

**May 13, 1976**

**Report from the GDR Embassy in the USSR, "Note about a Conversation between Comrade Bauer and Comrade Basmanov, Deputy Head of the 1st Far Eastern Department of the USSR Foreign Ministry, on 10 May, 1976."**

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**Summary:**

Summary of a conversation between Comrade Bauer and Comrade Basmanov addressing the personality cult in the DPRK, the socialist development in the DPRK, the DPRK's economy, the relationship between the Soviet Union and the DPRK. Basmanov, furthermore, compared the DPRK's relationship with the Soviet Union to its relationship with the PRC.

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GDR Embassy to the USSR  
Political Department  
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#### N o t e

About a Conversation between Comrade Bauer and Comrade Basmanov,  
Deputy Head of the 1st Far Eastern Department of the USSR Foreign Ministry, on 10  
May 1976

Comrade Heidenreich [female] was an additional participant for the GDR Embassy.

At the beginning [of the conversation], Comrade Bauer informed [Comrade Basmanov] about the state of relations between the GDR and the DPRK (based on the information sent by the Soviet Union Department of the GDR Ministry for Foreign Affairs on 14 April 1976).

Comrade Basmanov thanked Comrade Bauer for the information and made the following remarks in response to the questions from the letter by [GDR Deputy Foreign Minister] Comrade [Werner] Krolikowski from 26 April 1976:

#### On Assessing the Socialist Development in the DPRK

The DPRK is on the path of socialist construction and has had "certain successes" along the way. Obviously there are also a couple of things "which we do not like." This entails, in particular, their emphasis on a "special course" and, correspondingly, the failing acknowledgment of general determinants for a socialist development. There are various mistakes and deficits. They would not occur if the Korean comrades would consequently follow the principles of Marxism-Leninism and be mindful of experiences made by the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. However, in recent years there is a certain positive trend noteworthy in this respect. Experiences by the Soviet Union and other socialist countries are being taken more into account. For instance, they now devote major attention to the planned development of the economy, to material stimuli, and to the living standard of the population.

These developments came about without anybody mentioning them anywhere. The Korean comrades continue to emphasize their self-reliance and their ideas of juche. Here, obviously the increasing cult of personality comes into play along with all those mistakes associated with such a phenomenon.

#### On Relations between the USSR and the DPRK

Traditionally the Soviet Union maintains friendly relations with the socialist DPRK. The USSR avoids highlighting differences of positions on certain issues between both countries. The Soviet Union also avoids criticizing the negative aspects in the DPRK, mentioned above, in order not to burden relations, "which are overall more or less on a normal track."

Since the problems in 1965, the relationship has been on the upswing for the last ten years. "It is expanding and improving from year to year."

Exchange of delegations has unfolded on various levels (party, government, parliament, mass organizations). Obviously these exchanges are not characterized by the same openness of exchange in opinions as the cooperation between the USSR and other socialist countries. The Soviet Union understands this. The Soviet Union thinks this kind of exchange is still useful. We have to continue to use it to its maximum extent in order to influence the Korean comrades in our direction and pull them away from the PR China.

In recent years, cultural cooperation has also developed. The Soviet Union is eager to deepen it. Obviously here as well, the typical open atmosphere, so common in relations with other socialist countries, is missing.

As far as the press is concerned, the Soviet Union has so far not succeeded in achieving coverage of Korean publications concerning Soviet reality and Soviet experiences in communist construction. The Korean side limits its media to brief information, protocolary reports, and superficialities. It does not make any qualitative assessments of the domestic as well as the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. On matters of foreign affairs the Koreans restrain themselves to report Soviet positions on issues related to the Korea problem and their discussions in international settings. Yet on basic issues of international policy like disarmament and collective security in Europe and Asia, the Soviet Union does not receive any support whatsoever from the Korean press. In individual cases the latter even prints material of Chinese origin with anti-Soviet contents. For instance, the materials from the X Party Congress of the CCP were published with all their anti-Soviet passages, but withdrawn after hints of displeasure from the Soviet comrades.

Mechanisms of economic cooperation do function normally. The joint governmental commission on issues of economic and scientific-technological collaboration is meeting for its sessions at regular intervals. During recent years, however, a reduction of the overall trade volume is noteworthy. This is due to the Korean inability to serve its payments. The Korean side is interested in an expansion of trade but overestimates its own actual capacities. An annual pattern has begun where the DPRK attempts to receive a maximum from the Soviet Union on credit basis and then negotiates a deferral of payments due.

The DPRK attempts to shoulder its economic problems through an expansion of external economic ties, even with the capitalist states. Thus, it increased the trade volume with capitalist countries. However, the DPRK obviously has to serve its payments right away. There are already discussions in those countries to limit any trade with the DPRK since the latter turns out to be such a weak partner when it comes to payments. The increase of Korean trade with the capitalist countries limits options for trade with the socialist countries. The Soviet Union continues with its technological assistance. With its support, 53 facilities will be constructed. (Currently 30 facilities are in progress.) The overall volume of Soviet technological aid between 1971 and 1975 amounted to 475 million Rubles. It was all given on a credit basis. Overall, Soviet credit to the DPRK amounts to more than one billion Rubles. Here as well, the Koreans are unable to meet their payment obligations on time.

In February 1976, negotiations were held between economic delegations of the USSR and the DPRK. The Korean side requested to credit 400 million Rubles for the payment of debts from the previous period. The payment due date was moved up from 1976 to 1981.

Also, the Soviet Union provided further credit for the expansion of factories originally built with its support.

In 1974, the Soviet Union and the DPRK signed a fishing treaty. Furthermore, there are agreements pertaining to logging by Korean workers in the Chabarovsk region. So far, 3.8 million cubic meters of timber were logged annually. Recently a new agreement was signed to increase the volume of logging to 4.4 million cubic meters.

The Soviet Union strives toward further expansion of economic cooperation. It is viewed as an important factor for the continuation of relations in general, as well as for the increase of overall influence on the DPRK. It is noteworthy, however, that DPRK capacities for economic cooperation are limited.

#### ~~On the~~ Proportion of Relations Between DPRK-USSR and DPRK-PRC □□ □□

In general, the DPRK is eager to maintain a balance between its relations with the Soviet Union and the PR China. Sometimes the scale tips in favor of China, in other cases to the advantage of the USSR.

The DPRK conducts its foreign policy activities based on purely pragmatic considerations. The decisive question is always the following: What will benefit our interests, and what will not., The DPRK develops its relationships with individual states according to this thinking. Notwithstanding the growth of relations with the PRC during the previous year (increase of delegation exchanges and collaboration in the field of the press), it would be wrong to say the DPRK is tilting towards the PR China. There are several issues where DPRK interests do not match China's interests and the American presence in Asia is one example.. The DPRK demands the withdrawal of U.S. forces from this region, particularly from South Korea. In spite of heightened Chinese attempts to influence the Koreans in an anti-Soviet way, the latter so far has not followed along: "[Basmanov:] We cannot make the accusation that they have revised their position toward the Soviet Union."

In particular, concerning their postures in the Non-Aligned Movement or towards individual developing countries, there are certainly cases where they use Maoist terminology like "rich and poor countries" or the thesis about the role of the superpowers.

As far as the process of detente in Europe is concerned: They are not coming out in favor of it, but also do not go against it.

In talks with the Cuban comrades, they referred to their difficult situation on this issue. They expressed their interest not to end up with contradicting the PRC too strongly. They have a long shared border of 1,340 kilometers with the PRC. Their country is divided, and they need the assistance and support of the Chinese.

Regarding their position on Angola, they have corrected themselves and now agree with our position. They have recognized the MPLA and have come out clearly against the Chinese position. This is a similar situation to both Chile and the Middle East. If one analyzes positions of the DPRK on a couple of international issues, the result is that, to a major extent, they are in agreement with positions of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries or at least come close.

Obviously, there are also other issues where they are closer to PRC positions. This concerns, for instance, issues of peace and security in Asia. The Soviet Union does not receive Korean support for its proposal to create a system of collective security in Asia. At times, the DPRK even states its rejection of this idea.

#### ~~On the~~ Options to Integrate the DPRK More Strongly into the Socialist Community

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We have to further continue to undertake all attempts to move the DPRK towards the socialist community of states. However, in the near future a closer rapprochement by the DPRK, in the sense of a close cooperation with Comecon or coordination of foreign policy activities, is not very likely. Unfortunately, the DPRK is still unwilling to coordinate its foreign policy actions with the socialist countries. It is acting separately and does not take into consideration positions of the Soviet Union and the socialist community of states. Sometimes Korean positions are even directed against the latter. The DPRK also joined the Non-Aligned Movement without any previous consultation with the socialist countries.

Collaboration with the DPRK in the international arena is impaired by the pragmatic Korean approach to these issues. Though there are annual consultations between the USSR and the DPRK on the Korea issue and mutual cooperation on this question in the United Nations, the Korean side is avoiding talks on any other international subjects. They also barely comment on the latter in the international arena.

It is our task to move their positions maximally close to ours. Angola and Chile are positive examples in this regard. They demonstrate how Korea does not act jointly with the other socialist states, but proceeds in parallel to them. Maybe in the future we might have to analyze and exploit more effectively the contradictions existing between the DPRK and the PRC. By all means we have to prevent a close alliance between the DPRK and the PR China. Obviously we cannot expect from the Korean side open support in the struggle against Maoism. This is tolerated by the Soviet Union. The DPRK avoids all talk about the danger of Maoism and its essence, which is hostile to Marxism-Leninism. The country is afraid of the Chinese and does not want to be affiliated with the combined efforts of the socialist community of states against Maoism.

□□ On the Situation in South Korea and the Issue of Korean Reunification

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It is difficult to say something substantial about the internal situation of South Korea. The Soviet Union also does not have any contacts [like the GDR] and gets its information from press reports in South Korea, Japan, and the United States, as well as from the assessments by the North Korean comrades.

They have economic problems but also remarkable successes. Here, the extensive Japanese and American aid obviously comes into play. There exists concern in the DPRK about those successes. They do not want to fall behind in the economic competition.

Since imperialism suffered a defeat in Indochina, it now considers South Korea as more important. Imperialism wants to attempt, by all means, to prevent a repeat of Indochinese events there. For this reason they make efforts to bolster the regime in South Korea, to provide maximum support and the presence of U.S. forces, and to suppress all forces that advocate contacts between North and South Korea.

In the DPRK there still exists the opinion that reunification can be achieved. Developments in Vietnam have, no doubt, a stimulating effect here.

For the immediate future, however, no substantial results are to be expected in this regard. The situation is very tense. There is extreme hostility between the North and

South. The situation at the demarcation line has become exacerbated. Talks between representatives from the two parts of Korea have fallen apart.

The existing confrontation will further aggravate. Each side will attempt to secure maximum international support for oneself and increase its defense capabilities. Mutual attacks will probably intensify, and from time to time dangerous situations may occur

You have to analyze the current situation very thoroughly. In particular, the DPRK has to avoid overestimating its own capabilities.

Currently, the DPRK is eager to win new allies in the international arena. In recent years it has succeeded in establishing diplomatic relations with additional states. It also achieved, last year, the adoption of a resolution on the Korea issue in the U.N. General Assembly, which in particular demands the withdrawal of all foreign troops from South Korea.

In the context of a recent conference of the Soviet-Korean Friendship Association in Moscow, Korean comrades floated the idea of whether a "Committee to Support Korea" could be formed in the Soviet Union, just as it existed for the support of Vietnam. The Soviet side replied that the Soviet Union always supported the struggle of the DPRK for a peaceful and democratic unification of Korea without foreign interference. It will continue to do so.

The USSR does not think there is a need to form a special committee for this purpose.

~~On the~~ Planned Visit of Kim Il Sung in Moscow  
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The Korean side has proposed to realize the already long-planned and always delayed (from their side) visit of Kim Il Sung to Moscow for the second half of the year.

The Soviet Union has declared its willingness to receive such a delegation at the highest level. When preparations reach a more concrete stage, it will propose the month of October as a date. Whether this plan is realized depends on the Korean side.

[Signed]  
Heidenreich  
Attache

CC:  
3 x Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
2 x Moscow Embassy, Political Department