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Report from the GDR Embassy in the DPRK, “Note concerning a Conversation in Moscow on 12 May, 1976, with the Head of the Far East Department, Comrade Kapitsa, and the Head of the Southeast Asia Department, Comrade Sudarikov”

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Summary:

Summary of a discussion addressing the personality cult in the DPRK, its economy and its foreign relations, particularly with other socialist countries.

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Note

Concerning a Conversation in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Moscow on May 12, 1976,
with the Head of the Far East Department, Comrade [Mikhail Stepanovich] Kapitsa,
and the Head of the Southeast Asia Department, Comrade [Nikolay Georgievich] Sudarikov

This conversation was held following Comrade Kapitsa's request and served as an exchange of opinions about new aspects of the DPRK's domestic and foreign policies, especially with regard to the PRC

For my own assessment of the situation and the relationship between the DPRK and the PRC, I used the analysis we had crafted and reviewed together with the comrades from the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang.

At the same time, I also informed the Soviet comrades about a talk on the situation of the economy in the DPRK I had with Comrade Ri a day ago on the flight from Pyongyang to Moscow.

Other participants at the meeting [in Moscow] were Comrade Doerner, 1st Secretary of the GDR Embassy in the Soviet Union, and at a subsequent meal, the Ambassador, Comrade Goede, also attended. Both Soviet comrades agreed with the assessment I provided and emphasized from their perspective the following issues:

□□ The economic situation in the DPRK is indeed extremely difficult and complicated. The main reasons for this are the cult of personality [surrounding Kim Il Sung] and the subjectivism deriving from it.

□□

□□ There are new tendencies in Korean foreign policy. They are evident in the relationship with the PRC and in the apparently widely diverging positions of both states on important matters of foreign policy.

□□

Due to the uncertain attitudes of Chinese politicians concerning the deployment of American forces in South Korea, the DPRK has become very skeptical and distrustful of China.

The Soviet comrades emphasized that it must have hit the Korean comrades hard when they heard statements by American senators regarding their talks with Chinese politicians on this issue. On the other hand, [when] Deng Xiaoping was chosen as the main negotiating partner during Kim Il Sung's visit to the PR China in early 1975, this also had a very negative impact on relations between the DPRK and the PRC. Next to Kim Il Sung's signature on the agreements signed [between the DPRK and the PRC] is the signature of Deng Xiaoping.

Moreover, the Soviet comrades stressed [Korea's] other political differences with China, namely with regard to positions held by both states towards Chile, Angola, the Sahara question, and the Middle East conflict.

A very important event to gauge the relationship between the DPRK and China was the participation by representatives from the KWP at party congresses of the fraternal parties' congresses. These are indicators for the correctness of conclusions drawn from the results of the XXV CPSU Party Congress, according to which all efforts must be undertaken in collaboration with the fraternal parties to draw the DPRK closer to the Soviet Union and the states the USSR has fraternal relationships with. However, one should stay free of illusions and take into account the political dependence of the DPRK from the PR China.

Foreign trade between the DPRK and the PRC amounts to about one million Swiss francs. In light of the difficult economic situation in the DPRK, the Korean leadership will not undertake any step which might lead to a freeze of existing economic and scientific-technological relations with the PRC.

With regard to relations with the states of the Third World, the DPRK also faces increasing problems. They can be summarized by the fact that those states are mostly focused on other hotspots in the world like Angola, Sahara, etc. Thus the DPRK objective to focus their interests on Korean reunification is becoming less important.

Comrades Kapitsa and Sudarikov believe that Kim Il Sung will participate in the Colombo Conference [of the Non-Aligned Movement]. Like the Cuban comrades and the DR Vietnam, Kim will also position himself as a strong anti-imperialist. You can already say at this point that Kim Il Sung desires to play an important role at this conference.

Of the ten million dollars needed to fund this conference in Colombo, the DPRK alone contributed 500,000 dollars. The USSR will place major importance on this conference and is already active working to prepare for it. The most important Soviet goal is to move a qualitative step forward towards the formation of an Asian security system.

In summary, Comrade Kapitsa reiterated the position of the Soviet Foreign Ministry that every close fraternal state should use all opportunities and contacts at the minister and deputy minister level, as well as through mass organizations, parliaments, etc., to work with the respective organs of the DPRK. We have to explain our policy patiently and persistently and exert influence on the progressive development of the DPRK, especially to achieve that country's closer relationship with the fraternal states.

The Soviet comrades informed [me] that in all likelihood Kim Il Sung will visit the Soviet Union in October. Such a visit would generate many positive impulses for sincere and friendly relations between the DPRK and the socialist fraternal countries.

The Soviet comrades underlined the close fraternal collaboration between the comrades from the GDR (German Democratic Republic) Embassy in the USSR, and the Foreign Ministry. They repeatedly expressed their thanks for the same cordial relationship in place between the GDR Embassy and the Soviet Embassy in the DPRK.

[Signed]
Everhartz

CC:
1 x Comrade Mahlow
1 x Comrade Moldt
1 x Comrade Berthold
1 x Comrade Everhartz, Ambassador Pyongyang