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May 31, 1984

Memorandum of Conversation between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung

Citation:

"Memorandum of Conversation between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung", May 31, 1984, Wilson Center Digital Archive, SAPMO-BA, DY 30, 2460. Translated by Grace Leonard. https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/113198

Summary:

Summary of the conversation between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung on 31 May 1984. This is a continuation of the talks suspended on 30 May due to time constraints. Discussion of internal and foreign affairs of East Germany and North Korea, especially concerning relations with China and the Soviet Union.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

Memorandum
[stamp:] Personal Classified Information
Central Committee 02 310
on the meeting between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung on
31 May 1984

E. Honecker used the meeting to address some issues that could not be addressed in greater detail during the official talks on 30 May 1984 due to time constraints.

He stated that the GDR is currently preoccupied with its 35th anniversary. The Party, which has 2.2 million members, is making thorough preparations for the 35th anniversary. The centerpiece is the ideological work, which has led to intense talks with practically every citizen of the GDR.

He said that, as Kim Il Sung could see for himself, the Party is bound to the masses, and there is a good trusting relationship between the Party and the masses. The alliance policy is very important, that is, cooperation with allied Parties, the role of organizations of the masses such as the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions, with 9 million members, the Free German Youth, with 2.3 million members, and the whole range of other organizations of the masses.

He said that the election results of 6 May 1984 could be considered the best in the history of the GDR, both in terms of the election itself and in terms of voter turnout, and attests to the successful policies of the Party and government in carrying out the resolutions of the X Party Congress.

He stated that the Socialist competition in honor of the 35th Anniversary of the GDR is very important. The workers have established as their goal for this to increase productivity by one percent above what is planned. Given the results thus far it can be expected that they will surpass this goal in the competition. Thus net industrial production in the first 5 months of 1984 increased by 7.9 percent. Productivity in the field of industrial ministries increased by 7 percent during the same period. This demonstrates the excellent initiative of the citizens of [line cut off].

He stated that the fact that 6 million citizens received new apartments between 1971 and 1983 alone was very positive for consolidating trust between the Party and the masses. Now the goal is to improve the residential conditions of an additional 4.3 million citizens between 1984 and 1990. Then the issue of apartments in the GDR as a social problem would be resolved in 1990. In addition, there are a number of other measures in the realm of social policy, e.g., the recent resolutions on improving material conditions for families with more than 3 children and the third increase in minimum pensions since 1971.

E. Honecker detailed the activities of organizations of the masses such as the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions, the Free German Youth, the Association of Gardeners and Animal Breeders, the reinvigorated Association for Mutual Farmers Assistance, the scientific institutes of the GDR, the academies and schools of higher education, the development of the general polytechnical school, the activities of artists unions, and much more.

All of this, he said, is going on in our country under conditions that are open to the world, as he had already expressed in 1977, that is, under the immediate observation of the Western adversary's electronic media. Naturally there are a few people who listen to these broadcasters and their daily lies, but it should not be overlooked that

the vast majority of citizens of the GDR, one could even say, the people, stand fast and unalterably with the Party and government, with their republic.

E. Honecker then asked Kim Il Sung his assessment of the situation in China and of the current leadership of the Communist Party of China based on his own experience. For the USSR and also for the GDR and other socialist countries that do not have Party relations with China, China is a country about whose future course there are still many unresolved questions, for instance, as a result of the Reagan visit.

Kim Il Sung responded as follows. When Hu Yaobang visited our country in May, I also told him about my upcoming trip to the Soviet Union and the other Socialist countries. He welcomed it. I had not known Hu Yaobang before this. On the other hand, I have been friends with Deng Xiaoping for a long time. As you know, he was exiled three times during the Cultural Revolution. Deng Xiaoping paid me an unofficial visit for my 70th birthday in April 1982 to introduce Hu Yaobang to me as the new Secretary General of the Communist Party of China. He made a good impression on me from the beginning.

Hu Yaobang told me that he wants to improve governmental relations with the Soviet Union. He asked me to convey this to the leadership of the Soviet Union. Hu Yaobang assured me many times during our lengthy discussion that China is truly interested in improving relations with the Soviet Union. He confirmed this to me again this year. The leadership of the Communist Party of China is of one mind on this issue. He asked me to convey my thoughts on this to our Soviet comrades.

During his visit to the DPRK, he received news that Comrade Arkhipov's planned visit to the People's Republic of China would be pushed back. Comrade Hu Yaobang told me that he had very much been looking forward to this visit. Our Chinese comrades also think highly of Comrade Arkhipov. He used to be an economic advisor in China. Comrade Hu Yaobang said that he very much regretted that Comrade Arkhipov's trip would be pushed back.

I told Comrade Chernenko about this during my meetings with him. I told our Soviet comrades my thoughts both in a personal meeting with Comrade Chernenko and in official negotiations — that the Chinese really want to improve relations with the Soviet Union. The Chinese do not want war. Overcoming the consequences of the Cultural Revolution in the economy and in the standard of living of the population requires a lot of time and effort. All resources must be devoted to this. The Chinese are not developing relations with the US and Japan with the goal of working against another country.

Given the complex world situation, I hope that the Soviet Union and China work things out. I believe that the development of relations with the US is not targeted against the Soviet Union. Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai already told me that when they established relations with the US. They told us every time they met with Japan and the US. The only objective of these relations is to obtain developed technology and credit from Japan and the US. Deng Xiaoping is said to have stated in the US that the arms build-up in the US is good for peace. I don't know if that's so. This is the first time I have heard of Deng Xiaoping expressing a sentiment like that.

It is a fact that the Chinese have improved governmental relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The number of delegations exchanged has grown, as well. All of this can help to reduce the mistrust between the Soviet Union and China. Naturally, I was not able to tell Comrade Chernenko that I think it is a mistake to push back Comrade Arkhipov's visit to China. I just told him that the Chinese regret it. The Presidium of the Central Committee of the Com-munist Party of China has 5 members. Two of them—Wu Xueqian and Li Xiannian— used to be friends with Comrade Arkhipov. Today they are both powerful. Comrade Arkhipov could build trust

in meetings with these two men.

Hu Yaobang told me the following: We sent the Deputy Prime Minister to Comrade Andropov's funeral. During the welcoming meeting, his escort told him that he could meet with anyone he wanted. As is customary with East Asians, he said that he would accommodate himself to whatever his host had arranged. Our Soviet comrades did not understand this correctly. There were meetings with just anyone. Only the Foreign Minister attended Brezhnev's burial. They were sending a message to the Soviet Union by sending the deputy prime minister. But this was not understood.

Kim Il Sung said that he believed that all socialist nations should work toward creating trust between the Soviet Union and China. No new mistrust must be permitted to arise. I have told our Soviet comrades that I believe that the goal of our Chinese comrades is to put Socialism in China in order. They don't want a conflict. I think it is important that China wants to open the gate to socialist nations in the interest of socialist modernization. We should not oppose that. Why should we leave the important Chinese market to the capitalists?

The old generation of leadership in China is dying out. We should show the new generation an opening. If we leave China to the capitalists, there is the risk that China will become a quasi-colony again. We should not close the door in China's face.

Because of our position—the length of our border with China, confrontation with the US and Japan—what we are most afraid of is that China will not stick with socialism. There are 1 billion people in China. We have to make sure that they follow the socialist path rather than some other path. We have to focus on drawing them toward us. In the past there were major anti-Soviet campaigns in China. This is not the case anymore. During the Cultural Revolution there were major propaganda actions against us on the Yalu. There were provocations in North Korea at the time of the Chinese/Soviet conflicts on the Ussuri in 1969. While I was recuperating in the country, I received a call from our Minister of State Security that Chinese troops were crossing the Tumen [River] onto our territory. I gave the order not to shoot, but to let them come ahead so that we could take them on our territory, if necessary. We sent a group of soldiers there. Then the Chinese withdrew. The Chinese have castigated the Soviet Union and even us as revisionists. It lasted about 5 years in our case, and we had to keep our peace because of our situation. We had to be patient.

China has new leadership now. They don't want any conflict with the Soviet Union. They want peaceful co-existence with the US, Japan, India, and even the Soviet Union. There are still no Party relations between the Soviet Union and China. We should all try to use our governmental relations to create an atmosphere that promotes the restoration of Party relations, even between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of China. I ask that you, Comrade Honecker, recommend to our Soviet comrades that they send Comrade Arkhipov to China and furthermore that they begin exchanging delegations. I am convinced that China would never put herself on the side of the US against the Soviet Union. All socialist countries should develop economic ties to China, and should even invest in China. The Chinese wanted to speak to Comrade Arkhipov about opportunities to cooperate in modernizing the numerous plants built by the Soviet Union. I told Hu Yaobang that I would ask the Soviet Union about building a nuclear power plant. Hu Yaobang welcomed this, because it would be better than purchasing one from a capitalist country.

Regarding the incidents on the Chinese/Vietnamese border that you mentioned, which you do not approve of, which you regret, I have only the Chinese press accounts to go by. I know nothing of what actually happened. I consider it very regrettable, because these incidents help neither the Vietnamese nor the Chinese. They do damage to our common tasks, above all bringing the Chinese closer to us. All socialist countries should urge the two great powers to hold out their hands to one

another.

Hu Yaobang has gathered a lot of new people around him. Hu Qili, who in the past was with the World Federation of Democratic Youth—he knows many people from the past, including you, Comrade Honecker. The current Foreign Minister was also involved in the youth organization in the past. There are many other people around Hu Yaobang who used to work in the youth organization. Hu Yaobang himself is still very healthy; he is smart, his theoretical knowledge is good, and he has also made a thorough study of Marxism. Deng Xiaoping works more from behind the scene, but he also believes that they have to develop relations with the Soviet Union. He is the only one of the old functionaries who is still there. I am his friend. In the past the Chinese castigated the Soviet Union as social imperialists. They don't do that any more.

I met Comrade Chernenko for the first time [line cut off]

... I knew him well. He has been to Korea three times. He sent me a personal letter immediately after he was elected. I promised him that I would come to the Soviet Union quickly so that I could travel to the GDR immediately afterwards. But that had to be postponed due to Comrade Andropov's illness. Since I have just gotten to known Comrade Chernenko, I did not know how far I could go with him during our talks. I ask you, Comrade Honecker, to discuss all of these issues with him when you meet. How good it would be for all of us if the Soviet Union and China would reconcile. Japanese journalists have frequently asked my opinion on Sino-Soviet relations. I always said that they are both socialist countries and they therefore belong together. Both the Soviet Union and China are our comrades-in-arms.

To E. Honecker's inquiry about the nature of the group of Koreans living in Japan, Kim Il Sung stated that this was a group formed by the DPRK. We support relations between this group and socialist countries, including the GDR.

Hu Yaobang, Kim Il Sung continued, had me briefed in great detail on his trip to Japan. I support normalization of relations between China and Japan. There are those in Japan who aspire to reviving militarism and the alliance with the US. But Japan in general can have no interest in re-militarization for economic reasons. All of Japan's mass organizations oppose militarization. Much depends on which people are in power. I asked Hu Yaobang about his talks with Nakasone. He told me that Nakasone said that Japan will not become cannon fodder for the Americans. It can't dissociate itself from the US, but does not want to become a lackey of the US. We should all think about that. For the future it could be important whether Nakasone remains prime minister or whether Abe becomes prime minister. In China the Chinese have been courting Abe because they think he would be the better choice. We have to work with the Japanese in a way that ensures that militarism does not recur. I sometimes make harsh statements against Japanese militarism, but we have to work with them anyway. Above all we oppose the US/Japan/South Korea trilateral military alliance. The Japanese have promised the Chinese $2 billion in credit. This is good for the Chinese economy.

I would like to address the socialist market, but today we have no more time.