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Memorandum of Conversation with Pak Ui-wan

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Summary:

Pak Ui-wan explains to V.I. Ivanov the personality cult in the Korean Worker's Party and the somewhat unstable condition of the Worker's Party due to the debate surrounding the cult of personality.

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DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR to the DPRK V.I. Ivanov for the period from 29 August to 14

September 1956

Pyongyang

6 September

[Vice Premier and Minister of Light Industry] Pak Ui-wan [Pak Ui Wan] told me the following about the work of the KWP CC Plenum:

In Kim Il Sung's address, the problem of the personality cult was touched upon only in connection with the status of work in the area of propaganda. It was mentioned by Pak that both with and without any reason, many cried "hurray" to the leader and also glorified him in various textbooks and literature.

In the discussion on the speeches, the first to speak was the Chairman of the State Planning Committee, Yi Jong-ok [Yi Jong Ok], who spoke in a sycophantic tone about the massive feats achieved in the DPRK.

The second to speak was party provincial committee secretary from the province of Northern Hamgyeong, Kim Dae-gong [Kim Dae Gong]. He also talked about the successes achieved in the provinces under the leadership of the KWP. It merits mentioning the fact that he singled out and sharply criticized the work of the Ministry of Trade and the activities of the unions in his speech. It was clear that the speech was prepared well in advance.

The third to speak was the Minister of Trade, Yun Gong-heum [Yun Gong Hum] who excitedly and in a harsh tone declared that the spirit of the CPSU Twentieth Congress was absent from the KWP Third Congress. Kim Il Sung immediately cut him off, accusing him of slandering the party. Continuing, Yun said that the KWP CC does not put the ideas of Marxism-Leninism into practice with integrity and dedication. From the Presidium came remarks such as "what are you slandering" and "is the KWP a fascist or bourgeois party[?]."

Further, Yun declared that Choe Yong-geon [Choe Yong Gon] is the leader of another party and was immediately named to the post of KWP Deputy Chairman, a clear violation of party democracy. At that point Choe Yong-geon stood and called Yun a dog and insulted him in every manner.

Choe Chang-ik [Choe Chang Ik] came forward to the defense of Yun, however, as everything was prepared to finish off Yun, Choe Chang-ik could not speak, not being permitted to talk.

At the evening session, Minister of Finance Ri Du-yong [Ri Tu Yong] spoke. He illuminated the victory and success attained thanks to the policies of the Workers' Party. In particular, he said that there is not one country in the Socialist camp other than the DPRK that could raise the wages of workers at once by 35%. Regarding Yun's speech, he said that the statement deviates and is factionalist and characterized him as counterrevolutionary and anti-party.

The next to speak was Nam Il. He spoke in general phrases, simply pointing out the truth that

unfortunately the decree of the CC March Plenum, where Kim Il Sung talked about the personality cult, was not brought to the attention of the members of the party. Repeating the well known party slogans about the need to expand party democracy and struggle with the personality cult, he didn't say anything of substance on that issue in the KWP. At the same time, he rained down on Yun with crushing criticism.

The Union of Democratic Youth Central Committee chairman, Pak Yong-guk [Pak Yong Guk] spoke for a very long time, stating that the KWP Third Congress, guided by the decree of the Twentieth Congress, successfully put into effect the principles of Marxism-Leninism. He stressed that the cult of personality was spread and supported not by Kim Il Sung, but by Pak Heon-yeong [Pak Hon Yong] who was practically compared with God. He also said that there was no need to belittle. Talking about democratic perversions inside the party, he pointed out that they are the legacy of Heo Gai [A.I. Hegai] and do not pertain to the practical work of Kim Il Sung. He characterized Yun's speech as counterrevolutionary, directed against the existing state structure, and suggested removing Yun from the ranks of the Central Committee, expelling him from the party and putting him on trial.

There was nothing negative in Choe Chang-ik's speech. He pointed out that the policies of the party were correct, but that it is necessary to talk about the personality cult, a sore issue for the party. He also pointed out that the KWP CC made individual errors in its work. He was given a large number of questions, from which it became clear that he subscribes to the ideology of the factionary group.

The Southern Pyeongan party committee chairman Kim Man-geum [Kim Man Kum] talked about the condition of the economy in the provinces and expressed his full support for the speech of Union of Democratic Youth Central Committee chairman. He also noted that Yun's speech was a planned speech of the anti-party group headed by Choe Chang-ik and that that group should be investigated and all of them jailed.

In his speech Kim Chang-man [Kim Chang Man] said that all activities of the leadership of the KWP have been correct. He characterized Yun not only as anti-party, but also as a person who is morally corrupt, who does not eat any other meat than veal, who squanders large sums of money, and who is a thief and a swindler.

Speaking next, Kim Il Sung recounted the history of the rise of discontent with the leadership of the KWP, underlining that Choe Chang-ik and Pak Chang-ok lead the group of malcontent. He also said that rumors reached the leadership of the KWP before the meeting that, apparently, a person who leads the malcontent and considers the policies of the KWP incorrect is at the Soviet Embassy. The leadership of the KWP was obliged to send Pak Jeong-ae [Pak Jong Ae] and Nam Il to the Soviet Embassy to clarify the situation. It turned out that those rumors were antagonistic and spread by the anti-party gang. Following that, a letter of the CPSU arrived in which it was indicated that in individual countries where the problem of the personality cult was being examined, certain individuals took advantage of that, expressing their discontent with the leaders. He did not speak about the inner-party problems that were coming to a head, but only concentrated on the anti-party group, making it their aim to overthrow the leadership and seize power in their hands.

The speech of the province of South Hamgyeong [Hamgyong] Party Committee chairman Hwang Dong-min [Hwang Tong Min] was directed against those who expressed discontent.

The KWP CC department of propaganda and agitation head Ri Il-gyeong [Ri Il Kyong] pointed out that the Third Congress was completely guided by the ideas of the Twentieth Congress and following it, the KWP CC in turn resolved the shortcomings connected with the personality cult. Several individuals accused us of discontinuing radio programming from the Soviet Union.

However, it is well known to all that in those countries, which developed and matured, absolutely nothing is transmitted from the Soviet Union. We have also grown, and therefore discontinued broadcasts from the Union.

In his speech Choe Yong-geon pointed out that Yun presented to the plenum a concentrated program against the party and government. In a truncated form, the factionalists presented to the plenum all issues of the party: its history; the issues of the country's economic conditions; the personality cult and the placement of cadres. The factional activities of those individuals are a continuation of the principal work of the group of Pak Il-u [Pak Il U]. Choe Yong-geon pointed out that it was Yun Gong-heum, Choe Chang-ik and others who mounted the campaign against the Soviet-Koreans, starting to thrash out at Soviet-Koreans. They prepared this in a bomb shelter at Central Committee Agricultural Department director Pak Hun-il's [home] in 1952, where Pak Il-u, Choe Chang-ik and others were, in order to work out a program of activities against Kim Il Sung. To do that they had to unite with Pak Heon-yeong, and they united. Seo Hwi [So Hwi] told two Koreans coming from China that they would work for ten years in the DPRK not getting a higher title than Major-General.

Choe Yong-geon said that Yi Pil-gyu [Ri Pil Kyu] came to the KWP CC and said that they were led by Choe Chang-ik and Pak Chang-ok and that if measures to improve welfare standards were not taken, then there would be major dissatisfaction and that they would have another Poznan on their hands. He was indigent at the fact that Pak Il-u, to this day is being held in jail.

Choe Yong-geon also named the Minister of Communication Kim Chang-gil [Kim Chang Kil], whom he cautioned so that others would not consider him a representative of any faction, while at the same time attacking individual leaders of the party and state. Of Pak Chang-ok, he said that this person is a deep-seated factionalist and in connection with that gang, and that he sent Yun to the Soviet Embassy.

Following that, Pak Chang-ok spoke, explaining that he thinks that the KWP CC December Plenum took a very strict and unfair position in relation to him. He indicated that he is not connected with any group. He was interrupted by the remarks coming from the Presidium and from the hall and was not permitted to continue speaking.

In closing, Kim Il Sung spoke, suggesting organizational measures in relation to Choe Chang-ik, Pak Chang-ok and other individuals about whom the Plenum accepted a well known decree.

In closing Pak Ui-wan said that the Plenum was held under very trying and oppressive conditions. In the country a massive battle has begun, severe repression is called for in the questioning of security workers, drivers and servants. Essential issues in the party were distorted and matters were presented before the members of the Party in such a manner that the malcontent, it would seem, prepared a serious conspiracy, something similar to a palace coup. At present, the discontent have been driven deep down, by its inner strength the atmosphere in the Party, he said, will not be relaxed.

Pak noted that the functionaries, against whom organizational measures were taken, were bad people. But it is impossible to work under conditions of systematic mutual mistrust of leading functionaries toward one another, things don't get done and the work is not close to your heart. He said that knowing his feelings, although he recently switched over to Korean citizenship, he requests that I relay to the Soviet government, that after he returns he would like to be granted Soviet citizenship once again and restored to the ranks of the CPSU.

Ambassador of the USSR in the DPRK

/V. IVANOV/

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