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Congressman Solarz's Talks in North Korea

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Summary:

In his National Security Council memorandum to Brzezinski, Donald Gregg notes that Kim Il Sung appears conciliatory toward the South during his conversation with Solarz. Gregg then makes recommendations on how the US and South Korea should respond.

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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

August 15, 1980

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR:

ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI

FROM:

DONALD GREGG *DG*

SUBJECT:

Congressman Solarz's Talks
in North Korea

Solarz has sent you transcripts of his talks with Kim Il-sung and Kim Young-nam. I have read them with interest, and offer the following observations

- Solarz had done his homework quite well, and was not mousetrapped by the North Koreans.
- Kim Il-sung was far more forthcoming and flexible in his talk with Solarz than was Kim Young-nam, a lower ranking member of the Central Committee.
- Kim Il-sung gives the impression of being willing to make some significant gestures to the South, in order to get the talks going. These gestures would include, free trade, family and mail contacts, and the dropping of a previous pre-condition--that the ROK repeal its anti-communist law.
- Kim Chong-il, the putative replacement for his father, is already adopting these same positions, according to CIA reporting.
- If this is the case, we may be faced with a situation in which the North appears, through adroit playing of its cards, to be more moderate and flexible than the South. (I made this point to Ambassador Gleysteen, and he agrees.)
- One result of this could be a deterioration of our relations with the South, particularly if General Chon takes a very hard line toward the North's apparent concessions.
- The North stands on the verge of scoring a real propaganda coup. This is not Solarz's fault; the North obviously was going to put its very best foot forward in meeting the first US official to visit Pyongyang in 30 years.

- If the South responds with sincerity, there may be a chance to move North-South talks forward, thereby decreasing tension on the peninsula.
- We will have to be patient with the South, which is likely to be very suspicious of the carrots Kim now seems to hold forth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

You may wish to skim the Solarz talk with Kim Il-song, to pick up the flavor.

You may also wish to reply to the Solarz note. If you do, I would suggest that you

- Congratulate him on having done his Korean homework
- Urge him not to raise the issue of troop withdrawal from the South until we have a better reading of what Chon represents.
- Express hope that the apparent concessions made by Kim may lead to a lessening of tensions on the peninsula, but stress that the South must be given the chance to explore these possibilities thoroughly. If you would like such a letter to be drafted, please so indicate.

Draft letter ✓

No reply necessary _____

Attachments

2B.

2B

see note proposed by Madeline

has this been shared with the S. Koreans?
It shall be.
Ack Steve.