

May 16, 1961

**Cable from Qiao Xiaoguang, 'The South Korean
Military Coup Situation'**

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Summary:

North Korean and Chinese analyses of Park Chung Hee's coup in South Korea.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

[...]

The South Korean Military Coup Situation

To the [Chinese] Foreign Ministry and the General Staff [of the PLA]:

At 6:30 p.m. today, Comrade Kim Il spoke with us about this morning's South Korean military coup.

Kim said that the Comrade Prime Minister had commissioned him to speak about this matter with us. The military coup was led by Park Chung Hee and joined by the Seoul suburbs' First Brigade, the Sixth Army District's ground force Division 30, Division 33 and six artillery battalions. They have already completely occupied Seoul, detained all Jang Myeon [Chang Myun] government personnel, established a Revolutionary Military Committee, dismissed the National Assembly (along with provincial assemblies), and declared that the Revolutionary Military Committee will exercise complete power. Daegu, Busan, Incheon, Jeonju, and Chuncheon are already under the control of the Revolutionary Military Committee. Judging from the political program issued by the Revolutionary Military Committee, much of the content is not good, so at first [we] guessed it had been masterminded by the American imperialists to strengthen [their] fascist rule. When from the start the American imperialists expressed concern and announced they would not interfere, we were even more convinced that this was a plot hatched by the United States. But when U.N. Army Commander Magruder and U.S. diplomatic representatives in Korea issued statements (in support of Jang Myeon) we guessed that it might not have been masterminded by the American imperialists after all; it is possible that it was carried out alone.

Estimating based on the current situation, one possibility is organized action on the part of progressive forces. They first put forward this kind of program to grasp power, and then accomplish their own goals. The evidence for this estimate:

- 1) The military coup launched by Park Chung Hee was not done at the directive of army headquarters; the National Defense Ministry's commanders have been detained, and although Commander-in-Chief Jang Do-young participated in the coup and became chairman of the Revolutionary Military Committee, Jang was not the initiator, but called on by others to shoulder the responsibility.
- 2) A portion of those who participated in the coup, according to the data, are progressive.
- 3) Park Chung Hee himself was once a member of South Korea's Labor Party, and his older brother was killed for revolutionary activity. His older brother's wife, who was also once a Labor Party member, still lives in the Park household. Park was never trusted by the U.S. military or Jang Myeon; he gained control over many young army officers, and also has organizing capabilities.
- 4) In the past there were intelligence reports that progressive forces among the troops would revolt. Another possibility is that the army's Sojang (Young officers) Faction (there are altogether three factions in the puppet army: the Chung Il-kwon Faction, the Paik Sun-yup Faction and the Sojang Faction) wanted to seize power out of dissatisfaction with present circumstances. Thus, there is a 90% possibility that this was not masterminded behind the scenes by the American imperialists. The exact nature of this military coup is at present still very difficult to judge; we will need to wait and see today and tomorrow. At present there is not yet news from the South Korean parties' side, and we can only rely on our own analysis and judgment.

Kim Il said the [North] Korean side is still looking into what measures to take, and is preparing to release a statement in support of the coup.

Kim Il lastly stated: If Beijing receives any important intelligence reports, [they] hope to be told of them.

Qiao Xiaoguang

May 16 [1961], 11 p.m.