Union, Hungary, Cuba, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, DKP [West German communist party], GDR) is against Chinese policy and furthers Chinese isolation in the international communist world movement.

The DPRK policy towards India does not correspond to Chinese interests as well.

According to information by the Soviet Embassy in the PR China, the Chinese have not published much about the DPRK recently. The Korean comrades take note of this and it makes them overall insecure.

Otherwise you cannot explain the huge propagandistic efforts currently made for the Chinese military ensemble visiting [Pyongyang] right now. Apparently there is a kind of "cajolery" involved here.

Regarding my statement that economic relations between the PR China and the DPRK improved last year, Comrade Kryulin opined one cannot state such in absolute terms. It is correct that with the oil pipeline the Chinese have created a substantial factor to further economic cooperation. Yet this factor will only become effective when they build this year the agreed chemical factory for oil refinery. The oil pipeline the DPRK took over with much propagandistic effort will not resume production for now. Such is due to substantial deficits in technical quality, as Soviet experts have assessed. In general, the Soviet economic experts came to the conclusion that economic relations between the PR China and the DPRK have made no relevant progress during the last two years. What the DPRK really needs for its economic development, the Chinese cannot deliver. The Chinese no longer deserve the reputation they had acquired in previous times, namely the exact fulfillment of contract requirements. The Soviet comrades have obtained information, including from many countries in the Third World and accordingly from the DPRK, that the Chinese comply insufficiently with their previously agreed trade obligations. This situation can be explained by the domestic situation in the PR China. There was economic chaos and no clear foreign trade concepts.

This gets further confirmed by the power struggle in the PRC during recent months. However, Comrade Kryulin stressed, a similar such situation existed in the DPRK.

Kim Il Sung was foremost concerned about political issues and evidently neglected the economic development of the country. The recent changes made, namely the dismissal of Comrade Kim Il as Prime Minister and his replacement by Pak Seong-cheol, might also turn many things towards the better in the DPRK's economic policy. Kim Il was a sick man and did not show up any more over the last two years. Pak Seong-cheol, in contrast, is a very energetic politician who also understands a lot about the economy.

Comrade Kryulin called Pak Seong-cheol a person who always committed to friendship with the Soviet Union. However, it will be important for future

developments which role will be played by Kim Il Sung's son and what his relationship with the Soviet Union will be. At this moment, nobody is in a position to make an assessment here.

Note:

Comrade Kryulin's remark on Korean coverage of events surrounding Deng Xiaoping referred to the period until the removal of Deng. Extensive information was provided on 9 April in "Nodong Sinmun" (see our telex 55/76 of 9 April).

Regarding his remark on Pak Seong-cheol: There are very different opinions on this issue among the fraternal ambassadors [here in Pyongyang]. We think there are no relevant indications to characterize Pak Seong-cheol as a close friend.

[Signed]

Everhartz

Ambassador

CC:

Comrade Mahlow - Central Committee

Comrade Moldt - Foreign Ministry

Comrade Berthold - Foreign Ministry

Ambassador