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Record of a Conversation with Canadian Ambassador to the USSR R. Ford

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Summary:

S.P. Kozyrev and the Canadian Ambassador review Soviet policy toward the resolution of the Pueblo Incident and the connections between developments in Vietnam and the military situation on the Korean Peninsula.

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from the journal [redacted] 2 February 1968
of S. P. Kozyrev, [redacted] N° 140/GS-ns

Record of a conversation with Canadian Ambassador to the USSR R. Ford

2 February 1968

I received Ford at his request.

Referring to our conversation of 28 January about the detention of the American ship by the DPRK Ford said that he would like to continue the discussion of this issue. If he correctly understood the point of view of the Soviet side it basically comes down to the following: 1) the US should not yield to emotion and should examine the issues associated with this incident in a calm businesslike atmosphere; 2) the US should abandon the threat to use force in order to settle the incident; 3) there should be direct talks about this issue between the Americans and the North Koreans; 4) it is necessary to eliminate the fever of propaganda and the campaign and uproar around the discussion of this matter in the Security Council.

The Ambassador noted that the government of Canada is grateful with respect to these ideas and, for its part, has used its influence both in Washington and New York for the quickest possible settlement of the incident by customary peaceful means. At the present time it seems that there is an opportunity to begin direct talks between the Americans and the North Koreans within the framework of the Armistice Observation Commission [Translator's note: SIC, probably the Military Armistice Commission] in Korea and this opportunity ought not be lost.

Ford then reported that the Canadian government was especially interested in the Americans purpose in sending the aircraft carrier Eisenhower and other American warships to the shores of the DPRK. The Americans, in the Ambassador's words, replied in the sense that the interested sides themselves can determine with what purpose the American ships were sent to this region, especially since the Eisenhower is located 290 miles from Busan and not Wonsan, which substantially changes the matter.

The Ambassador noted that the Soviet side of course cannot verify the reliability of this information and expressed a desire to hear possible additional views of the Soviet side with respect the prospects for settling the incident with the American ship Pueblo.

I promised to report to the Minister about the ideas expressed by the Ambassador.

I then said that the position of the Soviet Union about the incident was described in detail during the last conversation.

As regards the Ambassador's comment regarding American attempts to discuss this issue in the Security Council, the Soviet Union has always opposed and does oppose putting the Korean issue on the Security Council's agenda. Right now the issue concerning this incident is about reasons of principle and not just because this promotes the spreading the uproar around the incident with the Pueblo which has begun in the US. I expressed satisfaction about the favorable attitude of the Canadian government toward the position of the Soviet Union with regard to the issue about the Pueblo incident and the efforts undertaken by Canada in order to settle this incident with the methods which are customary and generally accepted in international practice. I stressed the importance of settling this question through direct talks between the interested countries, that is, between the US and the DPRK.

As regards the aircraft carrier Eisenhower and the other American warships then they were undoubtedly sent to the shores of Korea with the object of placing pressure on the DPRK. The transfer of combat aircraft to South Korea is being done for these same purposes. It stands to reason that the DPRK will not agree to a settlement under the threat of their use of force or pressure in any form whatsoever.

Having noted that he was expressing his personal opinion, Ford tried to make a link between the latest serious attacks against the Americans by South Vietnamese patriots and the incident with the ship Pueblo. Personally he, the Ambassador, does not believe that such a connection exists but if it does this undoubtedly complicates the position of the Americans and, in particular, the withdrawal of their troops from Korea. The Ambassador was then interested in whether talks between the Koreans and the Americans would lead to positive results.

I replied that there really is a connection between the events in Vietnam and Korea in the sense that the US is pursuing the same policy of aggression and interference in the internal affairs of Vietnam, Korea, and other countries. The Americans love to talk of their desire for peace and easing of tensions, however the facts and their deeds are evidence of the opposite. The US does not want to withdraw its troops from Korea and other countries and continues provocative acts against the peoples of these countries, leading matters to a worsening of the situation. The Canadian government knows very well the point of settlement of the Soviet side with regard to US foreign policy. As regards the actions of the South Vietnamese patriots, we understand these actions for no people can live under the bayonets of occupiers.

I told the Ambassador about a statement of a senior DPRK leader, in which it clearly said that the DPRK government is not willing to talk with the US under pressure or threats but will be ready to talk with the Americans if they want a settlement by the customary means accepted in international practice. In this event, it is the US which is violating international law and the sovereignty of the DPRK, and it ought to take steps in the direction of settling this matter. The ball is now in their court.

In connection with the Ambassador's statement with regard to a so-called stage-by-stage solution of the problems in this region, namely first settling the Pueblo incident and then the Vietnamese problem, I said that here, too, everything depends on the US and its approaches to these problems. If the US really wants a peaceful settlement of these problems then they ought to act in a different manner. However, their words about a desire for peace do not match their deeds. Instead of settling the Pueblo incident by customary peaceful means the US has begun to concentrate its naval forces along the shores of Korea and has increased its air forces in South Korea, thereby aggravating the already tense situation in this region further. The Americans are pursuing the same policy in Vietnam. Not without reason a few days ago P[aul] Martin, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, called the US position with respect to settling the Vietnam conflict "inflexible"! However, Martin is evidently conscientiously mistaken for the Americans, judging from everything, are not trying to settle this problem at all and are pursuing the matter toward a further escalation of the war, refusing to stop the bombing and other military actions against the DRV, and are ignoring the proposals of the DRV and NFOYuV [National Front for the Liberation of Vietnam] with regard to ways to peacefully settle the Vietnam problem.

The Ambassador thanked [me] for the explanations.

Ye. N. Makeyev, Deputy Chief of the 2nd European Department, and V. I. Dolgov, 3rd Secretary of the Department, were present at the conversation.

DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (S. Kozyrev)

Send to CPSU CC Politburo members and candidate members

27 February 1968. A. Gromyko