

February 1, 1968

Note on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the CSSR Embassy, Comrade Horshenevski, on 30 January 1968 between 15:00 and 15:40 hours

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Summary:

German and Czechoslovak diplomats exchange information on negotiations in Panmunjeom for the release of the USS Pueblo crew.

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German

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Translation - English

GDR Embassy to DPRK
Pyongyang, 01 February 1968

Note

on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the CSSR Embassy, Comrade Horshenevski, on 30 January 1968 between 15:00 and 15:40 hours

The conversation was arranged following a suggestion from the Czechoslovak side.

At the beginning we talked about the current situation. Both sides agreed that currently there are no indications whatsoever for further escalation - if one ignores the war-mongering propaganda of many Western press publications. In this context Comrade Horshenevski mentioned that there are some new developments in Panmunjeom. He himself has not been fully informed yet. However, Ambassador Holub intends to join our meeting and provide the latest news. Around 15:20 hours Comrade Holub joined us and reported the following:

On 29 January General Pak Jung-guk [Pak Jung Guk] received at 16:30 hours CSSR General Toman (head of the CSSR delegation in the Neutral Commission) and the acting head of the Polish delegation, General Jaroszinski. He informed them both about the DPRK government declaration of 27 January. Hereby he frequently mentioned an incident from 1963 when an American spy plane was shot down over DPRK territory. Comrade Pak emphasized that back then the United States apologized before the bodies of the dead crew were returned.

On

On 29 January Counter Admiral Smith sent a letter to General Pak. It expressed the following thoughts:

I

I received your information you transmitted through the members of the Neutral Commission. As my response to your questions, I refer to the television speech by President Johnson from 26 January where he clearly stated our position regarding the ship "Pueblo" and its crew. The crew of this vessel consists of sailors and officers of the U.S. Navy and two specialists from the hydrographic service. This ship is part of the American war navy. Accordingly its crew is protected by the Geneva Conventions from 1949 signed also by you, the DPRK. I have noted with relief how it was possible to receive information through unofficial channels that the crew is doing fine, the wounded receive medical attention, and the body of the killed individual is preserved. You also told me that a direct contact is possible. Therefore I request to tell me as soon as possible the names of the wounded and killed people from the "Pueblo" crew. In addition I request a meeting of the heads of the armistice commission from both sides.

On around 9:00 hours on 30 January Counter Admiral Smith forwarded another letter to General Pak Jung-guk. The content of this letter is as follows:

I

In order to achieve progress in solving the problem of interest to both sides, I propose an immediate meeting by the heads of the armistice commission from both sides. I propose to hold it as meeting four-eyes-only with only one translator from each side present. If the Korean side prefers to have one additional officer from each side around, we will have no objections to that. It must be arranged, however, that those do not sit at the negotiation table. I ask for your response.

Moreover, Smith stated in his letter that he believes in better results if the private meeting is held with translators only. If the Korean side, the letter continues, prefers however to hold an official meeting of the armistice commission, I am ready to participate. If there will be only a private meeting of the heads of the armistice

commission, this meeting should take place in the meeting rooms of the Neutral Commission in case the members of this commission agree. Finally Counter Admiral Smith wrote that he is fully aware not to expect an immediate response to his letter. However, he is asking to keep the delay between the transmission of this letter and the response as short as possible.

Comrade Holub stated that the members of the Czechoslovak group in the Neutral Commission interpret this letter as a further element towards a peaceful solution of the conflict. He applied the perspective that the American side has de facto agreed to the proposal to define the members of the ship crew as prisoners of war. The United States has also accepted the Korean proposal to hold direct talks about these issues.

In case there is new information coming out of Panmunjeom, we agreed to meet again on 31 January.

Jarck
Acting Ambassador

CC
1x State Secretary Hegen (Foreign Ministry)
1x Comrade Markowski (Central Committee)
1x Embassy/Secretariat

On 1 February I got informed by the 1st Secretary of the CSSR Embassy that General Pak told Smith he agrees to a private meeting, with one translator and one additional officer each from both sides present.