

April 13, 1955

**Record of a Conversation with Illarion Dmitriyevich
Pak, Chairman of the Jagang Provincial People's
Committee**

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Summary:

Pak discusses the domestic political situation of the DPRK, in which a culture of servility toward Kim Il Sung pervades the political atmosphere and great pressure is placed the on peasants as a result of new agricultural policies.

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[CPSU CC stamp: Secret Copy N° 1
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6 May 1955]

to the CPSU CC
to Cde. I. T. VINOGRADOV

We are sending you records of conversations between officials of the USSR Embassy in the DPRK and Korean officials received in the last mail containing material about the situation in Korea deserving of attention. [We] request you return these documents after use.

Attachment; 25 pages of text

CHIEF OF THE USSR MFA
FAR EAST DEPARTMENT
[signature]
I. KURDYUKOV

6 May 1955
N° [obscured by handwriting]/dv

[handwritten note:
"Very urgent
to Cde. I. S. Shcherbakov
Please discuss
I. [[surname illegible]]"]

2-VP/yub
1 - to the addressee
2 - to file
N° 1292-dv
6 May 1955

FROM THE JOURNAL OF [stamp of N. T. SECRET
Embassy Counsellor Fedorenko's Copy N° 1
A. M. Petrov and Secretariat: [USSR MFA
1st Secretary I. S. Byakov "Secret Far East
Incoming N° Department
489-if stamp:
4 May 1955"] Incoming N°
2026s
4/6 May
1955

Record of a conversation
with Illarion Dmitriyevich
PAK
Chairman of the Jagang Provincial

People's Committee

31 March 1955

On 31 March we invited Illarion Dmitriyevich Pak [Pak Ch'ang-sik] for dinner to the apartment. Pak had arrived in Pyongyang for a KWP CC plenum that opens on 1 April.

Pak is a Soviet Korean, a CPSU member since 1928 who worked for a long time in the USSR in soviet work, beginning with chairman of a village soviet up to chairman of a rayon executive committee. In Korea he has occupied a number of senior posts since 1945: Chairman of the People's Committee of City of Pyongyang, Chairman of the People's Committee of the City of Seoul (in the summer of 1950), and then he worked as Chief of the KWP CC Agriculture Department, Deputy DPRK Minister of Agriculture and member of the KWP CC.

At the present time he works as chairman of the people's committee of the province of Jagang. Pak is in very close relations with a number of senior DPRK officials. This includes Pak Jeong-ae, whom he knew from their work together in the USSR, with Pak Yong-bin [sic], Pak Chang-ok, and Kim Il Sung.

Several issues of the DPRK domestic political situation and the province of Jagang were touched upon in the conversation which took place.

In conversation Pak stressed that an unhealthy atmosphere of sycophancy and servility toward Kim Il Sung exists [among a] majority of senior officials in the Cabinet of Ministers and the KWP CC. Pak said that a negative consequence of this is that big mistakes in work are being concealed. Therefore Kim Il Sung's information about the state of affairs in the DPRK is not objective, and is to a considerable degree sugarcoated [priukrashena]. This had an especially obvious effect on the assessment of the 1954 harvest and in carrying out the grain purchasing campaign.

In reply to our question about what the actual situation with the 1954 harvest is, Pak replied that a majority of leaders of provincial committees officially reported that the harvest of rice and other grains was approximately 30-35 centners per jeongbo, but in fact the net yield was less than 20 centners per jeongbo. Per Pak's statement, this led to a whole series of big mistakes in Party and government policy with respect to the peasantry. For example, according to law the tax in kind from the peasants should be 27% of the harvest for rice and 23% of the harvest for other grains; in fact, in connection with the incorrect, inflated determination of the yield more than 50% of the harvest was taken from the peasants as agricultural tax in kind.

This also explains the inflated grain purchasing plan. The targets for grain purchases extended to each household reached a magnitude of approximately 50% of the tax in kind, which put the poor and middle peasantry in a difficult position. Pak said, the province of Jagang is not an agricultural province. The proportion of manual laborers and office workers is over 60% of the entire population of this province. The peasants of the province are almost 50% khwadenmin (poor peasant farms growing crops in the mountains by clearing [land]). Nevertheless, the grain purchasing plan for the peasants of the province of Jagang was 10,000 tons. The harsh demands from the DPRK leaders to ensure this plan at any cost led to a majority of peasant being left without grain and seeds. Although crude forceful methods were also not used in the province as they were in other provinces, the fulfillment of this plan was done with great stress and great pressure on the peasants.

Pak noted that hostile and kulak elements in the countryside have launched much work to organize massive resistance by the peasants to the grain purchases. Pak said

there were times during the grain purchases when a threat of a widespread action [povsemestnoye vystuplenie] against the grain purchases by the peasants was created. Pak thinks that the peasants' situation was such that they were ready to start an uprising. By decision of the government 7,400 tons of the 10,000 tons of grain purchased from the peasants of the province of Jagang in February were given back in the form of food and seed loans. But, Pak said, this is insufficient to supply the peasants with grain and seeds. In many cases the seed loans are being consumed for food. Therefore right now there is a threat of not fulfilling the planting plan if a seed loan of at least 3,000 tons is not given to our province of Jagang in the near future.

After the well-known KWP CC February plenum decision about the mistakes in the grain purchasing campaign, local Party and government bodies did much explanatory work among the peasants. At the meetings of peasants being held when giving reports local senior officials admitted when giving reports that they had distorted Party and government policy, condemned the compulsory measures, and assured peasants they would not allow this any more in future work.

Pak said, it needs to be recognized that KWP CC and government representatives were not present at these meetings of peasants. At the present time the situation in the countryside has been somewhat alleviated in a positive direction in connection with the explanatory work which has been done and also [with] the aid given in food and seeds.

In reply to our question in regards of the matters of trade in the province of Jagang, Pak replied that the situation of trade remains difficult as before. It is almost impossible to buy bread and other foodstuffs.

Trade in bread at commercial prices in state and cooperative stores has essentially stopped. Workers only live on one food ration consisting of 600-800 grams for manual laborers and office workers and 300 grams for family members. No other products are being issued by ration cards. There are also very few manufactured goods in the stores. Recently cotton fabrics brought in from China appeared in a store. They are being sold at a very expensive price of 300 won per meter. A large quantity of banknotes in 100,000 won [denominations] and above is accumulating in individual groups of the population, prosperous peasants, merchants and craftsmen. In connection with the fact that there are very few goods in the stores and they are of low quality a black speculator's market is appearing where prices, particularly for bread, have been hiked up by 5-6 times and more compared to the previous market prices.

Manual laborers and office workers are very discontent with the deduction of one-day's food ration per month for a so-called fund for peasants suffering from a bad harvest. A voluntary character is given to this but in fact this is being done in a nationwide procedure at the order of the leadership.

We asked how the senior officials of local Party and government bodies are assessing this situation. Pak said in reply to this that the majority of senior officials view the practical politics of the KWP CC and government as mistaken. Pak said that it seems to him that many senior officials intend to make sharp criticism of the shortcomings and mistakes in the work of the CC and government at the upcoming plenum.

Pak is also ready to criticize the government and KWP CC.

We asked Pak to give his opinion about DPRK Minister of Communications Pak Il-u.

Pak said that Pak Il-u has very great authority among senior DPRK military officials

and also among the Chinese military leadership. Pak Il-u's removal from military management work provoked discontent among individual military officials of both the Korean People's Army and the military leadership of the Chinese volunteers. During the Patriotic War Pak Il-u occupied the post of Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Korean People's Army and was in very close contact with General Peng Dehuai, the Commanding General of the Chinese volunteers, now Minister of Defense of the Chinese People's Army [SIC].

Kim Il Sung, taking into account his great authority among DPRK military and civilian leaders, and considering his great authority among Chinese military leaders, is acting correctly in keeping him in the leadership post of DPRK Minister of Communications and also in keeping other officials connected with Pak Il-u in leadership posts.

We thanked Pak for the conversation and asked [him] to come to us at any time.

Pak expressed satisfaction that he had managed to talk from the heart and invited us to be his guest in the province of Jagang.

We thanked him for the invitation and promised to visit him in April.

[signature] (A. Petrov)

[signature] (I. Byakov)

Four copies printed

1 - to Cde. Fedorenko

2 - to the DVO

3 - to Cde. Tugarinov

4 - to file

Nº 315

Drafted by Petrov and Byakov

Typed by Sarycheva

13 April 1955