

May 30, 1984

**Stenographic Record of Conversation between Erich
Honecker and Kim Il Sung**

Citation:

"Stenographic Record of Conversation between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung", May 30, 1984, Wilson Center Digital Archive, SAPMO-BA, DY 30, 2460. Translated by Grace Leonard. <https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/113197>

Summary:

Stenographic record of the first meeting between Kim Il Sung and Erich Honecker upon the former's 1984 official visit to the GDR. This is the morning session of 30 May 1984. Kim does most of the talking. Kim Il Sung discussed the economic situation in North Korea, objectives and problems of energy generation, the educational system. He asked the GDR for labor and cooperation in the education of specialists. He wanted to sign a long-term agreement of economic cooperation along with the intended friendship treaty. Kim Il Sung also evaluated the military situation in South Korea, explaining the problems of negotiations and reunification with the South. Honecker proposed the creation of an agreement towards economic and scientific cooperation between GDR and North Korea.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Stenographic record

Official friendship visit to the GDR by the Party and State Delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea led by Kim Il Sung, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party and President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

First day of meetings: Wednesday, 30 May 1984

Start time: 9:30 a.m.

Erich Honecker: Dear Comrade Kim Il Sung! Dear Korean comrades who have accompanied Comrade Kim Il Sung here. Permit me to say as we officially begin our exchange of views that again we all welcome you to this friendship visit to the GDR in the name of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, the State Council, the Council of Ministers of the German Democratic Republic, and in the name of all of the people of the GDR.

At this moment we feel transported back in time and think of our trip to the People's Republic of Korea, the warm welcome that awaited us as we arrived there. I am not betraying any secrets when I stress how much we have looked forward to this opportunity to renew our acquaintance in the GDR. Our relations have developed very well since then and have reached a new level. We are entirely convinced that our exchange of views here in Berlin and the rest of your stay in the German Democratic Republic will enhance the friendship, cordiality, and assertive community between our two Parties, states, and peoples.

Again, a warm welcome, dear Comrade Kim Il Sung and dear Korean comrades and friends! Now, as we agreed, I would like to give you the floor.

Kim Il Sung: Thank you very much. First I would like to thank you, Comrade Erich Honecker, for these warm words. I am paying this visit in return for the visit seven years ago, in December 1977, when Comrade Erich Honecker visited our country. At that time you told me that we would sign a Friendship Pact in Berlin. I also hoped that we would be able to sign this pact one year later here in Berlin, but it was not to be. I could not visit that soon because of the situation that developed in our country. I ask your pardon, therefore, that I could not make this visit until somewhat later. I am very pleased that I am able to visit you here today.

When we arrived, you, esteemed Comrade Erich Honecker, and also the leading comrades of your Party and state leadership, greeted us warmly and the people of the German Democratic Republic made us feel very welcome, despite the rain. I believe that signifies the feelings of friendship your people have for our people. The people of the GDR have proved in this manner that they stand solidly behind the Central Committee of your Party with you at the top. I believe that this is a great success for your Party.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all of my comrades and on my own behalf to offer our sincere thanks for your warm reception and to pass on to you fraternal greetings from the Central Committee of our Party and our government to the Central Committee of the SED, the government, and the people of the German Democratic Republic. I am extremely pleased that we are meeting here today to conduct these talks.

I would like then first to address our country's situation and relations between our two countries. I would like to tell you about the situation in South Korea and in the countries that surround our country. I will take this opportunity to personally provide you information about the non-aligned movement and other issues.

So I would like to tell you about the situation in our country, especially the issues that came up in our country after your visit. Since then there have been exchanges of many high-level delegations, which has improved the exchange of information between our countries.

After your visit to our country, we held the VI Party Congress and had many events related to the festivities surrounding the 35th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. You sent high-level delegations to this Party Congress and to the festivities. You will be familiar with the situation in our country through these delegations.

After your visit to our country, we held the VI Party Congress of our Party, as I already said. We took stock at the VI Party Congress. We were able to determine that we have successfully had three great revolutions. We had the ideological, technical, and cultural revolutions. We assessed this at the VI Party Congress and set out new goals.

We also set forth new goals in the area of the economy and put forth a new proposal for accomplishing the peaceful unification of our country. We discussed issues of the movement of non-aligned countries and issues of sovereignty for the whole world. During our stock-taking, we were able to assess that we have successfully implemented the political/ideological program.

It was also found that the entire population has rallied solidly around the Central Committee of the Soviet Union and, with the policies of the Party, is armed to build socialism even more successfully. This is also important because our country is divided and the other part is dominated by US imperialists. It is therefore very important for us to make sure that capitalism does not penetrate our ideology. I will summarize once more: it was very important to train the population in the spirit of patriotism and class ideology so that the entire population could successfully build socialism. In short, the entire population and all Party members are in a good ideological position. That is, the entire population and all Party members are prepared to reject any type of anti-communist propaganda.

The struggle for the organizational life of the entire population was also bolstered. Party members must organize their Party life well; the workers must consolidate their unions politically and organizationally, and all of our youth work in their youth organization. The farmers are enhancing communal life in their villages.

We have obtained excellent results arming and training all of our people in politics. Sometimes it was also necessary to exercise mutual criticism during the training. This is how all of the political work was conducted successfully.

Unity and solidarity in the ideological realm between the people and the Party were consolidated by reinforcing the ideological work and by studying the ideology of communism. We enhanced the struggle for ideological training.

I'd like to address the economic situation. Ten perspective goals for the 80's to 1990 were identified at our VI Party Congress; these goals testify to the fact that we want the economic level of our country to approach the level of developed nations. The goals are: to produce 15 million tons of steel; to increase coal production to 120 million tons; to increase energy production to 12 billion kWh, cement production to 20

million tons, production of chemical fertilizers to 7 million tons, production of non-ferrous heavy metals to 1.5 million tons, and production of textiles to 1.5 billion meters. Furthermore, to catch 5 million tons of fish, to produce 15 million tons of grain, and to reclaim 300,000 ha [hectars] of marshland.

If we have achieved all of these prospective goals at the end of the 80's, then we can say that we have also nearly reached the level of the developed nations. In order to achieve these ambitious goals, the Central Committee first posed the task of reclaiming marshland from the sea. In our country, there is a very limited amount of usable land, we have very little of it, only 2 million ha. But if you don't count the area devoted to fruit orchards, there are only 1.5 million ha of usable land, because 200,000 mountainside ha must also be deducted. But we can produce 15 million tons of grain with these 1.5 million ha. We have already achieved grain production as high as 9.5 million tons, now that we are applying the methods of intensification in the countryside. Now it is important for us to reclaim these 300,000 ha of marshland, because with this land we can achieve an additional 3 million tons of grain production. This marshland is flat, and we can farm it mechanically—we have already begun.

But what is most important is that later we also have the requisite water resources for this new land. For this reason we have begun to build the barrage¹ at Nampo. When we have built this lock, then we can bring water from the Daedong, the great river that flows through Pyongyang, to the marshland. We have made it a goal to finish this lock by October of next year, and it is realistic. Naturally this is a major planned construction. The entire Party and all of the members of the army are engaged in bringing it to fruition. But when we have accomplished this task, then we can also achieve grain production of 15 million tons. This is why the first task is to resolve the issue of water supply. We have encapsulated this in the slogan, "Rice is Communism!" All of our Party members are now engaged in the struggle to achieve these goals.

The second most important task we put forth is to achieve our goal for non-ferrous heavy metals. We have rich mineral resources: copper, lead, and zinc. We came up with the solution at the Central Committee Plenum in 1982. First we must achieve 1.5 million tons of non-ferrous heavy metals and then attack the rest. We made this resolution in August 1982. Within a year we unleashed the battle and for this reason we were able to reach 1.5 million tons. That is, we built a metallurgical plant with a capacity of 1.5 million tons. We accomplished this in less than a year. Including this mining, we can obtain an additional approximately 700,000 to 800,000 tons of ore. Next year we want to recover 200,000 tons of copper.

If we have largely achieved our goals in terms of nonferrous heavy metals in the next year, we will also have solved the currency issue. While we are still in debt to West European countries, next year we will be able to pay it all off. We are not very deeply in debt to the West European countries. The total is about 700 to 800 million, and this is owed to France, Austria, Sweden, and Denmark. Not so much for the other West European countries. This year we will make substantial re-payments and next year we will have paid everything back. The world market price for one ton of zinc has risen to about 720 pounds. Once we have largely solved the currency issue, we will introduce the required facilities for metallurgy, mining, coal mining, and the electrical industry.

Altering our domestic structure will play a large role in steel production, for instance, building silicon plants. We are already producing some, but it does not satisfy the engineering industry. We must also produce stainless steel pipes. We need a plant for producing high voltage lines. If we bolster this industry, then we can increase steel production and better develop the engineering industry.

Naturally we have rich deposits of hard coal. There are 15 billion (?) tons of our

prized brown coal. Thus far we have no experience in producing brown coal, because in the past we have only mined anthracite. Mining in Anju has already begun to yield this brown coal.

On the occasion of my visit to European socialist countries, I would also like to address cooperation with these nations and their assistance in exploiting our brown coal deposits. Our geographical position is a bit complicated because the region with the brown coal is immediately surrounded by the sea. We have already been able to set up a mining operation with a capacity of 7 million tons, but at least 30 to 40 million tons must be mined; this is within the realm of the possible. We are now in the process of acquiring the experience we need to mine this region. We are convinced that we can achieve the goals that we have set for ourselves if we obtain appropriate support from construction engineers from socialist countries.

In terms of the production of energy: we have good water resources since it rains a lot in our country. We will therefore build both hydroelectric plants and heating and power stations. We have the potential to produce 70 billion kWh of current through hydroelectric power. We are building a hydroelectric plant with China on the Yalu River. Other mid-size and small hydroelectric plants will be built in the countryside, as well. We will have hydroelectric plants available to the degree that we resolve the coal-mining issue.

During my visit to the Soviet Union, I also made agreements with our Soviet comrades to build nuclear power plants. We are convinced that when we have accomplished this task, we will certainly be able to produce 100 billion kWh of energy. And once we have done this, developing agriculture is no longer a problem. Once we have solved the industry problem, nothing else will be an issue.

Naturally there are also problems in the area of the economy. This is foremost a lack of workers.

Because we are confronted with imperialism, many of our young people must go into the army. We must have 400,000 to 450,000 soldiers, because the South Korean army has 700,000 soldiers. Then there are also about 43,000 American soldiers stationed in South Korea. Although this is a great burden for us, we cannot reduce the strength of our army. We must resolve the labor problem using mechanization and automation, thus freeing up workers.

We ask for your support in resolving this problem, because we will resolve the labor issue if we automate at all in mechanical engineering and in industry. And if we have enough labor, we could create numerous mines and even strengthen the other industries. Other countries might have excess labor, but we don't. We are now considering how we can automate by trading with you and with your support, and we would also like to have cadre train with you in this field.

Now, these difficulties that are cropping up now are difficulties that can occur as development progresses.

Just as you are confronted with capitalism, we are also confronted with capitalism. We must therefore also show the South Koreans the superiority of socialism, just as you show the West Germans. It is also important to influence the entire South Korean population so that they want socialism and are in favor of unifying the country.

With respect to the cultural revolution, I told you about this, esteemed Comrade Erich Honecker, when you visited us. There are no major issues to clarify. We have introduced 11-year compulsory education. We have a total of 3.5 million children ranging in age from infants to high school age. Overall we have some 8.5 million

being educated. Our current population is 17.7 million. That is, about half of the population is being educated at this time.

Naturally this is a great burden for us. But we have to take this upon ourselves in order to develop. All people must have a high degree of technical ability in order to build socialism and develop. If we accomplish these tasks, then we can train the people in the socialist sense. The issue is that each person strengthens his socialist lifestyle so that his neighbor can build socialism even better. People who are now less than 60 years of age have learned the lessons of middle school. We have set forth the solution that all people should reach the level of high school graduate. Then we can completely resolve the issue of the national cadre.

We have not had less success in the area of the cultural revolution. When the country was liberated, we Koreans had only 12 high school graduates. Now there are some 1.2 million high school graduates. Training of the national cadre is the most important issue in Third World nations. We have resolved this issue.

As far as the economic situation is concerned, we must and we can achieve the perspective goals for the 80's in order to progress further. This is the situation. But we will have to work hard.

I would like to tell you briefly about the situation with South Korea. The situation with South Korea is very complicated and also very dangerous. Every year the American armies conduct a major military exercise. They conducted these exercises even prior to the Reagan era, but since Reagan took office this has grown. Last year 100,000 South Korean soldiers took part in this military exercise in addition to the American soldiers. We were a bit shocked that the Americans mobilized 100,000 South Koreans. We declared a state of emergency. This year the Americans mobilized more than 200,000 soldiers for this exercise. These exercises were "Team Spirit '83" and "Team Spirit '84".

The Americans stationed in Okinawa participated, as did those stationed in Hawaii. But many also came from the US. It was a major military exercise. But in contrast to last year, this year we did not declare a state of emergency. Our enemies threaten both us and the South Korean people with these exercises, and therefore there is this tension day in and day out on the demarcation line.

We have to take countermeasures every time the enemies conduct such military exercises, and this is a great hindrance for our production. Since the number of soldiers in our army is smaller than that of the South Korean army, we have to mobilize many workers in these cases. But when the workers are mobilized, one work shift is dropped for up to one and a half months per year. That is a great loss.

We proposed conducting tri-partite talks between us, the US, and South Korea this year in order to reduce tensions. The goal of these talks should be to replace the armistice with a peace treaty with the US. We proposed a nonaggression pact to South Korea. We hope that this will help to improve the tense situation, as well. And then the armies for both sides would be reduced and the Americans would withdraw from South Korea. Our opponent is using the pretext that we would attack South Korea, and says that this is why the Americans have to remain in South Korea. There is constant talk in the US House of Representatives that our military forces are stronger than those of South Korea—the purpose of this talk is to deceive the people of the world. In truth, it is not even possible for us to have more armed forces than our opponents. We have a population of 17 million, while South Korea has a population of 30 million. Just looking at these figures it is clear that it is impossible for us to be stronger militarily.

Just looking at the weapons potential, our opponent gets all of its weapons from the US. And then there is the US army that is stationed in South Korea. And they even have nuclear weapons there. It is very plain that we are not militarily superior to them. But they use the pretext that we are stronger militarily in order to build up their weapons even more. And it would be impossible for us to attack them. This is all just a pretext for them to continue to occupy South Korea. South Korea is nothing more to the Americans than a colony and a military support point. The Americans never intend to leave South Korea. When Carter was in office, sometimes he said that there would be a partial withdrawal of American troops from South Korea. But Reagan has said that there should be even more American troops in South Korea. This is another reason we proposed tri-partite talks. We wanted to use the proposal to expose the American pretext. But this is precisely why the Americans have not agreed to our proposal yet. But their official statement is that they are against such tri-partite talks.

Their position has been that only two sides, that is, North and South Korea, should hold talks and negotiations. But in reality the South Korean authorities have no right to do so. In the past they opposed an armistice. They didn't want to sign it. In reality only we and the Americans are signatories. This is why it's completely clear that only the people who were signatories should hold the talks, but not those who opposed it. This means that when they say that both parts of Korea should hold talks, they will not replace the armistice with a peace treaty and they also oppose a statement of nonaggression. The commander of the South Korean Army is in reality an American. They are the unified military forces of the US and South Korea. This is why if talks are conducted with South Korea's president, it will never be possible for the armistice to be replaced with a peace treaty and for the soldiers on both sides to be reduced to a strength level of 100,000 to 200,000 troops. In reality our opponents want two Koreas and do not want to accept peaceful unification of the country.

The Americans now demand that if tri-partite talks are even to be conducted, the Chinese should also take part, so there would be four sides. The Chinese say they will not take part in such talks. The Chinese do not want to be drawn into the Korea issue. When Reagan was in China, he proposed conducting quadripartite negotiations, but China was opposed to this.

So the Korean situation looks like this. The struggle by the population of South Korea is currently intensifying. In the past the South Korean populace either feared the Americans or worshiped them. These two tendencies are in decline. The South Korean populace fought for democratization in the past. They did not fight for national sovereignty; they just demanded it. The demand for sovereignty would mean extricating itself from US domination. The young people and students of South Korea are currently waging an energetic battle for this. The Chun Doo-hwan regime is even worse than the Park Chung Hee regime. There are dogs that are somewhat belligerent and others that are downright vicious. This Chun Doo-hwan regime is like a vicious dog. The US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the armed forces in South Korea fought with Chun Doo-hwan against the Vietnamese during the Vietnam War. Chun Doo-hwan held major fundraisers for Reagan during the election when he was running for president.

When Reagan became president, he invited Chun Doo-hwan to further increase military forces in South Korea.

Once Chun Doo-hwan took power, the democratic parties in South Korea were dissolved under the pretext that they were our inventions. Some of the chairmen of the democratic parties were arrested, some were expelled. These representatives of democracy have thought about things since then and now say that there could be negotiations if they were still active as a party there. The entire population and even many Catholics in South Korea are unleashing a vigorous struggle against the Chun Doo-hwan regime. There is a rumor that the Americans are now considering replacing

Chun Doo-hwan because the current trend in South Korea is to fight against Chun Doo-hwan.

In a word, there is little chance of reunification coming about as long as the Americans occupy South Korea. It is necessary to put forth proposals for peace over and over again in order to show the world that the US does not want this reunification. This is also necessary in order to encourage the South Korean people in their struggle. In the past we made a proposal for peaceful reunification, and, as I said, this year we proposed conducting tri-partite talks. So much for the situation in South Korea.

I would like to take this opportunity, esteemed Comrade Erich Honecker, to express to your Central Committee and your government our most sincere gratitude for your great understanding and active support for the fight to bring about the reunification of our country.

I would now like to turn to relations between our two Parties. Another reason we are visiting you is to consolidate friendly relations between the two Parties and to learn from the successes you have had in building a developed socialist society. At the same time, we have come to sign the Treaty of Friendship we spoke about in Pyongyang. Signing this treaty will be very encouraging, not only for socialist countries, non-aligned countries, and Third World nations, but also for all peace-loving peoples in the world. And this is very necessary in order to strengthen cooperation in the economic realm.

Our comrades have come at your invitation, at the invitation of the Central Committee and your government. It is both a great honor for us and a great joy that we are meeting here in Berlin. We have no differences of opinion with your Party and your government. It is necessary that we band together in order to reinforce the building of socialism and to assure peace in the entire world. I am in favor not only of signing the Treaty of Friendship, but also the long-term agreement on economic issues so that we can demonstrate socialism's superiority to capitalism.

The Central Committee and the government of our country actively support your people's struggle as the outposts of socialism in the West. We actively support all of your proposals with regard to security in Europe and in the world. Our challenge is also that we obtain peace and strengthen the building of socialism. This is how we can assure peace in the entire world, because the only way we can continue to build socialism is under peaceful conditions.

With regard to relations between our two nations, I do not want to neglect mentioning that you also provided our people material and moral support during the three years of war in Korea. We are also very happy that you took in so many of our orphaned children and raised them as cadre. We are also grateful that you supported building up our country after the war ended, especially building up Hamheung. We are also grateful that you actively support us today on every issue.

I'd like once again to take this opportunity in the name of the Central Committee of our Party and in the name of all of the delegation members to express our sincere thanks for your active support for us in every area. I also believe that we will take the time on some other occasion to tell you about the issue of the movement of non-aligned nations and to speak with you about developments in countries in the region.

Erich Honecker: Thank you. If you permit, we will continue the talks after a short break and tell you about developments in the GDR and about problems we face in the further build-up of socialism, in realizing the resolutions of our X Party Congress.

In our country, the rent for one square meter of residential area is 0.80 to 1.20 M; in the Federal Republic of Germany it is 11.00 to 30.00 DM.

Comrade Kim Il Sung, I notice that we have exceeded the time we had allotted. I propose that we talk about the development of mutual relations at another time. We consider them positive, but think they can be expanded.

I have here the draft of an agreement between the governments of the Korean Democratic People's Republic and the German Democratic Republic on economic and scientific cooperation during the period up to 1990. I propose that our comrades get together and work out the final text—this would be Comrades Reichelt and Müller on our side. Then the Prime Ministers will sign it. We have fulfilled the goals of the last long-term agreement.

We have achieved a great increase, and we accept your proposals, also those on specialization and cooperation, which we take as the foundation for completing our Treaty of Friendship in the economic arena.

If you will permit, I would like to close now. We can continue our discussion after the afternoon break.

Kim Il Sung: Thank you very much. I also thank you in the name of my delegation for the detailed report. We wholly and completely support the measures you have undertaken to maintain peace in Europe and in the world.

In addition, you spoke about relations between the two German nations. That was an important and very interesting issue. What you said was precisely correct.

Erich Honecker: We will meet again, then, and will also be together all day tomorrow.

¹ Translator's note: German word used in source document can also mean lock or sluice