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Report from I. Kurdyukov to V.M. Molotov

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Summary:

Molotov and Kurdyukov discuss political purges under Kim Il Sung, who has established a Stalin-like cult of personality in North Korea and the ongoing relief efforts by various Communist countries to provide food aid to North Korea.

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[handwritten across the top: "to Cdes. Gromyko and Fedorenko.
11 May 1955. V. Molotov"]

to Cde. V. M. MOLOTOV

Records of conversations between Korean officials and officials of the embassies of countries of people's democracy have come to the USSR MFA from our Embassy in the DPRK containing information about several issues concerning the situation in Korea which deserve attention in the opinion of the Far East Department.

1. In a conversation with Embassy Counselor Cde. Petrov Illarion Dmitriyevich Pak, Chairman of the People's Committee of the province of Chagang (a Soviet Korean), reported that there exists an atmosphere of sycophancy and servility in the DPRK Cabinet of Ministers and in the KWP CC. Serious shortcomings in the work of the government and KWP CC are being concealed and papered over. The DPRK government is not always correctly informed of the real situation in the country and consequently sometimes makes erroneous decisions. In particular, such a decision was made about the issue of the tax in kind and grain procurements.

In a conversation with chargé d'affaires Cde. Lazarev Chondoist Party leader Kim Dal-hyeon reported that after fulfilling grain procurement commitments about 70% of peasant members of the Chondoist Party now need food aid from the state themselves and will not be able to cope with the spring planting without this aid.

In a conversation with Cde. Petrov K. [Lazlo], Counselor of the Hungarian Embassy in the DPRK, reported that the Embassy knew of cases of crude pressure on peasants when grain procurement was being carried out and much unrest among the rural and urban populations because it was impossible to buy bread either in stores or on the market.

2. In a conversation with Embassy Counselor Cde. Petrov [Song Din Fa], editor of the journal Novaya Korea [New Korea], reported that Kim Il Sung declared in his speech at the 10th KWP CC plenum that many Korean leaders who had previously worked in other countries have become demoralized, careerist elements. In this connection Kim Il Sung sharply criticized Pak Il-u, Pang Ho-san, and several other Koreans who had come from China and also dwelled on the "Hegai case," then saying, "we did well by isolating him in time." Speaking of the accusations which were made against Pak Il-u by Kim Il Sung in his speech at the plenum, [Son Din Fa] said that Pak Il-u's group had supposedly tried to set itself against the Korean leadership and discredit the work of Soviet military specialists, that during the Korean War Pak Il-u, being the Korean People's Army representative in the joint HQ of the Korean-Chinese command, had spread rumors that he was allegedly appointed to this post by Mao Zedong and he was not subordinate to the Korean command.

In one of the conversations I. D. Pak, Chairman of the People's Committee of the province of Chagang, informed Cde. Petrov that Pak Il-u has very great authority among DPRK senior military leaders and also among Chinese military leaders. In Pak's words, the removal of Pak Il-u from managerial work in the Army caused discontent among Chinese and Korean military specialists. I. D. Pak then noted that during the Korean War Pak Il-u, being the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Korean People's Army, was in close communication with Peng Dehuai, Commanding General of the Chinese People's Volunteers, and now PRC Minister of Defense.

3. In a conversation with Cde. Petrov Czechoslovak Embassy Counselor M. Macuch stressed the fact that the Korean friends continue to extensively propagandize a cult of personality. Macuch said that they excessively praise Kim Il Sung everywhere. Then he referred to a report printed in the Korean press about the 10th KWP CC plenum, noting that in this report Kim Il Sung was mentioned three times as "beloved leader".

Macuch further reported that when studying the Korean press he noted that there are very few critical articles in it and that in those cases where such articles appear they are one-sided: all mistakes and shortcomings are ascribed to low-level officials, but

mistakes by national governing organizations and their officials are hushed up.

Ryu Seong-hun, Rector of the Institute of the Economy, also spoke of the propagandizing of a cult of personality in the DPRK in a conversation with Embassy Counselor Cde. Filatov. Speaking of the state of affairs at the Institute, Ryu Seong-hun pointed out that a number of instructors of the Institute, including instructors of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, political economy, and history, incorrectly understand questions of the role of personality and the popular masses in history. They think that the primary driving force of history is national leaders [vozhdi] and Party and government leaders. At this point they refer to the current practice in the DPRK. They point in particular to the fact that Kim Il Sung decides everything in the DPRK and that nothing is said in the press about the Korean people as the primary driving force in the course of history. They declare that whatever issues are decided in the KWP CC and DPRK government are done only at the instruction of Kim Il Sung.

4. Officials of the Hungarian and Czechoslovak Embassies expressed a number of comments about relations with the Korean friends in conversations with our Embassy officials in the DPRK. In particular, in a conversation with Embassy Counselor Cde. Petrov Hungarian Embassy Counselor K. [Lazlo] reported that the Hungarian Embassy was encountering great difficulties in getting reliable information about the state of affairs in the DPRK. He said that Hungarian Embassy officials can meet with Korean officials only with the permission of the DPRK MFA and at that, in the presence of a DPRK MFA representative.

In a conversation with Cde. Petrov Czechoslovak Embassy Counselor Macuch expressed dissatisfaction that Korean leaders are reluctant to engage in frank conversations in meetings with the Czechoslovak ambassador and do not inform him about the state of affairs in the country.

Macuch also expressed dissatisfaction that Korean leaders refuse Czechoslovakia supplies of some non-ferrous metals, particularly copper. In Machuch's words, Czechoslovakia offered the Koreans aid in the expansion of the existing copper mines in the DPRK and promised to deliver equipment and send their specialists to work in the mining industry. However, the Koreans are avoiding direct talks on this issue. Macuch noted that Czechoslovakia gives the DPRK free aid, but the Koreans are only interested in what they can get from Czechoslovakia.

In the opinion of the Far East Department the facts cited above could be used in conversations with the Korean friends located in Moscow during a discussion with them of issues of the situation in the DPRK.

Please take into consideration. [signature of I. Kurdyukov]