

April 4, 1973
Telegram from Pyongyang, No.061.113, Urgent,
SECRET

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<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114046>

Summary:

KWP Central Committee member Kim Yeongnam explains to the Romanian representative that the DPRK proposed changes in the North-South Coordination Committee meeting to ease tensions and transform the armistice into a peace treaty. Kim blames the South Korean hawks and separatists who abide by the interests of the US and Japan for the lack of progress. Despite the impasse, the North Koreans look to the internal dissent against Park Chung Hee in South Korea as a sign of support for Pyongyang.

Credits:

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To the 2nd Direction, Relations

On 3 April, on the occasion of a meeting with Kim Yeong-nam [Kim Yong Nam], the head of the International Section of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party, he discussed some of the reasons for which, at the latest meeting of the Coordinating Committee, the DPRK had insisted on the measures meant to bring about a relaxation of military tensions and a transformation of the Korean armistice into a peace treaty.

Therefore, he mentioned that since the Vietnam War had ended and since there was a real opportunity to find a political solution to the Korean matter, certain dissensions sprung up within the top echelons of power in Seoul, especially in military circles. Park Chung Hee, Lee Hu-rak, the head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, and several other reactionary elements, with the support of the USA and Japan, were increasingly moving towards the right and in order to maintain their current positions, they were breaking up the process of unification into time sequences. This group is supported by South Korean generals, recently returned from Vietnam, who are instigating against North Korea "to unite the country by defeating communism," etc. These dissensions amongst military cadres grew also as a consequence of the prospects of a reduction in military aid from the United States, which may impact on the material situation and morale of the South Korean army, which would create great uncertainty for career officers in the South Korean military. As a result of this upheaval amongst militaries, Park Chung Hee was recently compelled to remove from office one of his closest friends, i.e. the head of the Seoul garrison, and several other generals, justifying his decision by stating that they did not present enough trustworthiness.

On the other hand, a certain deviation towards the left is growing increasingly prominent, as displayed by a large number of intellectuals and a great share of militaries, motivated primarily by patriotic feelings, who are more realistic about the possibilities to overcome clashes and differences that have piled on through the years, as a result of the different political systems in the two parts of Korea.

I managed to gather from Kim Yeong-nam's remarks that the recent proposals of the DPRK were meant to stimulate the leftist trends in South Korea, the aggravation of the internal contradictions which exist in the Seoul administration and military circles and only lastly [they aimed at] adopting some practical measures to achieve a relaxation of military tensions.

My interlocutor mentioned that the DPRK would not be able to get along with Park Chung Hee because of his total submission to American and Japanese interests. Kim Yeong-nam hinted at the fact that the DPRK, by launching its well-known proposals, including the proposal referring to signing a peace treaty, wishes to put the South Korean authorities in a delicate position, one in which they cannot accept any of those proposals but at the same time in which they cannot interrupt the dialogue. Although unable to obtain any concrete successes through cooperation, the North Koreans are winning many followers amongst the opponents of Park Chung Hee, who will help the North Koreans topple the current regime in Seoul.

Getting involved in economic, cultural-social exchanges with the South Koreans would only have created more problems and politically it would have been more efficient for the South, which would have used this [opportunity] as a foundation for its separatist tendencies, arguing that the North Koreans recognize South Korea as an economic and commercial partner.

Signed: Dumitru Popa

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