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Note about a Meeting on 29 November 1957 between Deputy Foreign Minister Pak Seong-cheol with GDR Ambassador Comrade Fischer and Comrade Behrens

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Summary:

East German and North Korean officials discuss North Korea's economic and political relations with India, Indonesia, Burma, Syria, and Japan.

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GDR Embassy to the DPRK
Pyongyang, 10 December 1957

Note
about a Meeting on 29 November 1957
between Deputy Foreign Minister Pak Seong-cheol [Pak Song Chol]
and a Division Chief from the Ministry for Foreign and Domestic Trade on the Korean side
with GDR Ambassador Comrade Fischer and Comrade Behrens on the German side

This meeting took place because our embassy had requested answers to some questions concerning relations of the DPRK to Bandung states.

Questions on India

On 19 August there was a foreign trade agreement between the leader of the Korean delegation, Minister Din Bon Soo [sic], and the Indian state-run foreign trade association.

Can you conclude that India is interested in trade with the DPRK?

Did the Indian banking delegation come to Pyongyang to finalize a payment agreement?

If yes, did the meeting yield positive results?

If no, what are the prospects?

Are there chances to accomplish the establishment of a Korean government foreign trade representation [in India]?

What are perspectives for a deepening of relations?

Questions on Indonesia

A DPRK trade delegation was there.

What are results of meetings?

On which level were the meetings held?

Where does the Indonesian government stand on issues of the DPRK?

Did the good relations with Indonesian societal organizations like the PKI and the trade union have an impact on the government?

Questions on Burma

Can you say whether there was a trade agreement on the government level?

What is the state of progress of the establishment of trade representations in both countries?

What are perspectives for the deepening of relations?

Questions on Syria

DPRK support for the Syrian question is known.

The Syrian President has received a lawyers' delegation. Are already results known?

Questions on Japan

Are there intense visits by Japanese delegations and vice versa?

According to our knowledge, societal organizations from the DPRK maintain relations in Japan via the Koreans living there.

Is this correct? Or have official representatives from the DPRK already been to Japan?

Trade agreement until 1956 amounted to 18 million British pounds. In 1957 it was 12 million British pounds. Are those agreements implemented? Are there restrictions from the side of the [Japanese] Kiji Government? Or does it tacitly approve?

What is the assessment of the DPRK government regarding the upcoming Asian-African conference in Cairo?

On question #1 [India] :

First negotiations were held by the Korean and Indian ambassadors in Beijing. It was figured out that talks are both possible and necessary. An agreement was made the DPRK should send a government delegation. It was asked for, however [by the DPRK], that only the head of the delegation will be named. No official information was to be given about functions of other delegation members in the DPRK government. The DPRK delegation was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Trade, the Deputy Minister, a Trade Attache and other officials.

In India the delegation was received by the Deputy Administrative Head in the Ministry for Trade and Industry, by a Secretary of the Minister, the Minister of Trade, and Nehru himself. It was considered necessary to trade between both countries. One should start on a limited level with the intention to expand trade at a later point. Negotiations can be conducted at the government level, but no political or even trade agreement may be signed on this level. Those negotiations just serve the purpose of establishing contacts. Actual agreements have to be signed by trade organizations. This was the Indian position. The Korean side demanded to hold negotiations on government level until an agreement is reached. After negotiations over the course of two months, the Korean position was rejected by the Indian side.

The [DPRK Deputy] Minister assessed the Indian position as follows: India has agreements with the United States, with West Germany, with England and Japan. India is seriously interested in trade with the DPRK but it is afraid of reprisals by the above listed imperialist powers.

Accountancy resulting from foreign trade between both countries is supposed to be dealt with by the DPRK opening an account with an Indian bank. A banking delegation will have to travel to India. Currently, the DPRK is undertaking preparations to send such a delegation.

On question #2 [Indonesia]:

There was no government delegation. The delegation that went to India split up, and a smaller delegation traveled to Indonesia headed by an official from the DPRK Association for International Trade. Thus in this case there was no trade delegation in the strict sense. Accordingly, negotiations were not as difficult as in India.

[The Korean side] reported positions of the Indonesian government as follows:

Indonesia wants to trade with the DPRK. It is considered a first step towards the establishment of contacts. Only then agreements should be signed on government level. The agreement reached during the visit concerns a list of designated goods to be traded in the future. Issues of pricing are to be dealt with later through respective trade delegations. Also, it is possible to later have negotiations on issues of political concern.

Indonesia would deliver to the DPRK: rubber, coconuts, raw materials for cosmetics. The DPRK would export to Indonesia: cement, steel, non-ferrous metals, window glass. Indonesia wants to export a lot but import only little. This is a consequence of Indonesia's bad hard currency situation. The British pound is supposed to serve as a basis of accountancy.

Then the [DPRK] Deputy [Foreign] Minister said: The agreement reached between the Indonesian and Korean trade delegation is a variation of the agreement signed between the GDR and Indonesia. This is because the [Indonesian] signatories of the agreement were the same who did the agreement with the GDR.

[According to the Deputy Minister,] concerning government positions on the Korean problem there were no major differences between India and Indonesia. Yet in Indonesia large masses of underclass people have a strong interest in Korean issues. There is massive pressure on government ministers from these people. There is only one party not interested in establishing a good relationship with the DPRK. This is the Masyumi Party, which represents the middle classes.

[Our] Note:

The Masyumi Party is representing the upper and comprador bourgeoisie and only in part the middle classes.

On question #3 [Burma] :

In this case negotiations were held on the highest level. The trade agreements signed were ratified on government level. Trade representations are said to be established in both states, with responsibilities of these representations matching those of other

countries.

The DPRK is preparing to send a trade delegation. Whether Burma will also send its trade delegation immediately, is not yet clear. The agreement was only vague on this. A provision states both sides will determine the timing by themselves. There is also the possibility that Burma is currently not concerned with this issue, since the head of Burmese trade stays right now in Beijing. Therefore it is likely that the sending of a delegation will be postponed.

In order to characterize the negotiations in Burma, the Deputy Minister told the following: The DPRK delegation was received by nobody upon arrival. It had to find an hotel itself, and there it did not get visited by anybody. Also, the Burmese press did not take notice of the delegation.

This initial situation, the Deputy Minister explained to us, was due to the presence of many representatives from imperialist countries in Burma, like from the United States, England, but also from Israel etc. The Burmese government wanted to keep the presence of a DRPK delegation secret. After the delegation checked with the government, it was received by the government. All negotiations were subsequently held on government level. After negotiations ended, an official reception was held. A farewell was given to the delegation by government representatives at the airport.

Therefore the first impression was that the visit will bear no results. Yet later this impression changed and good outcomes were achieved. This is in part due to the fact that the Burmese Minister for Foreign Trade and the Minister for Foreign Affairs are both directly subordinated to President U Nu.

On question # 4 (Syria):

Our question was only answered by saying that the President of Syria received the delegation. Members of the Korean delegation were awarded with orders by the President. Concrete results will be know only when the delegation has returned from its visit.

On question # 5 (Japan):

Over the course of three years about 600 individuals from Japan have visited the DPRK. This would be the overall largest [foreign] delegation visit [to the DPRK], and it is coming from the largest capitalist country in Asia. Delegations from Japan mostly consisted of progressive people who are in part members of the communist party, the socialist party, or other progressive organizations.

Those delegations first travel to China. When they obtain their visa [in Japan], they have to sign that they will not travel to the DPRK. Only when they have arrived in China, they get invited by the DPRK. Most of them are accepting this invitation then. When they return to Japan. they hardly have to face reprisals. There exists a Japanese law on free travel and their previously signed statements are then destroyed.

So you can say, the Japanese government does not support travel to the DPRK but is tacitly approving it. Problems do exist in the opposite direction. Therefore it is still the case that no official delegation from the DPRK has ever traveled to Japan. Relations to Japan as such are conducted through the organization of Koreans living in Japan.

As far as the implementation of trade agreements are concerned, it was said they get implemented. Japan was said to be interested in an expansion of trade. Yet Korea cannot deliver as much as Japan wants, therefore Japan is also delivering less. The

Japanese government stands between two buffers - the Western imperialist powers it is allied with, and its own people. For the outside it impairs trade with the DPRK, but actually it applies a tacit approval. The trade is conducted via China. Officially the [Japanese] government does not know about it. It officially declared it does not export any goods to Korea. Yet it is known that the [Japanese] Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Deputy Minister of Trade, and the Deputy Minister of Transportation have instructed trade organizations to expand trade with the DPRK.

Japan does know the DPRK and its possessions of raw materials very well. Thus Japan has great interest in these resources. Transportation routes between the DPRK and Japan are short, and transport of the same resources from other countries in Europe or Asia is too expensive for Japan.

On question # 6 [Asian-African Conference]

The DPRK government rates the conference highly. The DPRK also received an invitation to join the preparatory conference. Yet due to time constraints it turned out impossible to send a respective delegation.

The Asian-African Conference will be opened on 26 February in Cairo and be attended by about 50 countries. A delegation from the DPRK will be there. We hope that our delegation will establish good contacts with representatives from Asian and African states and that the conference will also deal with problems of Korean reunification. Currently members of the delegation are not yet known.

p.p. [signed] Behrens
[signed] Fischer [Ambassador]