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**Information about the Central Committee Plenum of
the Korean Workers Party between 28 June and 3
July 1967**

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Summary:

Report about the plenum of the North Korean Labor Party on 3 July 1967 concerning North Korean economic and defense affairs, and the 1967 Gapsan Faction purge. North Korean reunification efforts are also discussed.

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GDR Embassy to the DPRK

Pyongyang, 4 August 1967

I n f o r m a t i o n

about the Central Committee Plenum of the Korean Workers Party
between 28 June and 3 July 1967

1. The plenum was convened under the chairmanship of Comrade Kim Il Sung. It was primarily concerned "with measures to consequentially implement the decisions of the party conference" (from the announcement of the plenum in Rodong Sinmun, 4 July 1967).

Comrade Kim Il Sung gave the main speech at the plenum. However, so far neither this presentation, nor a report by the [KWP] politburo, nor any other speeches or contributions for discussion have been published.

Besides the [notes from the] talk by Ambassador [Horst] Brie with Central Committee Secretary Comrade Pak Jeong-guk (see our note from 8 July 1967), for the preparation of this information we only had at our disposal the Rodong Sinmun editorial from 4 July 1967 and some other press commentaries. Therefore this information represents just some preliminary thoughts and a summary of facts. It cannot be viewed as a comprehensive overview on the overall issue of the plenum.

2.1 The phrase regarding the plenum's topic, "measures to consequentially implement the decisions of the party conference" as quoted in 1., is becoming more concrete when viewed in the context of quotes such as, for instance, the following:

"The course of the parallel development of economy and defense - this is the embodiment of the juche[1] position of our party which has shouldered the full responsibility for the implementation of the Korean revolution. This course expresses the revolutionary position of our party. The party fights under any circumstances against the aggressive plans of the imperialists, spearheaded by the American imperialists. It decisively represents the interests of the revolution". (Rodong Sinmun, 5 July 1967)

Or take this quote:

"The development of the situation in recent years clearly demonstrated the correctness, the wisdom, and the prescience of our party. It secured the parallel development of economy and defense in order to timely strengthen the power of our military." (Rodong Sinmun, 18 July 1967)

And another one:

"This line and the policy of the party is embodying Kim Il Sung's revolutionary ideas. It is the application of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete reality of our country and the exclusive guiding compass of the Korean revolution. It is the ideological, theoretical, and practical weapon enabling us in the absolutely correct manner to resolve the questions posed by our revolution and our build-up." (Rodong Sinmun, 5 July 1967).

This continues later on:

"All that (refers to the unity of the people and achieved successes in economy and defense, D.[ietrich] J.[arck]) is convincing evidence that the course outlined by Comrade Kim Il Sung at the party conference on parallel development of economy and defense, as well as the entire policy, constitutes the most correct Marxist-Leninist line to accelerate the revolution and the build-up in our country." (Rodong Sinmun, 5 July 1967).

2.2 If one views these quotes in the context of statements made by Central Committee Secretary Pak Jeong-guk to Ambassador Brie, the following conclusions appear to be warranted in our opinion:

- the main issue of the plenum was the controversy whether the parallel development of economy and defense the way it is currently conducted (35 percent of the budget going into defense) is correct and necessary.

- the disappearance of some members, respectively candidates, of the Politburo (Pak Kim Chol, Lee Jo Sun, Kim Do Man, Kim Chun Chu [sic] and other officials can apparently only be explained this way: they held positions in contrast to what was outlined above - this is, divergent opinions about the need of an extraordinary strong emphasis on the defense industry -, and they were unable to get their opinions approved at the plenum.

2.3 Maybe other aspects play a role as well regarding the purge of the functionaries listed above. At this point we cannot make assessments here. Yet we are thinking of issues related to the cult of personality surrounding Kim Il Sung.

Other aspects are contained in press material published about the plenum. They, and their future development, have to be studied further and continuously.

3.1. At the party conference (October 1966) the following phrase was used to define proportions between economy and defense: "[...] We have to provide more means for solidifying our defense, even so if we have to somewhat calibrate the speed of development in our economy". (brochure edition of Kim Il Sung's speech [at the party conference], p. 64, Russian version)

The material we have does not contain any such statements about the subordination of the economy under defense. However, due to the overall more militant course pursued for a couple of months, apparently this basic direction got confirmed by the plenum.

"As demonstrated at the plenum, we have to fight a focused struggle. Given the context of new warmongering machinations by the American imperialists, we have to devote much attention to defense in the future as well; also we have to speed up the construction of a socialist economy." (announcement about the plenum, Rodong Sinmun, 4 July 1967).

3.2 In some text passages, the plenum emphasizes the need to accelerate economic development and to not allow the latter to fall behind the build-up of defense. It can be inferred from this that there have to be reasons for making such statements, like that economic development is actually lagging behind.

The plenum leaves no doubt that even increasing economic growth will serve the purpose of defense:

"If you do not secure nowadays a comprehensive strengthening of the country's economic power, the military course of our party cannot be fully implemented. Neither can the modernization of the army, the arming of the entire people, and the turning of the country into a fortress. It is also impossible to secure the monolithically solidified defense ability of the country." (Rodong Sinmun, 18 July 1967).

4.1 Without doubt, the entire issue of "South Korea" has played anything but a minor role at the plenum. It is highly likely that there also existed different positions about the "how" and "when" of reunification. For instance, the now disappeared Politburo member Ri Hyo-sun - who was in charge of the South Korea department in the Central Committee - said to the former Soviet ambassador during the latter's farewell visit: "Nobody knows when reunification will become possible. Only a revolutionary movement in South Korea can lead to a change in the situation."

However, for quite some time now the official version is that reunification will still occur during the lifetime of the current generation (i.e. still under the leadership of Kim Il Sung).

4.2 Since April and May 1967 the course has become more militant, in particular concerning the "how" of reunification. This gets confirmed by the material published in preparation of the plenum, as well as by the plenum itself.

So far this course was most clearly expressed in Kim Il Sung's speech in Hjanan [sic] at the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the successful attack by Korean partisans on Japanese border units in Bocheonbo in the Baekdusan Mountains (see our confidential information Nr. 71/66).

At the occasion of a comprehensive exercise of the Korean People's Army [KPA], the head of the Political Main Department of the KPA, Comrade O Din U, stated the following:

"The Korean People's Army is conducting strenuous struggle in order to prepare the revolutionary event, the liberation of South Korea and the unification of the fatherland, through a high level of combat readiness". (Rodong Sinmun, 9 June 1967).

This course had its logical sequence in the plenum. The KWP central organ Rodong Sinmun wrote the following in its editorial devoted to the plenum:

"The struggle for implementation of decisions made by the party conference ... this is also the struggle for the expulsion of the American imperialists from South Korea, the struggle for the liberation of the suffering South Korean people ..." (Rodong Sinmun, 5 July 1967).

5. Besides those issues, the material published in the context of the plenum also contains some hints to certain questions of the KWP foreign policy course; something that must not be left unnoticed.

5.1 As in the past, self-reliance and independence get emphasized very strongly.

"As we understand economic construction, it means the build-up of an independent socialist economy. If you are dependent on others economically, then the option and principle of self-defense is the same as moot than the opportunity to secure for itself political independence." (Rodong Sinmun, 18 July 1967).

5.2. This thesis gets phrased even more clearly pertaining to relations with so-called great powers:

"If you are lagging behind others economically, then you cannot annihilate the bowing before the great powers. You cannot guarantee the work towards the implementation of juche to the fullest extent." (Rodong Sinmun, 18 July 1967)

Another passage from this article cited above refers to the international situation of the DPRK. There it is stated:

"As a result of the increasingly aggressive machinations of the American imperialists, the international situation has become severely aggravated. In all regions of Asia the danger of expansion of war is growing. In our country such a serious situation was created as we had it at the eve of the triggering of the war by the American imperialists in the year of 1950."

No doubt, this characterization of the DPRK's situation serves propagandistic purposes. However, if you place it in the context of the following quotes, it is going to result in a dangerous nationalistic course which does not exclude the option of adventurist activities.

"Current conditions are such that the American imperialist aggressors make strenuous efforts not to aggravate relations with the major countries. They frantically attempt to subjugate the divided and small countries one after the other. Therefore it is imperative to have one's own strong defensive power based on self-defense and bolstered by a firm independent economic foundation."

Another passage continues like this:

"A war is not capable to turn everything to ashes. And may it [everything] even be destroyed - however, if you have a foundation and experiences in rebuilding, you can build up even better." (Rodong Sinmun, 18 July 1967).

5.4. Other passages emphasize the great importance of the development of the economy, both for the "independent unification of the fatherland" and the "fulfillment of our international duty", this is the support of the "anti-imperialist front in the entire world."

6. The main measures to fulfill the tasks of the plenum are characterized in press publications as follows:

- improving discipline and the morale of the workers through ideological education with special emphasis on the traditions of the anti-Japanese partisans;

- "proletarianization" and "revolutionization", this is education of all people - no matter from what classes and social strata they come from - in the spirit of the course of the party;

- strengthening of the militia and improving its training;
- consequent continuation of the Chollima Movement

Furthermore, some concrete instructions for various parts of the domestic economy are listed like, for instance, development of the construction material industry, as well as of fruit growing and vegetable gardening, et cetera.

This again has to be interpreted from the perspective that, ultimately, the economy will not be developed in order to meet the continuously growing demands of the population - but that it will serve the [build-up of] defense and the outlined course of reunification.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The plenum is representing a continuation of the party conference. It had the assignment to accelerate the implementation of the party conference's decisions, and to eliminate any existing resistance against them. The plenum is an active defense of the course of Kim Il Sung.

7.2 Conflicts there mainly concerned problems of subordinating economic development under the build-up of defense in order to facilitate the expulsion of the Americans from South Korea and the reunification of the country still during Kim Il Sung's lifetime; and even so, if there do not exist conditions for a revolutionary uprising of the population in South Korea.

We are currently unaware of the positions held by the those members expelled [from the Politburo].

7.3 The plenum again fully reiterated the role of the army in political and economic life. As far as we know, none of the personnel changes has so far affected any of the leading military officials.

[signed]

Jarck

1st Secretary

CC:

2x [GDR Foreign Ministry] Far East Department /2

1x SED Central Committee, International Relations Department

1x Embassy

[1] Juche means to stick to the following principle: To solve independently all questions of the revolution and the build-up, in accordance with realities in its own country and mainly by its own forces. It signifies a creative application of the general truths of Marxism-Leninism and the international revolutionary movement in accordance with historical conditions and national specifics of your own country. It means that everybody is responsible himself for his own affairs and decides them independently until the very end. (quote from brochure edition of Kim Il Sung's speech at the party conference, Foreign Language Literature Publication House, Pyongyang 1966, p. 97, Russian version/[translated by] D[ietrich]. J [arck].)