



March 17, 1968
Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, TOP SECRET,
No. 76.068, Urgent

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Summary:

The Embassy of Romania in the DPRK reports on discussions held between DPRK Minister of National Defense, Kim Changbong, and Leonid Brezhnev on Soviet intervention in the event that an armed conflict were to break out in Korea.

Credits:

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- English Translation

On March 16, in a conversation with A. Lazar, the Czech Second Secretary M. Hoholushek, the latter said that he had found out from Soviet sources that the DPRK Minister of National Defense, Kim Changbong, asked (on the occasion of his visit to Moscow in February—our note) Leonid Brezhnev for an assurance that, in case of the outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula, the Soviet Union would promptly intervene to the defense of the DPRK.

The Czech diplomat added that throughout the three-hour conversation [with Kim Changbong], Brezhnev persisted in trying to persuade the Korean minister against resuming the war in Korea, underlining that just like in the case of Vietnam, this war would be a very tough one to win. The Korean minister pressed for at least a principled agreement from Brezhnev, which, to our mind, would be enough for the outbreak of war.

Brezhnev concluded that if the DPRK had ignored his opinion, the USSR would not have replied positively to Korean calls for help.

Hoholushek said that Soviet diplomats in Pyongyang believed that if Brezhnev had given some sort of nodding signs or vague assurances, a war in Korea would have definitely broken out.

A. Lazar asked for the opinion of the Czech diplomat with respect to the new measures adopted by the Korean authorities regarding the interdiction of driving in the city from midnight until morning, and prohibiting the circulation of all vehicles (including diplomatic vehicles) without free circulation passes stuck to their front windows. In a nutshell, the Czech diplomat described these restrictions, which only continue the series of restrictions adopted earlier, as an undeclared state of emergency.

On March 16, Radio Seoul announced during its evening broadcast that starting with that date, the army and the workers-peasants red guards in the DPRK were in a state of emergency. No such official announcement was made in Pyongyang.

Signed: N. Popa