

September 10, 1956
Memorandum of a Conversation with DPRK
Ambassador to the USSR Ri Sang-jo

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Summary:

Ri Sang-jo expresses to Shcherbakov his concerns about the problems within the Korean Workers' Party and indicates that external help is needed.

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

with Cde. Ri Sang-jo, DPRK ambassador in Moscow and candidate member of the Central Committee of the Workers Party of Korea, held in the CPSU CC Department for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties on 10 September 1956

Cde. Ri Sang-jo asked that his thanks be sent to the CPSU CC for the help given the Korean Workers' Party and said that he basically wants to report the same thing that he said in a conversation with Cde. Fedorenko and wrote in a letter to Cde. Khrushchev. In addition, said Ri Sang-jo, I sent a letter to Cde. Mao Zedong.

Ri Sang-jo then expressed the opinion that at the present time the issues with which the party is now faced cannot be solved by the internal forces of the Workers' Party itself. It is difficult to generate criticism in conditions when honest, good communists are expelled from the party for criticism. For example, all critical comments about the cult of personality are viewed as anti-party statements. I hope, said Ri Sang-jo, that the CPSU and the Communist Party of China will look into Korean affairs together and help correct the current abnormal situation in the KWP.

There are many shortcomings in the Workers' Party, said Ri Sang-jo, and this is what is to be criticized. Cde. Kim Il Sung has by no means given an account of the CPSU CC recommendations to the KWP CC. I know about this from Central Committee members. At a conversation in the CPSU CC in July of this year, Pak Jeong-ae [Pak Jong Ae] and Nam Il were present besides Kim Il Sung; the remaining Central Committee members do not fully know the substance of the conversation. Kim Il Sung, said Ri Sang-jo, admitted to the CPSU CC the correctness of the comments addressed to the KWP leadership but on return to Korea he began to act to the contrary.

Ri Sang-jo reported that he intended to send a letter to the KWP CC Plenum with a description of his point of view on the state of affairs in the party, but Nam Il [Nam Il] informed him that Kim Il Sung's report at the Central Committee Plenum was well prepared and on the advice of several Korean comrades, said Ri Sang-jo, I did not send this letter.

Ri Sang-jo stated that, as Nam Il informed him, the CPSU CC letter, which discussed the statements of several Soviet communists after the CPSU Twentieth Congress (meaning the CPSU CC letter about the results of the discussion and fulfillment of the decisions of the Twentieth Congress), was described at the KWP CC plenum. In connection with the one-sided interpretation of the CPSU CC letter by Nam Il, Ri Sang-jo asked that he be familiarized with the contents of this letter.

The contents of that part of the CPSU CC letter about the results of the discussion and fulfillment of the decisions of the Twentieth Congress in which it talked about the individual incorrect statements that occurred after the Twentieth Congress were explained to Ri Sang-jo.

Cde. Ri Sang-jo was told that his report about the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee Plenum and also the information that we have from the Communist Party of China Central Committee about the transfer of four senior DPRK officials to the PRC and the reports of our ambassador in Pyongyang deserve the most serious attention. We are alarmed by all the events that have taken place. A CPSU delegation to the Communist Party of China Eighth Congress has instructions to discuss this issue with the Korean delegation and talk with the Chinese comrades about the situation in the Korean Workers' Party.

Ri Sang-jo was told that, as he obviously knows, during Cde. Kim Il Sung's visit to

Moscow, a conversation was held with him in the CPSU CC Presidium. Cde. Kim Il Sung stated that he agreed with the CPSU CC advice about the need to overcome the cult of personality in the DPRK and develop intra-party democracy and self-criticism.

In connection with the fact that Cde. Ri Sang-jo is raising the question about the need for advice and recommendations on the part of the CPSU and the Communist Party of China to the leadership of the Workers' Party about intra-party issues, he was told that in principle fraternal communist parties can give advice and recommendations, but it needs to be borne in mind that the Korean Workers' Party is an independent party. Therefore there cannot be interference in its affairs and internal life, and the complexity of the situation needs to be understood when determining the steps and measures by the CPSU and CCP with regard to advice to the Korean Workers' Party.

Cde. Ri Sang-jo then said that it would be useful to speak out in the press in whatever form, where the shortcomings in the activity of the Workers' Party and the critical comments could be described, even if only in general form.

Cde. Ri Sang-jo was told in reply that the issue of the critical statements by Cde. Ri Sang-jo or any other statements about the leadership of the KWP CC ought not to be discussed in this conversation.

In conclusion Cde. Ri Sang-jo expressed gratitude for the reception and the conversation in the CPSU CC.

The conversation was recorded by [signature] I. Shcherbakov

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