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Information on Some Domestic Problems of North Korea

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Summary:

The German Democratic Republic embassy in Pyongyang reports on the internal problems of North Korea concerning economic relationships with GDR, Koreans who migrated from Japan to North Korea, Polish-North Korean relations, and North Korean agriculture.

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[GDR Ministry for Foreign Affairs]
1st Extra-European Department
Section Korea

Berlin, 16 April 1964

Information on some domestic problems of the DPRK

1. Information from a female GDR citizen married to a Korean who now permanently resides in the DPRK:

Among her circle of personal contacts there are many young Korean engineers and technicians who have studied in the GDR. According to Ms. Choe, this circle has quite a critical attitude about the political and economic development of the DPRK. There are doubts pertaining to the correctness of the political and economic course. An example of this is the remark by a young electronic engineer who works in the Ministry of Transportation. He commented on the instruction by his ministry to no longer order from the GDR electronic security systems for railway lines, because the GDR does not want to deliver them any more: "We probably do not want to pay for them."

Regarding attitudes of Koreans repatriated from Japan in her circle of acquaintances, Ms. Choe stated that most of them want to return to Japan. They draw comparisons between their lives now and their lives back in Japan, arriving at the conclusion they now live worse. This opinion became public at a meeting at Nampo Wharf about the lives of workers under capitalist conditions. There, one repatriated Korean told what he and his son owned and still own in Japan (radio, refrigerator, car, etcetera). This was a singular incident, but it still created confusion at the meeting. The chairs of the meeting completely ignored these remarks.

As the only European in Nampo, Ms. Choe is often asked about developments in Europe, both in the socialist European countries and in the GDR. People mostly ask her about negative things. She was asked whether it is true that the GDR is falling apart, Poland has already left Comecon, and whether the GDR has big economic problems.

An interesting example of the ideological poisoning of the [Korean] people are statements made at a public party meeting for the workers of Nampo Wharf. There it was stated that Khrushchev is an enemy of progress and suppresses the peoples of the Soviet Union. The latter are against Khrushchev's rule and rebel against it. The Korean people have fraternal ties with the peoples of the Soviet Union and harbor deep sympathies for them. However, since the Soviet peoples are incapable of liberating themselves independently from Khrushchev's pressure, one has to liberate them.

2. The Polish ambassador, Comrade Naperai, informed [GDR] Ambassador Becker that he was received one week ago by the DPRK Minister of Higher Education. He had a very tough argument with the minister, also pertaining to differences in opinion between our parties. During that conversation, the minister argued in a very provocative way against the CPSU and other fraternal parties. In his attacks, such as those regarding issues of war and peace and the national liberation movements, he completely embraced the argumentation of the Chinese leadership.

3. Hungarian Ambassador Kovacs commented during a talk with Ambassador Becker on the theses about the development of agriculture published by the KWP at its 8th [Central Committee] Plenum. He viewed it positively that with this plenum some steps are taken to improve the conditions of the rural population. Still, those theses contain a lot of measures without any grounding in reality. Kovacs remarked, so far it was impossible to introduce an 8-hour workday in agriculture in any socialist country and to implement such an extensive program funded by the state. A transfer of large investments from industry into agriculture will automatically lead to problems for socialist industrialization in coming years. It will create disparities in the development of individual sectors of the economy. Like before, the principle of material incentives is hardly recognized. The new theses also repeat this pattern.

This information was compiled from the most recent courier mail [of the GDR embassy in Pyongyang].

[signed]
Wegracht
Acting Head of Section

CC:
1x Comrade Minister Schwab
1x Central Committee, International Relations Department
1x Information Department
1x Embassy Pyongyang
1x Section Korea