

October 31, 1973

Conversation with the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV)

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Summary:

Conversation between GDR Ambassador to the DPRK Everhartz and the DRV Ambassador Comrade Le Dong addressing the personality cult in the DPRK, changes of cadres in the DPRK, issues of the peaceful reunification of the country and the economic situation in the DPRK.

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GDR Embassy to the DPRK
Pyongyang, 31 October 1973

N o t e

A Conversation with the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), Comrade Le Dong, on 25 October 1973 (which was held upon his request in the Embassy of the GDR)

Additional participants in the meeting:

Comrade Ta Kuin, 1st Secretary of the DRV Embassy

Comrade Peter Hoffer, Attaché at the GDR Embassy

Comrade Le Dong informed [us] that his embassy currently analyzes questions of internal DPRK developments, especially compliance with the 6-year-plan, cadre changes at the 7th plenum of the KWP Central Committee, the military congress from early October 1973, and the DPRK's positions on the X Party Congress of the CCP.

Referring to the joint communiqué issued by the DRV party and government delegation that recently visited the GDR, and to our deep links of friendship, [Le Dong] requested a frank exchange on issues mentioned.

On Personality Cult in the DPRK

He stated pointedly: "If somebody calls himself the greatest, there is something wrong. The personality cult in the DPRK does not only inflict damage on the internal development and reputation of this state, but also on the communist world movement." DPRK intelligence services have a very large network and perform according to the maxim "hearing what people are listening to, and saying what is to be done". Large segments of the population are extremely afraid to enter into a conversation with foreigners. This fact, in addition to the already launched expansion of the personality cult into a family cult, is creating dissatisfaction among people and will deterministically lead to its further increase.

Kim Il Sung's son was appointed a few weeks ago as the Secretary in the Central Committee and Head of the KWP's Division of Propaganda. Kim Il Sung's daughter works as the Secretary in the Youth Association, and the brother of Kim Il Sung's wife is the Deputy of the Administrative Committee for the City of Pyongyang.

On Changes of Cadres in the DPRK

Comrade Le Dong asked himself the question. "How many changes have occurred since the V Party Congress in the KWP's structure and the Central Committee and the Political Committee?" No one within the diplomatic corps can answer this question precisely since there is no information issued on personnel changes. One can only infer from meticulous study of the press and the mentioning of functions of respective people. A few weeks ago at the 7th Plenum, three members were removed from the Political Committee of the Central Committee, namely Park Song-cheol, Han Ik-su (Head of the Political Main Administration of the Korean People's Army) and Kim Man-kim (Chairman of the Committee for Agriculture). Furthermore, over the last year, major changes in cadres were implemented in the provinces and higher positions in factories and agriculture. The reasons behind all this have to be studied.

On Issues of the Peaceful Reunification of the Country

The objective of achieving a rapid and peaceful reunification of the country, which

was pursued for the last two years with great effort, remains unfulfilled. According to Comrade Le Dong, the most important reason for this was an insufficient consideration in the DPRK's proposals of the real situation in the ROK. Also, the balance of class forces was not evaluated correctly. Le Dong, himself, considers Kim Il Sung's proposal to establish a "Federal Republic of Koryo" unrealistic.

Some military people have become very nervous. Apparently they prefer, in light of their existing incorrect perception of the enemy, to solve the reunification issue by military means. The recent congress with 22,000 military officers in Pyongyang was convened with the intention to "harness" those military voices, better adapt the course of "rapid peaceful reunification" to the actual situation, and, consequently, follow the goal of achieving reunification without making any concessions on this issue. The problem of "1 against 100" or "1 against 1,000" does not simply involve political and moral components. It also contains a strong military context. [Le Dong] wanted to have noticed how recently many Chinese military delegations visited the DPRK and were hosted with major attention and protocol honors.

It cannot be excluded that the DPRK has entered this decidedly pro-Chinese course due to military considerations, i.e. in order to obtain a safe hinterland or to acquire certain weapons systems from the PRC. Comrade Le Dong voiced his concern that the PRC will exploit this situation to drive a wedge between the DPRK and the Soviet Union. Earlier, the DPRK criticized the Cultural Revolution in the PRC. Today, the Korean comrades talk about it the same way as the Chinese. He also wonders why the Korean leadership has sent such a "cordial telegram in support" for the political goals of the X CCP Congress to the Chinese party leadership. In his opinion, the entire situation is related to a new and more nuanced DPRK reunification policy.

Concerning the situation in the ROK, Comrade Le Dong emphasized that student demonstrations do not enjoy the essential support of the working class and revolutionary peasants. This speaks to the fact that, in contrast to assertions by leading Korean comrades, a revolutionary situation to remove the existing regime [in Seoul] and to lead to a peaceful reunification of the country is still far from maturity.

On the Economic Situation in the DPRK

In economic regards, the DPRK still has to overcome existing disproportions. Le Dong said he wants to talk with about these problems at another time.

He referred to information obtained from a Korean comrade according to which the DPRK owns arable land of about 2 million dschongbo (1 dschongbo equals 0.98 hectare). It is divided up as follows:

- out 700,000 dschongbo for rice cultivation
- . about 700,000 dschongbo for corn cultivation
- . about 400,000 dschongbo for fruits
- . about 200,000 dschongbo for other agricultural products including potatoes.
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For 1973, the DPRK estimates a rice and corn harvest of about 500 million tons. This is still insufficient to meet domestic demand. An indication for this is the large imports of grain recently shipped from France and other countries.

Looking at the planning the DPRK has made in individual areas -such as the

perfection of agricultural technology (especially tractors), fertilizer production, production of chemicals, oil refining, manufacturing of engineering equipment-you have to note that none of the planning goals were achieved either in terms of deadlines or in the quality of products.

Although the DPRK is developing a remarkable level of trade with Japan, France, Italy, some Scandinavian countries, and the FRG [West Germany], a long-term dependency will persist on the socialist countries for continuous support, especially in the field of technology. Just one year ago, it anticipated fulfilling the Six-Year-Plan in only four years. Today, they just talk about an earlier fulfillment in general. This shows, again, that commitments they made are not being realized. A huge gap exists between scientific planning and the actual potential.

We agreed to continue our conversation in due time.

Note:

During the conversation it became evident how the very critical assessment by Comrade Le Dong was partially due to some sort of discontent. Since the [1973] Paris Agreement, the DPRK no longer devotes proper attention to the situation in the DRV and its problems of rapidly dealing with major destructions [from the war in Vietnam] and socialist construction. Frequently, Le Dong compared the large solidarity by the people of the GDR with the attitude of the DPRK leadership.

However, the assessments made by Comrade Le Dong are more or less consistent with our own.

As far as the goal to fulfill the Six-Year-Plan within four years is concerned: In recent weeks informed Korean comrades, again, confirmed to us that this goal remains in place. In this context, I want to refer to the "90 days of Struggle", a movement conducted in the entire country and in all sectors of the economy with great enthusiasm. Its main goal is the very fulfillment of the Six-Year-Plan in four years in the most important economic sectors. Furthermore, it is my opinion that, despite all the critical assessments made, one cannot overlook successes achieved by the DPRK especially last year in both industry and agriculture.

We continue to monitor the overall situation and will apply our observations shortly into a more extensive analysis.

[Signed Everhartz]
Ambassador

CC:
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