

New Evidence on North Korea in 1956

Introduction by James F. Person

Few events since the end of the 1950-1953 Korean War have had such enduring political relevance in the 60-year history of the North Korean party-state as the three-year dispute in the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) over development strategies that culminated in the summer of 1956. Yet, due to the secretive nature of the regime and the paucity of documentary evidence from Korean and other archives, little has been known about this pivotal event until recently. While accounts of the episode have appeared in many histories of modern Korea,¹ they have largely focused on the August 1956 Plenum of the KWP Central Committee (CC), which is generally portrayed as the climax of a decade-long power struggle between four factions: the so-called "Soviet faction" composed of ethnic Koreans who lived in the Soviet Union and were sent to serve in administrative positions in northern Korea after 1945; the "Yan'an faction," made up of those Koreans who lived in China during Japan's colonial rule over Korea; the "domestic faction" of veteran communist Bak Heonyeong; and Kim Il Sung's own "Gapsan faction" of former anti-Japanese guerrilla fighters. According to the standard narrative, following the purge of Bak and his supporters in 1953 for allegedly attempting to seize power, only Kim Il Sung's group and the foreign supported "Soviet" and "Yan'an" factions remained. Mirroring to a certain degree North Korea's official historiography, the August 1956 Plenum is generally portrayed as an abortive *coup d'état* orchestrated by the "Soviet" and "Yan'an" factions.²

Recent accounts by Russian scholar Andrei Lankov and Hungarian scholar Balazs Szalontai have shed additional light on the actions of key actors in the weeks and months before the August Plenum.³ Drawing on newly released materials from the Soviet and Hungarian archives, both scholars describe the clandestine efforts of the "Soviet" and "Yan'an" factions to challenge the KWP leadership, hastily organized during North Korean leader Kim Il Sung's absence from the country while on a month-long trip to fraternal communist countries. Their conclusions about the severity of the threat to Kim Il Sung, however, differ rather sharply. Lankov argues that from the beginning, Kim's opponents sought to unseat him.⁴ Despite agreeing with Lankov about the factional origins of the conflict, Szalontai, by

contrast, concludes that the attack on Kim Il Sung's policies at the August Plenum "was a desperate attempt to turn the tide rather than a serious challenge to Kim's rule."⁵

The documentary evidence on post-war North Korea has been greatly enhanced recently through the release of documents at the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI), the post-Stalin Central Committee archive. These documents, some of which are presented below, originated with the Central Committee Department for Relations with International Communist Parties, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPSU) own foreign policy organ.⁶ Some of the documents were also analyzed by Japanese scholar Nobuo Shimotomai, who accessed them in microfilm copy at the Slavic Research Center in Hokkaido, Japan. As I argue in CWIHP Working Paper No. 52,⁷ the new documents reveal that contrary to the common wisdom on factional power struggles, a myriad of factors and motivations played into the pivotal events of 1956. Kim and his opponents did not simply compete for raw power, they also had clear ideological and practical preferences and differences. Indeed, as the newly available materials seem to suggest, the precipitating cause of events at the August 1956 Plenum was not a factional power struggle or Kim Il Sung's prolonged absence from the country during the summer of 1956; rather, after a three-year dispute over socialist development strategies, opponents of Kim Il Sung's vision for modernizing the DPRK made a final, desperate attempt to convince the North Korean leader to adopt post-Stalin Soviet-style "New Course" economic reforms. Moreover, they sought to rid the party of nationalist elements hostile to foreign influences, and place limits on the growing personality cult in North Korea.

In light of the new documentary evidence, the events of 1956 can no longer be examined with a narrow focus on a power struggle between groups with diverse revolutionary backgrounds. Such an approach to a large degree mirrors North Korea's official historiography in that it is narrated "in terms of Kim Il Sung's supremacy over all [...] political challenges, from within and without."⁸ Factional rivalries, the documents suggest, were exaggerated by Kim Il Sung as a pretext to purge policy opponents. Rather than a factional power struggle, the events of

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1956 have to be seen in the context of the broader theme of competing visions for socialist modernization, both inside the North Korean party-state and throughout the communist bloc. Another factor we must be mindful of is Kim Il Sung's determination to limit the influence of those he felt did not fully appreciate the realities of life in North Korea, i.e. the Soviet and Chinese parties, and their minions inside the KWP. This necessitates a comprehensive reexamination of the DPRK's history from the end of the Korean War in 1953 through the August Plenum of 1956.

The debate over development strategies in North Korea began within weeks of the 1953 armistice that brought an end to hostilities in the Korean War, when two policy lines (*gyeyeoul*) emerged in the wake of the Sixth Plenum of the KWPC. On the one hand, Kim Il Sung and his supporters advocated the Stalin-inspired development of heavy industry at the expense of light industry and consumer goods, and the rapid collectivization of agriculture. His opponents, on the other hand, most of who were Soviet-Koreans or those who spent time in China during the period of Japanese colonial rule, encouraged the development of light industry and consumer durables. The latter, given the appellation the "consumer goods group," vigorously encouraged Kim Il Sung to mechanically replicate modernization strategies promoted by the post-Stalin Soviet leadership in other fraternal socialist countries. Moreover, members of the "consumer goods group" supported North Korea's further integration into the international division of labor through the reinvigorated Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON).

Kim Il Sung had very practical reasons for rejecting these appeals of his policy opponents, however. First, he equated industrialization with strength at a time when South Korean president Syngman Rhee continued to engage in saber-rattling and the Republic of Korea witnessed a massive influx of US aid. Moreover, he was certain a strong DPRK would appeal to left-leaning South Koreans. Furthermore, Kim recognized that integrating the DPRK's economy into the international division of labor meant foregoing industrial development since North Korea was expected to simply export its natural resources and marine products to COMECON member countries. Kim Il Sung was first and foremost a nationalist, and with Korea emerging from a centuries-old Sino-centric system of relations and 35 years of Japanese colonial rule, he would not willingly subordinate his country by entering into a new suzerain system of "serving the great" (*sadae*) with the Soviet Union.

As the documents presented in this section suggest, in February 1956, after nearly three years of debate over development strategies, members of the "consumer goods group" were boosted in their efforts by developments in the Soviet Union. During the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), Nikita Khrushchev launched his attack on Joseph Stalin, condemning the former leader for his personality cult and violations of intra-party democracy. The "consumer goods group" seized the opportunity to level the same charges against Kim Il Sung, who was also guilty of many of the charges Khrushchev made during the so-called "secret speech." Emboldened by Khrushchev's attack on Stalin, the "consumer

A NOTE ABOUT THE REVISED ROMANIZATION OF KOREAN

CWIHP has adopted the Revised Romanization of Korean (2000), the official Korean language Romanization system in South Korea. Among the notable changes to the Romanization of Korean words and names, the breve has been eliminated and aspirated consonants (as in k', t', p', ch') have no apostrophe. Moreover, the "k," "t," "p," and "ch" are now with letters that are voiced in English: g, d, b, and j. With the exception of Kim Il Sung, the surname Kim is now rendered Gim. The surname Lee is now rendered as Yi or Li, and Pak (or Park) is written as Bak.

Pak Hon-yong	—	Bak Heonyeong
P'yongyang	—	Pyeongyang
Pak Chong-ae	—	Bak Jeongae
Kim Sung-hwa	—	Gim Seunghwa

goods group" added to its list of criticisms and openly questioned the advisability of disregarding fraternal experiences with de-Stalinization while continuing to encourage "New Course" economic reforms advocated by the post-Stalin Soviet leadership. They also began to meet with the staff of the Soviet and Chinese embassies to encourage foreign communist leaders to intervene on their behalf and to admonish Kim Il Sung and the KWP leadership during "friendship visits" to the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Mongolia in June and July.

During his trip throughout Eastern Europe in June and July 1956, Kim Il Sung admitted to the correctness of the comradely advice in the presence of fraternal leaders. Yet, upon returning to Pyongyang in mid-July, he was reluctant to comply with the recommendations of Khrushchev and other foreign communist officials. His reluctance to make changes, at least at the pace his critics considered necessary, convinced members of the "consumer goods group" of the need to make one last appeal during the August plenum. Far from an attempted coup d'état, members of the "consumer goods group" attempted to bring their case directly to the Central Committee, stressing the need to learn from the experiences of fraternal communist parties and implement a post-Stalin Soviet-style development strategy in North Korea. They also sought to purge nationalist elements hostile to the influence of the Soviet and Chinese parties in the party. Believing that the majority of the CC would support their proposed reforms, Kim's policy opponents sought to accomplish this course change by engaging in pointed criticism and self-criticism, without removing Kim Il Sung from power so long as he complied in making the necessary changes. Indeed, as more than one document in this collection reveals, the most prominent members of the "consumer goods group" considered Kim a competent, if somewhat inexperienced leader, who deserved to retain his position at the helm of the North Korean party-state.

As the documents demonstrate, Kim Il Sung prepared well

in advance for what he apparently perceived as a showdown, and threatened those who sympathized with his policy opponents with blackmail. The members of the “consumer goods group” were thus easily silenced during the plenum. They were subsequently purged and declared factionalists. Curiously, the first mention of a “Soviet” or “Yan’an” faction does not appear in documents until after the so-called “August factional incident” of 1956. From late 1955 onward, Kim Il Sung came under increasing pressure from Khrushchev and other Soviet officials to reform the North Korean economy. He responded, throughout the months leading up to August 1956 by creating separate group identities for the members of the “consumer goods group,” based on their revolutionary backgrounds. He did this by launching broad-based attacks on the most contrived grounds. This was the case with the Soviet-Koreans in December 1955, when individuals were accused of supporting reactionary authors from the south while neglecting the achievements of North Korean authors with proper revolutionary credentials. After creating separate group identities for his policy opponents, by August 1956, Kim Il Sung could successfully declare them factionalists, making the existence of separate “Soviet” and “Yan’an” factions an ontological reality.

The joint Sino-Soviet party intervention of September 1956, led by CPSU CC member Anastas Mikoyan and PRC Defense Minister Peng Dehuai, served only to further alienate Kim Il Sung from the socialist bloc. Thus, Kim hastened his transition from internationalist, fraternal socialism to an indigenous version of Marxism-Leninism, or “Korean-style socialism”⁹ and the anti-hegemonic *Juche* ideology.

Most of the documents presented in this collection are memoranda of conversations that took place between Soviet embassy officials and both North Korean leaders and Chinese embassy staff. Additional meetings occurred in Moscow between the North Korean ambassador and Soviet Foreign Ministry officials. The documents cover the period from March to October 1956, i.e. from one month before the KWP Third Congress to a few weeks after the September Plenum and joint Sino-Soviet party intervention led by Mikoyan and Peng. It is no coincidence that copies of many of the documents found in RGANI are also housed in the Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVPRF). As the CPSU’s analogous organ to the Soviet Union’s Foreign Ministry, and given the strong interest in preserving Marxist-Leninist principles in the foreign policy of the Soviet party-state, the documents of the Central Committee Department for Relations with International Communist Parties make RGANI as valuable a resource as AVPRF in studying Moscow’s relations with fraternal nations from 1953-1957. However, the arbitrary nature in which documents are either released or withheld from scholars at the Foreign Ministry Archive sometimes make the more systematic Central Committee archives, under the auspices of Rosarkhiv, more accessible once documents have gone through the declassification process.¹⁰ This appears to have been the case with documents pertaining to the opposition movement in the DPRK in 1956.

Document #1 in the collection is a memorandum of a conversation between the Soviet ambassador to the DPRK, V. I. Ivanov, and vice premier and chairman of the State Planning Committee, Bak Changok. Bak, a prominent member of a group of ethnic Koreans sent to North Korea from the Soviet Union from 1945-1948, served in a number of influential administrative positions in both the party and state for over a decade. Much like other “Soviet-Koreans,” Bak maintained regular contact with the Soviet embassy throughout his career in North Korea. After the contentious issue of postwar economic rehabilitation placed Bak and many of his former compatriots in opposition to Kim Il Sung, the “Great Leader” responded by unleashing a smear-campaign against Soviet-Koreans in the fall of 1955 in an attempt to create a group identity for the Soviet-Koreans, making them easier to purge in the future. Most of Bak’s statements in the March 1956 meeting were designed to redeem himself in the eyes of Soviet officials after the KWP CC accused him of being anti-party. Yet, the account is nonetheless valuable in that it provides details of the anti-Soviet-Korean campaign and the inner workings of the KWP in the turbulent period that enveloped the communist world following the death of J. V. Stalin in March 1953.

Document #2 is a Soviet-edited draft of the KWP statutes adopted at the Third Party Congress in April 1956. The document is fascinating in that it reveals Moscow’s “New Course” in international relations by suggesting the elimination of language considered by the embassy to be of a “warlike character.” Just three years after a ceasefire effectively brought an end to hostilities on the Korean peninsula, however, the North Koreans, as well as the Chinese, were evidently troubled by the notion of peaceful coexistence with the West. Thus, many of the Soviet-suggested revisions, including the elimination of bellicose terminology, were simply disregarded in the final version adopted at the congress. Yet in partial recognition of the changed situation in the communist world, and as a minor concession to critical party functionaries, Stalin’s name was struck from the list of ideological bellwethers guiding party activities. The KWP now described itself as simply Marxist-Leninist.¹¹

Document #3, a memorandum of a conversation between Kim Il Sung and Soviet Ambassador Ivanov, reveals that Bak Heonyeong, the veteran Korean Communist leader and former North Korean foreign minister who was accused of being an American spy and sentenced to death in 1955, was still alive in early 1956. Nearly every history of modern Korea claims that Bak had been executed swiftly following his December 1955 sentencing, nearly two years after his fellow conspirators were put to death for allegedly attempting to overthrow Kim Il Sung and create a pro-American government. Bak’s purported factional activities, which supposedly took place throughout the 1950-1953 Korean War, resulted in the demise of the group of Korean communists who had remained in the country throughout the 35-year Japanese colonial occupation. During the conversation, Ivanov informed Kim that several members of the DPRK government visited the Soviet embassy to consult the resident KGB advisor on Soviet interests in prevent-

ing the execution. Infuriated by this, and by Ivanov's personal observation that carrying out the sentence would be inexpedient, Kim suggested the party had already reached a unanimous decision on the matter, and that those making individual inquiries were in breach of the principle of democratic centralism. As this and other documents in this collection reveal, throughout the spring and summer Kim's patience was being tested by those violating the iron will of the party.

Documents #4 and #10 are memoranda of conversations between North Korean ambassador to the Soviet Union, Li Sangjo, and two Soviet Foreign Ministry officials held shortly after Li returned to his post in Moscow following the Third Congress of the KWP. While both meetings were officially arranged to discuss Kim Il Sung's upcoming trip to the Soviet Union and other fraternal countries, Li used the opportunity to voice his displeasure with the outcome of the Third Party Congress. By the time of the two meetings, Li was already an outspoken critic of Kim Il Sung's cult of personality, the post-war reliance on heavy industry, and the party's ideological work. These memoranda are significant since Li encouraged Soviet leaders, specifically Nikita Khrushchev, to criticize Kim Il Sung and the North Korean government delegation during their visit to Moscow. The promotion of Kim's nationalistic former guerrilla allies to leadership positions within the KWP was becoming so prominent that Li and other party officials, especially the Soviet-Koreans and those former members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), considered outside intervention necessary to complement the direct criticism of Kim and his ex-comrades-in-arms that was taking place inside the DPRK. The "consumer goods group" thus took a multi-front approach to encourage Kim Il Sung to adopt post-Twentieth Party Congress-style reforms and to purge the KWP leadership of nationalist elements: direct criticism at home, coupled with the dressing-down of Kim during his trip to the USSR, Eastern Europe, and Mongolia.

DPRK Deputy Prime Minister Choe Changik, who according to most accounts was the leader of the so-called "Yan'an [Chinese] faction," met with Ivanov twice in early June [**Documents #7 and #9**]. During these meetings, Choe expressed many of the same sentiments Li Sangjo shared with Soviet Foreign Ministry officials upon returning to his post in Moscow. Most notably, Choe also considered outside intervention necessary in order to correct the policies of the KWP, claiming that he did not see the necessary forces inside the party to do this on their own.

Choe also noted that the KWP leadership had developed the "harmful" practice of selecting cadres based not on their professional or political qualities, but based on their revolutionary backgrounds, i.e., those who lived in China, the Soviet Union, or remained in Korea. This practice, Choe alleged, was designed to engender "nepotism" and conflict among cadres. Prominent Soviet-Korean Bak Uiwan expressed the same concern with Ambassador Ivanov just days before [**Document #6**], noting that Kim Il Sung was dividing workers into "Soviet, local, Southerners, and partisans" and consciously sought to

maintain "proportions" in the party leadership.

Curiously, Choe also spent a considerable amount of time defending the Soviet-Koreans who had come under increasing attack since the end of 1955. Although it can be argued that Choe did this only because he was in the presence of the Soviet ambassador, this does not explain Choe's request for Soviet assistance which, along with the defense of the beleaguered Soviet-Koreans, seems to contradict the standard narrative which examines North Korean history through the lens of factional rivalry.

Document #11 is the memorandum of a conversation between the Soviet charge d'affaires, A. Petrov, and the North Korean head of the Department of Construction Materials under the Cabinet of Ministers, Li Pilgyu. Held on 20 July, the day after Kim Il Sung's return from his extended trip abroad, Yi's visit to the Soviet embassy was likely precipitated by the "Great Leader's" lack of response to the comradely advice he received while abroad. According to the DPRK ambassador to the USSR, as reported by Li, Kim Il Sung allegedly failed to give an account of the CPSU CC's recommendations to the KWP CC upon returning to Pyongyang. In Moscow, Kim "admitted to the CPSU CC the correctness of the comments addressed to the KWP leadership but on return to Korea he began to act to the contrary" [**Document #17**]. Li Pilgyu's meeting with Petrov was the first of four visits between 20 and 24 July to the Soviet embassy, three of which were apparently coordinated to inform the legation of events to come. Indeed, once the "consumer goods group" decided to take matters into its own hands, members visited not only the Soviet embassy, but also the Chinese embassy, though records of these meetings have not yet emerged [**see Document #13**].

Li Pilgyu, like numerous other members of the "consumer goods group," had moved to China during Japan's 35-year colonial occupation of Korea where he became active in the Chinese communist movement. Most scholars have labeled those who returned from China, like Li, as the "Yan'an faction," one of four so-called "factions" comprising the leadership of the North Korean party-state.¹² The other alleged groups included, as noted, the "Soviet" faction, the "domestic" faction, and Kim Il Sung's "guerrilla" faction. As I argue in *CWIHP Working Paper No. 52*, however, despite the history of factionalism in Yi Dynasty Korea and in the early Korean communist movement, there was no inherent antagonism or hostility, and certainly no "intense factional rivalry"¹³ among those who comprised the leadership of the DPRK.

The existence of four factions is not supported by the available documentary evidence. The widely held notion of four factions appears to be the direct result of Kim Il Sung's divide-and-conquer policies of the mid-1950s. Only after the purportedly factionalist groups were defeated, were they retroactively charged with the sin of factionalism. Before 1953, purges were targeted not at whole groups of functionaries with ties to either the Soviet Union or China, but at individuals. Following the war and the prolonged debate on development strategies, however, Kim began to attack those who had conducted their revo-

lutionary activities abroad (i.e. Soviet-Koreans and returnees from China), warning against attempting to “emulate or imitate others.” This was in response to what Kim perceived as the dogmatic adherence of the Soviet-Koreans and returnees from China to developments in the fraternal parties. As the prominent Soviet-Korean Bak Uiwan noted, “more than ever before, the Soviet-Koreans, Chinese-Koreans, and domestic Koreans, etc., [were] being separately defined. Dividing into groups [...] does not strengthen the party, but weakens it.”¹⁴ Bak Uiwan was not alone in observing this threat to party unanimity. Indeed, the alleged “factions” actually resented and resisted being categorized as such. For example, as DPRK Ambassador to Moscow Li Sangjo explained [Document #21], “Comrade Kim Il Sung and his supporters took revenge on the comrades who spoke [at the August Plenum], declaring them ‘the anti-party Yan’an group’ and ‘conspirators’ trying to overthrow the party and the government.” Moreover, “Korean Communists who had come from the USSR were called ‘the nepotist group’ [...] Only the partisans who had fought under the leadership of Kim Il Sung and members of the ‘Korean Fatherland Restoration Association in Manchuria’ did not belong to groups and comprise the main backbone of the party.” “Characteriz[ing] under various names by groups,” he claimed, has “cast the shadow of anti-party activity on them.” Thus, according to Li Sangjo, “the so-called Yan’an group [...] which in fact did not exist in nature, was fabricated. As a result, intra-party democracy and party unity were undermined even more.” Those who were not former comrades-in-arms of Kim Il Sung, Li suggested, “must wear the stigma of factionalism.”

Although it has been stressed that Li Pilgyu’s visit to the Soviet embassy was highly irregular given his “factional” affiliation,¹⁵ it was in fact not out of the ordinary as other officials from the “Yan’an” group consulted Soviet embassy officials on both official and unofficial business. While there was certainly mistrust between individual functionaries with different revolutionary backgrounds (there were also well known conflicts within groups, such as the acrimony between Soviet-Koreans A.I. Hegai and Bak Changok), there does not appear to have been any widespread animosity between the Soviet-Koreans and returnees from China that would have prevented Li from visiting the Soviet embassy. Indeed, the manner in which the Soviet-Koreans and returnees from China cooperated in encouraging Kim Il Sung to learn from the successes of the Soviet and Chinese parties first in post-war economic debates should raise questions about the notion of deep factional divisions. Moreover, Li Pilgyu spent two years in Moscow at the CPSU Higher Party School shortly after Korea’s liberation; something that was not unusual for members of the other alleged “factions,” either.

Li Pilgyu appears to have been very forthcoming with the Soviet charge d’affaires during their meeting. He first clarified the range of criticisms being made against Kim Il Sung and the KWP leadership. These included the distortion of revolutionary history, encouraging the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung, and cronyism. Second, Li indicated the extent to which the oppo-

nents were prepared to go in order to correct the course of the party. After engaging in sharp criticism and encouraging self-criticism, they sought to “replac[e] the present leadership.” Taken in isolation, this statement appears to support the claims that the group sought to carry out a *coup d’état* or that replacing Kim Il Sung was their primary task. However, according to the record, Li then admitted that “Kim Il Sung will not likely be in favor of that way...” Had the intention of the “consumer goods group” been to overthrow Kim Il Sung, as some have suggested, then Li Pilgyu would have no reason to be concerned about the “Great Leader’s” attitude towards their method. Moreover, as suggested by the statements of other members of the consumer goods group, including Bak Uiwan and Li Sangjo, they sought to purge only Kim’s cronies who were perceived as being elements hostile to foreign influences. If, as Li feared, that approach failed, then as a last resort, “the second way” to resolve the situation was “forcible upheaval.”

The three other visitors to the embassy from 20-24 July were Bak Changok, who, as noted, was a Soviet-Korean, Choe Chang-ik, like Li Pilgyu of the Yan’an group, and Nam Il, another Soviet-Korean. Document #12 is a memorandum of the conversation Petrov held with Nam Il on 24 July. Nam Il was the North Korean foreign minister and a staunch supporter of Kim Il Sung. Nam Il’s visit to the embassy was not to inform the embassy of the group’s plans, but to seek advice on what position to take and to determine the mood of Soviet diplomats. This exchange is significant in that it illustrates the attitude the Soviet embassy took to the idea of criticizing Kim Il Sung and his allies at the plenum – one of skepticism and apprehension. Embassy officials even suggested that Nam Il dissuade Bak Changok and other Soviet-Korean opponents from taking part in the criticism since it might send the “wrong impression.” We can assume that what was meant by “wrong impression” is that the criticism would be misperceived as a Soviet attack on Kim Il Sung.

Although no records have yet come to light, it becomes clear that Nam Il’s 24 July meeting with Petrov was not his only encounter with Soviet diplomats following the return of the government delegation. On 28 July, Nam Il went to the embassy with another Soviet-Korean ally of Kim Il Sung, Bak Jeongae, and then once more alone on 1 August.¹⁶ According to an account later given to Ivanov by North Korean Deputy Premier Bak Uiwan, Kim Il Sung reportedly relayed the history of the “anti-party” movement in his closing speech at the 1 August KWP Plenum, stating that there were rumors of a Soviet official sent to the Soviet embassy in the DPRK to deal with the personality cult and to coordinate the activities of the “consumer goods group” [see Document #19]. Kim boasted that he sent Nam Il and Bak Jeongae to the embassy to determine the authenticity of these reports, which he alleged were false. Moreover, he claimed that the Soviet ambassador explicitly informed Nam Il that the Soviet government was opposed to any criticism of Kim Il Sung.

Document #14 reveals that after months of direct criticism, Kim Il Sung had fully expected the showdown at the

upcoming 1 August plenum and was prepared to go to great lengths to prevent it from occurring. On the eve of the August Plenum, Bak Uiwan met with Ivanov and explained that Kim Il Sung's report to the upcoming August Plenum was accepted by a meeting of the KWP CC Presidium although he claimed there were unnecessary references to factionalism within the party. Bak also noted that fellow Soviet-Korean and member of the "consumer goods group" Gim Seunghwa had been sent to Moscow to study just two days prior to the start of the plenum. According to Kim Il Sung, Gim Seunghwa was "mixed up in some unsavory business" and had to leave. This, and a 5 September memorandum of a conversation between Li Sangjo and N. Fedorenko, Soviet deputy foreign minister, [Document #17], show the amount of intrigue and coercion Kim Il Sung was capable of in his efforts to silence his critics. Li describes how Bak Uiwan was blackmailed into supporting Kim Il Sung at the plenum after being threatened with compromising material.

Kim's efforts proved successful at the party plenum. Not only were his critics silenced in an orchestrated display of unity, four actually fled to China in fear of retribution [see Document #16]. The most visible of the critics were purged from the KWP and expelled from their posts [see Document #15]. Document #15 in the collection is Kim Il Sung's personal account of the KWP CC Presidium meeting and the August Plenum as relayed to Ivanov on 1 September, the day after the plenum had concluded. Kim began by explaining that in preparation for the plenum, members of the KWP CC Presidium agreed that it would be best not to focus too much on the alleged cult of personality in the party. He proceeded to describe the actions of the opposition at the plenum, characterizing them as "anti-party" because of their criticisms of the leadership. Moreover, he depicted the KWP CC as being unified in its outrage over those who rejected the general line of the party during the plenum. Furthermore, Kim informed the ambassador of the flight of the four "consumer goods group" members to China and of their expulsion from the party for their anti-party and "criminal" activities.

Document #16 is the record of a conversation between the Soviet and Chinese ambassadors in the DPRK shortly after the KWP August plenum. Chinese Ambassador Qiao Xiao Guang first briefly described the amount of aid that Kim Il Sung had requested from the PRC at a recent meeting before proceeding to inform Ivanov of "an extremely serious event [...] concerning the relations between the DPRK and the PRC" – the flight of the four members of the "consumer goods group" to China. In their discussion of the events surrounding the August Plenum, the ambassadors provided more details of the activities of members of the "consumer goods group" even prior to Kim Il Sung's departure for Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Mongolia in June. Moreover, the document further reveals the level of ambivalence Ivanov initially displayed, even suggesting that the criticisms were unnecessary since, based on an earlier meeting with Kim [Document #15], he understood that "all of these issues were touched upon in the address of

Kim Il Sung and approved by all members of the Presidium." (This is ironic because by 1961, Kim Il Sung would allege that Ivanov personally orchestrated the moves of the "consumer goods group" from the embassy.¹⁷) In a concluding statement, the Soviet ambassador appeared to be seeking reassurance from the Chinese ambassador about foreign influence on the proceedings of the plenum by stating delicately that "the issues which arose in the KWP are serious and were not stimulated by any outside factors, Soviet or Chinese, but were a domestic process taking place within the KWP."

Document #17 is the memorandum of a conversation between DPRK Ambassador Li Sangjo and Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs N.T. Fedorenko and a letter addressed to N.S. Khrushchev. Li sought a meeting with either Khrushchev or A.I. Mikoyan to press upon the Soviet leadership the gravity of the situation inside the DPRK and KWP CC following the August Plenum. In the letter, Li described in detail the actions of the party leadership after being criticized both before and during the August Plenum. Li suggested that the challenge was a democratic one aimed at eliminating the serious consequences of the personality cult and ensuring intra-party democracy and collective leadership, completely in accordance with the statutes of the KWP accepted at the Third Party Congress in April 1956. However, sycophantic and hostile elements in the party leadership "took revenge" on those who "courageously" criticized them. Li, who had long been a proponent of outside intervention, encouraged even further fraternal assistance. Despite the failure of earlier attempts to press upon Kim Il Sung the need to reform through comradely criticism by fraternal leaders, Li asked that a senior Soviet official be sent to Pyeongyang to call a new plenum with all present, including the purged members of the consumer goods group. Li also indicated that he had sent a similar request to Mao Zedong. As several documents in this collection discuss, two senior officials, A.I. Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai, were sent mid-September in a joint Sino-Soviet party intervention. [see Documents #18, #22-24]

Document #19, Bak Uiwan's account of the 6 September conversation with the Soviet ambassador, provides what is perhaps the most comprehensive record of the August Plenum available to researchers. In reading through this memorandum of the conversation, one is struck by the preparedness of Kim Il Sung's supporters for every move of the consumer goods group. For example, a seemingly nominal figure from a provincial people's committee, Gim Daegong, delivered a carefully prepared speech containing criticisms of the Ministry of Trade, including *ad hominem* attacks on Yun Gonghun, the trade minister and member of the "consumer goods group" who was scheduled to speak next. Undaunted, Yun Gonghun spoke out against the cult of personality and the lack of internal party democracy, though other members of the "consumer goods group" were less inclined to follow in his footsteps and the move to criticize the party leadership seems to have fizzled out in the face of the prepared counterattack. While Choe Changik mentioned the cult of personality briefly, it was almost completely absent from the speech of Bak Changok. Instead, Bak delivered a speech

denying his involvement with the “consumer goods group” and declaring his innocence in light of charges of factionalism made in a KWP CC decree earlier in the spring. Yet, all of the members of the consumer goods group, regardless if they spoke or not, were exposed in the speeches of Kim Il Sung’s cronies.

Mindful of likely repercussions of the plenum, Bak Uiwan, a Soviet-Korean, indicated at the end of his conversation with Ivanov that he desired to renounce his North Korean citizenship, regain his Soviet citizenship, and be reinstated in the ranks of the CPSU.

During a 10 September meeting with I. Shcherbakov of the CPSU CC Department of Relations with Foreign Communist Parties [Document #20], Ambassador Li Sangjo reiterated many of the same criticisms made during his conversation with Fedorenko and outlined in his letter addressed to Khrushchev and Mao Zedong [Document #17]. Once again, Li opined that the issues with which the party was faced could not be solved by the internal forces of the Workers’ Party itself, especially at a time when “honest, good communists are expelled from the party for criticism.” Li was informed that the Soviet delegation to the Chinese Communist Party’s 8th Congress [15-27 September 1956] (headed by A. I. Mikoyan) was instructed to investigate and meet with the North Korean delegation in Beijing. At the same time, Li was warned that while the Soviet party was alarmed by events in Pyeongyang, the Soviet and Chinese parties were limited in what they could do since the KWP was an independent party and meddling in internal party matters was inadvisable.

One of the most significant documents in this collection is the lengthy letter Li Sangjo sent to the KWP CC on 5 October 1956 [Document #21]. After failing to sway Kim Il Sung after the Third Congress of the KWP CC in April, during his trip to fraternal countries in June and July, and finally at the August Plenum, Li sought to appeal to the leadership of the KWP in a last ditch effort by expressing his disagreement and providing a history of failures and betrayals. Li’s letter provided an extensive description of the emergence of Kim Il Sung’s personality cult, locating its origins in Korea’s tradition of Confucianism and Japanese colonial rule. Among the consequences of the personality cult were the suppression of intra-party democracy and the growing number of Kim Il Sung’s former comrades-in-arms being appointed to positions in the party leadership while those who did not serve with Kim in the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggles, i.e. Soviet-Koreans and returnees from China, were declared factionalists. Moreover, Li alleged, the history of Korea’s struggle for national liberation had been falsified under the influence of the personality cult. Li was likewise critical of economic policies that did not address the material needs of the population and of “shortcomings” in the field of party propaganda. Interestingly, at the end of the lengthy letter on the crisis faced by the KWP as a result of the personality cult, Li indicated that “he [was] not against Cde. Kim Il Sung remaining in the party leadership.”

Documents #22-25 are Soviet reports that describe a conversation held on 8 October between Kim Il Sung and Ivanov

during which Kim rejected the Soviet and Chinese requests made during the Mikoyan and Peng mission that the KWP publish the proceedings of the August and September plenums in their entirety. During the joint Sino-Soviet party intervention in September 1956, Kim was urged to reinstate the members of the “consumer goods group” to the ranks of the KWP and publish a full record of the September Plenum reporting this action. These documents are of interest since they reveal aspects of the deal Kim struck with the Chinese and Soviet representatives, though it does not fill in the biggest gaps. The Sino-Soviet intervention is still the most mysterious aspect of the political turmoil surrounding the August Plenum, though it is certain that the actions and demands of the foreign communist parties greatly disturbed Kim Il Sung.

Document #26 is a second letter sent directly to the KWP CC from former DPRK ambassador to the Soviet Union, Li Sangjo. In this 18-page letter, obtained from Li’s family in its original Korean, the former ambassador sought to redress the issue of aid from the Soviet Union by reminding party members of the CPSU’s friendship and assistance to the North Korean people both before and after the war. Stressing the need for more transparency and accountability in the KWP leadership, Li disclosed Soviet criticism of Kim Il Sung’s economic policies and cult of personality during meetings held in Moscow in the summer of 1956. Moreover, echoing his earlier criticisms, Li insisted that the DPRK learn from the experiences of fraternal communist parties in economic planning and in their struggle with the cult of personality.

Documents #27 and #28 are memoranda of conversations between Ivanov and Chinese embassy officials, including Ambassador Qiao Xiaoguang. During their meetings, the Soviet and Chinese emissaries exchanged information on the political situation inside the KWP in the wake of the August and September plenums. Moreover, they discussed Kim Il Sung’s reluctance to comply with the recommendations of Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai. At the same time, we learn from these sources that Kim Il Sung did in fact reinstate the party membership of those who had fled to China, though they refused to return despite the concession. One of results of the Mikoyan-Peng Dehuai visit becomes clear in these documents. While in Pyeongyang, Peng Dehuai allegedly suggested that former KPA military commander and close friend of the Chinese, Bak Ilu, be released from prison to and permitted to travel to China to study. Chinese ambassador Qiao Xiaoguang informed his Soviet counterpart that the KWP CC Presidium had decided to release Bak from prison.

Document #30 is a Soviet report on conditions in Korea composed by the Soviet embassy in Pyeongyang. The document seems to take a much more objective approach to events leading up to the KWP CC August Plenum, less influenced by Kim Il Sung’s earlier account than previous reports to Moscow. Following Kim’s refusal to publish the proceedings of the August and September plenums in their entirety, and after receiving more detailed accounts from other participants, the document details the rise of discontent in the KWP leadership,

as well as the strained relations between the DPRK and the PRC following the joint Sino-Soviet intervention. In addition to suggesting that Pyongyang improve relations with Beijing, the document provided criticism of North Korean development strategies.

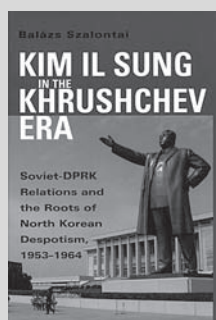


Notes

1. See for example: Robert Scalapino and Chong-sik Lee, *Communism in Korea: The Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Adrian Buzo, *The Making of Modern Korea* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
2. For accounts of the August Plenum of the KWP CC, see Robert Scalapino and Chong-sik Lee, *Communism in Korea: The Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Koo Woo Nam, *The North Korean Communist Leadership, 1945-1965: A Study of Factionalism and Political Consolidation* (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1974); Dae-sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); and Adrian Buzo, *The Making of Modern Korea* (New York: Routledge, 2002). For a description of the plenum as an attempt to replace Kim Il Sung, see Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea 1945-1960*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 154.
3. See Andrei Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea 1945-1960*; and *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005); Balazs Szalontai, "'You Have No Political Line of Your Own' Kim Il Sung and the Soviets, 1953-1964," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 14/15 (Washington: 2004) and *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953-1964* (Wilson Center Press: Washington, 2005).
4. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 154.
5. Szalontai, "'You Have No Political Line of Your Own,' 91.
6. Not willing to allow the state-run Ministry of Foreign Affairs to maintain a monopoly over foreign relations, the CPSU's International Department was created in 1943 when the Comintern was abolished to take over the task of uniting the world's Communist parties under the leadership of the Soviet party. From the spring of 1957, relations with

ruling Communist parties were handled by the newly formed Department for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties. The documents cited in this paper are filed under the Department for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties, although they in fact predate the existence of this Central Committee department by one year. For a history of the International Department, see Mark Kramer, "The Role of the CPSU International Department in Soviet Foreign Relations and National Security Policy," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3. (July 1990), pp. 429-446.

7. James F. Person, "'We Need Help from Outside': The North Korean Opposition Movement of 1956," *CWHP Working Paper* 52, August 2006.
8. Young Chul Chung, "The Suryong System as the Institution of Collectivist Development" *Journal of Korean Studies* 12, no. 1 (Fall 2007): 47.
9. See Charles K. Armstrong, "'A Socialism of Our Style': North Korean Ideology in a Post-Communist Era," in Charles K. Armstrong and Samuel Kim ed., *North Korean Foreign Relations in the Cold War Era*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
10. Though it should be noted that documents this author worked with from 1998 to 2002 have since been reclassified and are not scheduled to be re-examined at least in the coming year. As the director of RGANI informed this author during a conversation in March 2006, a list of materials to be reviewed by a declassification panel is compiled one year in advance. Scholars can request that specific materials be included on that list by submitting a petition to the director of Rosarkhiv.
11. Third Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea: Documents and Materials April 24-29, 1956 (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956): 387.
12. See Charles K. Armstrong, "The Myth of North Korea," in Bruce Cumings, ed., *Chicago Occasional Papers on Korea* (Chicago: The Center for East Asian Studies, The University of Chicago, 1991).
13. Andrei Lankov, "Kim Il Sung's Campaign Against the Soviet Faction in Late 1955 and the Birth of *Chuch'e*," *Korean Studies*, Volume 23, (University of Hawaii Press: 1999): 45.
14. Memorandum of Conversation with Deputy Premier Comrade Bak Uiwan, 24 January 1956. RGANI, f. 5, o.28, d. 412, ll. 67-69.
15. See Lankov's discussion of the Li Pilgyu visit in *Crisis in North Korea*.
16. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, 163.
17. Memorandum of Conversation between Kim Il Sung and Manush [Mytitiu], composed by Albanian ambassador to the DPRK, Hasan Alimerko, 4 Oct 1961, AQPPSH, MPP Korese, V. 1961, D4.



Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Role of North Korean Despotism, 1953-1964
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Pyeongyang in 1956

by Nobuo Shimotomai

This article examines Russian archival documents that illuminate how the Kim Il Sung regime reacted to the challenge posed by Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev's campaign against Stalin's 'cult of personality,' as well as foreign and economic policies launched in his famous secret speech at the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPSU) Twentieth Congress in February 1956. Khrushchev's secret speech sent shockwaves throughout the communist world; many regimes established under Stalin's banner viewed Moscow's "New Course" as a serious political threat. In North Korea, party members who opposed Kim Il Sung's political and economic decisions embraced Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin, using it as an instrument to restrict, or eliminate, the power of Stalin's Korean protégé. Their unsuccessful move against Kim Il Sung at the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) Plenum in August 1956 marked an important turning-point in the political history of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). As a result of the failed challenge to Kim's authority, the regime in Pyongyang became firmly entrenched.

Russian historian Andrei Lankov presented the first account of these events based on documentary evidence, drawing from records held in the Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVPRF).² He strongly suggested that factional elements existed within the KWP prior to the August 1956 incident. The documents printed below, from the CPSU Central Committee archive (RGANI), shed additional light on this still murky history.³ Since the CPSU International Department was responsible for relations with foreign communist parties, including the KWP, its records are a rich source for the political history of 1956. The most valuable documents are reports from the Soviet embassy in Pyongyang to the Soviet leadership.

The Soviet ambassador to the DPRK, V.I. Ivanov, was a key figure in North Korean politics and the Soviet embassy remained, at least until 1956, an important arena for North Korean political drama. Kim Il Sung visited the embassy quite often. Some of his opponents, especially Soviet-Koreans, tried to meet Soviet diplomats. Moreover, ambassadors from other socialist countries with embassies in Pyongyang met regularly with Ivanov. The records of the meetings with

'fraternal' ambassadors are particularly revealing because in June and July of 1956, Kim Il Sung visited almost all the Soviet-bloc countries that faced a wave of unrest and political struggle in the aftermath of the CPSU Twentieth Congress. The detailed reports made by Ivanov and his colleagues at the Soviet embassy also contain valuable information about the political process in Pyongyang in September 1956, when Kim Il Sung was nearly ousted through an intervention by his patrons, the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, the RGANI documents available thus far do not include reports by Ambassador Ivanov from the latter half of September, though diplomat N.M. Shesterikov's diary is available and the contours of the dramatic foreign intervention can be traced indirectly.⁴

Postwar conditions in the DPRK

The Korean War of 1950-53, which brought vast destruction to the North Korean economy and society, had been protracted at the insistence of Joseph Stalin. The Soviet dictator's death in March 1953 thus made it possible to put an end to this conflict.⁵ Stalin's successors were committed not only to ending the war in Korea, but also to embarking on a new strategy of consumer-oriented economic development and 'peaceful coexistence' with the 'capitalist world.' Kim Il Sung, however, resisted Moscow's "New Course," inaugurating instead an ambitious three-year plan that aimed at increasing production by 150% from 1949 levels, with a focus on heavy industry. The largest faction within the KWP, the PRC-allied "Yan'an group," was in favor of increased production of consumer goods. The Soviet embassy likewise advised the North Korean leadership that more emphasis should be placed on developing small-scale industry. These voices went unheard, however, and the North Korean population continued to suffer from serious shortages of basic goods, especially food stuffs.

The Soviet leadership noted Pyongyang's deviation from its economic and political course. A resolution on the North Korean situation adopted in January 1955 by the CPSU Central Committee charged Kim Il Sung with creating a 'cult of per-

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sonality,' consolidating under his authority all power within the party, government, and military, and with causing severe damage to North Korean peasants by forcibly confiscating grain.⁶ During his visit to Moscow in late April 1955, Kim's political course and economic policy were severely criticized by Soviet leaders, and Kim had to admit his errors by July, especially in regard to economic issues.⁷

In December 1955 a KWP plenum admitted that the country had suffered setbacks as a result of the flawed grain procurement campaign. Nonetheless, the plenum took an important step towards granting Kim Il Sung near-dictatorial power by appointing his comrade-in-arms, party vice chairman Choe Yonggeon, despite opposition by the majority of the KWP Presidium. Choe, who had been nominal chairman of the Democratic Party, was an 'old guard' Chinese Communist Party (CCP) member who had been close to Kim Il Sung during his years as an anti-Japanese partisan in Manchuria.⁸

These allegiances remained important in the development of the KWP which was formally established in 1949 by merging the South Korean Workers' Party with the North Korean Workers' Party. In reality, however, the northern party absorbed the southern party and the KWP remained divided into four factions: the "Soviet faction," composed of Soviet citizens of Korean ethnicity who had been brought to North Korea to meet the shortage of skilled cadres; the "Yan'an faction," composed of party members who had fought the Japanese alongside the Chinese Communist Party; the "domestic communists," who had remained in Korea during Japanese rule; and the "partisan faction," the small group who had, along with Kim Il Sung, taken refuge in the Soviet Union in the early 1940s.⁹

Beginning in the Korean War years, Kim Il Sung used Stalinist tactics against rival leaders, isolating them one at a time. Former Foreign Minister Bak Heonyeong of the domestic faction became the target of a show trial in 1953 and was sentenced to death in December 1955. Former Minister of Interior Bak Ilu of the Yan'an faction had been arrested at the beginning of 1955. Kim Il Sung claimed that the KWP had been weakened by the practice of admitting cadres upon recommendation by the Soviet and Chinese parties, and charged that Bak Ilu was "not armed with Marxism-Leninism and conducted anti-party activities from personal ambition."¹⁰ Alexander Ivanovich Hegai of the Soviet faction was criticized because he had an organizational base in the KWP Organizational-Instruction Department, where he was accused of "groupism."¹¹ The Soviet embassy became increasingly worried by the growing anti-Soviet atmosphere that followed the purge of Hegai. Indeed, after the December 1955 KWP Plenum, Kim Il Sung reprimanded Vice Minister Bak Changok and fifteen other Soviet-Korean high officials for allegedly being members of a 'Hegai' faction.¹² Even Bak Jeongae, a Kim loyalist, was reportedly doubtful about the existence of an 'anti-party faction' of Soviet-Koreans and attempted to persuade Kim Il Sung not to proceed against them, according to accounts leaked to the Soviet embassy.¹³

Khrushchev's secret speech and Choe Yonggeon's report

Khrushchev's secret speech at the CPSU Twentieth Congress in February 1956 shocked DPRK politics. The DPRK delegation to the Congress was headed by Choe Yonggeon rather than Kim Il Sung. Kim explained to Ivanov that he could not go to Moscow at that time because he was busy preparing for the KWP Third Congress which would begin 23 April.¹⁴ Kim's initial reaction to the new Soviet approach at the Twentieth Congress seemed mixed. He told to Bak Uiwan that he regretted that he never went to Moscow and began to change his work style to regularize meetings, etc.¹⁵ When the Soviet ambassador returned to Pyeongyang from the Congress, he gave Kim Il Sung a full report of the proceedings, as well as bulletins and materials of the Congress. The North Korean leader responded that the activities of the CPSU Congress were invaluable to the work of the KWP, but added that Moscow's new line should be studied carefully before it was adopted by the KWP.¹⁶ At the local level of the Korean party, however, cadres quickly realized that something more serious had occurred since Khrushchev had admitted that the Soviet Communist Party had suffered "defeats" instead of "failure," according to Foreign Minister Nam Il's report to Soviet counselor A.M. Petrov.¹⁷

On 20 March, Choe Yonggeon gave a three-hour report on the activities of the Twentieth Party Congress at a KWP CC Plenum that was apparently closed to Soviet embassy personnel.¹⁸ In his report, Choe omitted mention of the CPSU's centrally important decision regarding the 'cult of personality' issue. He stressed that Khrushchev had commented on the necessity of collective leadership, but stated that Kim Il Sung was in fact a leader who practiced collectivism. In addition he criticized the factionalism of Kim's opponents.¹⁹

Only three people gave a response to Choe's speech: Kim Il Sung, Nam Il and Yi Ilgyeong. Kim Il Sung's remarks were the center of attention. The North Korean leader explained that the party propaganda machine had emphasized his role and that the role of the masses should be stressed even more. He related the problem of the personality cult as applicable only to the worship of Bak Heonyeong in the southern part of the peninsula, not to the KWP as a whole.²⁰ The plenum adopted a resolution calling for rapid construction of socialism in the northern half of the Korean peninsula, peaceful unification, and independence. Cadres were instructed to distribute the materials of the Twentieth CPSU Congress.²¹ At the beginning of April, the KWP circulated a secret letter to local party organizations stating that the cult of personality was a phenomenon of the CPSU and was alien to the KWP. At most, it was related to Bak Heonyeong.²²

Analysts at the Soviet embassy reached a different conclusion, reporting to Moscow that Kim Il Sung had concentrated all the power of the party, government, and army in his hands. The roles of the Central Committee and the party congress had been diminished, and the Supreme People's Assembly, nomi-

nally the highest state organization, had not convened since 1948.²³ Moreover, Kim Il Sung was surrounded by ‘careerists’ and ‘yes-men.’ Journals and periodicals were filled with evidence of a ‘cult of personality.’ Ivanov noted that an article on the new party statute mentioned the name of Kim Il Sung twenty times.²⁴ The Polish ambassador similarly remarked that the cult of Kim Il Sung was enormous and the role of Gim Dubong as the chairman of the Supreme People’s Assembly was diminishing.

In the beginning of April, the Soviet Foreign Ministry sent a report “On the Cult of Personality in the DPRK” to all members of the Soviet leadership. The cult of Kim Il Sung was continuing, the report stated, even though it had been pointed out to Kim in May 1955, when the DPRK leader had visited Moscow.²⁵ Another report, entitled ‘On Several Problems of the Inner Party Situation in the DPRK,’ dated 14 April, moreover, drew a grim picture of the situation in the country. The Soviet embassy informed Boris Ponomarev, head of the CPSU International Department, that despite the fact that the severe political crisis of 1955 had to some extent eased, especially with regard to peasants, serious problems remained. “The condition of the citizens of the towns and countryside is severe; their democratic rights are curtailed, and the policy of the KWP toward the non-proletarian strata is incorrect.”²⁶ Moreover, the food shortage was grave. Private enterprises had almost been liquidated and the number of private traders had diminished sharply.

The Third Party Congress, April 1956

The KWP held its 3rd Congress on 23-29 April 1956, after an eight-year hiatus. If Kim Il Sung intended to use the congress as a display of party unity after purging the leaders of the other three factions, namely Bak Heonyeong of the domestic faction, Hegai of the Soviet faction, and Bak Ilu of the Yan’an faction, his effort was ill-timed in light of the de-Stalinization campaign unleashed by Khrushchev in February. The process of electing delegates at the local level, which began that same month, provided a forum for local cadres to criticize Kim Il Sung’s cult of personality and the lack of collective leadership within the KWP. As Foreign Minister Nam Il informed Soviet diplomats, local party members began to criticize the original draft of the KWP statute on the teaching of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, asking that Stalin’s name be eliminated.²⁷ There was also tension over the purge of critics such as Bak Heonyeong, who had been sentenced to death on 15 December 1955. However, he was still alive at least by 19 April 1956, when Soviet Ambassador Ivanov met with Kim Il Sung and discussed Leonid Brezhnev’s participation in the Third KWP Congress. The Soviet KGB in fact wanted Kim to refrain from taking extreme measures because Bak’s influence had been lost.²⁸ Kim Il Sung reacted with anger to Ivanov’s message that the Soviet KGB wished to save the life of Bak Heonyeong.²⁹ The Soviet delegate to the congress, future CPSU General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, mildly pointed out that replacing

the cult of personality with collective leadership was the new principle of the Soviet leadership, but Kim wanted to remain silent on this delicate issue. After watching the proceedings, officials from the Soviet embassy reported to Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko:

- a) Leninist norms of the party and collective leadership were never observed, elections were held only once in these eight years. b) [It was claimed that] the cult of personality was related only to Bak Heonyeong and never to Kim Il Sung. c) The grain procurement of 1955 has broken the unity of the workers and the peasants, and violated socialist legality, but this was never mentioned. d) The secret letter to the KWP cadres stresses the struggle against formalism and dogmatism, but in reality it turned out to be an anti-Soviet campaign. e) The secret letter never noted the negative side of Kim Il Sung.³⁰

The embassy also pointed out that the DRPK had suffered serious setbacks in agriculture and stockbreeding; the number of livestock had diminished sharply from 1953 to 1955.³¹ The disguised agenda of the ‘struggle against dogmatism’ was, in the views of the Soviet diplomats, in fact an anti-Soviet campaign, as several ministers who visited the Soviet embassy observed. One manifestation of this was the curtailment of programs for teaching Russian language and culture. The new leadership elected at the Third Party Congress reflected these developments. Kim Il Sung loyalists such as Choe Yonggeon and Bak Jeongae were elevated to vice-chairmen, while Kim Il Sung and Choe Yonggeon further expressed dissatisfaction with the Soviet-Koreans.

Another significant issue was the fate of Bak Ilu, the most prominent figure of the Yan’an faction, who was also purged in 1955.³² Gim Dubong asked for his immediate release, while Choe Yonggeon insisted that he be shot. The result, according to Bak Uiwan, a minister with close contacts with the Soviet embassy, was the firm establishment of a policy of purging aliens, including Soviet-Koreans, from the leadership.³³ Vice-premier Choe Changik, of the Yan’an faction, also met with Ivanov while Kim was away from the country, and told him that even a vice-premier was not allowed to meet with Soviet officials.³⁴

From Kim Il Sung’s Trip to the USSR and Eastern Europe to the August Plenum

In order to resolve contentious issues directly with the Soviet leadership and secure economic assistance from Soviet bloc countries—particularly the USSR, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia³⁶—Kim Il Sung set out on 1 June for a two-month trip to the USSR, East Germany, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Albania, Poland, and Mongolia, accompanied by some thirty compatriots. In his description of this trip to the KWP CC, Kim stated that the Soviet party had passed a resolution on the cult of personality to the effect

that “enemies were organizing anti-Soviet and anti-socialist campaigns using this ‘unhealthy phenomenon’ within socialism.” However, he argued, the Soviets decided that this cult of personality phenomenon was not the result of socialism itself. Moreover, the KWP had overcome the cult, because it was related to “Bak Heonyeong and his factional activity.”³⁷

However, it was not Bak Heonyeong’s domestic faction but rather the Yan’an faction, led by Vice Minister Choe Changik, that took action against Kim Il Sung while he was abroad. According to Foreign Minister Nam Il, who informed the Soviet embassy of the activities of the opposition, such prominent figures as Gim Dubong, Seo Hwi, and Minister of Trade Yun Gongheum met at the house of Vice Minister Bak Changok on 20 July, to discuss action to take against the leadership of Kim Il Sung, Bak Jeongae, and Bak Geumcheol.³⁸ Foreign Minister Nam Il criticized Choe Changik and Bak Changok, associating this movement with the activities of the former oppositionist Bak Ilu, who was still in prison.³⁹

Once Kim had returned to Pyongyang on 2 August, the CPSU warned the Korean leader to correct the mistakes of the KWP.⁴⁰ The Soviet embassy was watching the political process with unease and alarm. For his part, Kim Il Sung was afraid that his opponents would capitalize on the CPSU intervention, though he admitted their oppositional activities had waned by the middle of August.⁴¹ On 13 August Kim Il Sung informed the Soviet ambassador that the KWP Presidium had resolved to hold local elections by the fall and convene the Supreme People’s Assembly the following year. The Chinese ambassador informed his Soviet counterpart that Kim Il Sung would lead the DPRK delegation to the 8th CCP Congress.

However, Kim Il Sung’s optimism proved unfounded. At an 18 August meeting of the KWP Presidium, Choe Changok and others criticized Kim Il Sung, citing the letter from the CPSU. Gim Dubong’s mild but critical tone carried the majority.⁴² Five days later, Choe Changok again raised the issue of a purge of Bak Jeongae and Vice Minister Jeon Ilyong, members of Kim Il Sung’s faction. It was almost a frontal attack. On 24 August Bak Uiwan, a Soviet faction member and candidate to the Presidium, visited the Soviet embassy and confirmed these moves. Kim Il Sung had met with Bak Uiwan on 22 August and talked for three hours. He admitted the correctness of the criticism, but said these moves would only benefit South Korean leader Syngman Rhee.⁴³

The North Koreans never disclosed the contents of the August Plenum, despite requests to do so from the Chinese and Soviet communist parties. Nonetheless, Ivanov’s diary reveals the most important contents. On 28 August, at a presidium meeting prior to the plenum, Kim Il Sung declared that socialism had nothing to do with ‘cult of personality’ and that the KWP had discussed and eliminated this phenomenon, which was associated with the critic Bak Heonyeong. This point was apparently sharply contested by Gim Dubong and Choe Changik who said that the KWP should be more critical of the ‘cult of personality,’ according to an account by Bak Uiwan.⁴⁴ Gim Dubong also seemed disappointed with the tardy reaction

of the CPSU, knowing the ‘incorrect move of the KWP.’⁴⁵

The Plenum opened on 30 August. Kim Il Sung officially reported on his trip to the USSR and Eastern European countries. On the following day Kim informed Ivanov of the contents of the plenum, underlining that the focus was on cadre problems and not the ‘cult of personality.’ Gim Dubong raised the issue of the ‘cadres,’ which were shared with the “foreign party.” Gim Dubong hinted that the ‘Soviet embassy was not wrong,’ though he refrained from specifying the name of the “foreign party.”⁴⁶

Bak Uiwan also leaked information about the plenum, reporting that Kim Il Sung had emphasized the priority of heavy industry and stressed that the cult of personality was only associated with the work of the oppositionist Bak Heonyeong, thus avoiding his own responsibility. According to Bak, the cult of personality issue was raised only in connection with the issue of party propaganda.⁴⁷ As the critics made their attack, Yun Gongheum charged that the work of the KWP Third Party Congress never reflected the spirit of the CPSU Twentieth Congress because of Kim Il Sung’s influence. He also complained that the elevation of Kim’s associate, Choe Yonggeon, to the vice chairman post violated party rules. This criticism was supported by Choe Changik.⁴⁸

Kim’s supporters then counterattacked. Kim Il Sung stressed that the Soviet embassy had never been involved in this campaign, though the critics tried to legitimize their move against Kim Il Sung as a campaign against the cult of personality.⁴⁹ Repressive measures were taken against the opposition. Its four leaders attempted to take refuge abroad. They were detained at the Chinese border by Chinese officials. Prominent figures such as Choe Changik were removed from the presidium, while vice minister Bak Changok was ousted from the Central Committee, though Kim Il Sung refrained from taking measures against Gim Dubong. Choe Yonggeon appealed to the Soviet ambassador that critics like Yun had made a malicious attack on the KWP leadership.⁵⁰ Kim Il Sung’s faction thus survived the frontal attack.

Li Sangjo’s Criticism of the Kim Il Sung Regime

Both the Soviet and Chinese communist parties were deeply concerned about the actions taken during the KWP August Plenum. Li Sangjo, an important activist of the Yan’an faction and candidate member of the Central Committee, serving as DPRK ambassador to the Soviet Union, had appealed to take up the issue of the ‘personality cult’ at the KWP presidium of the April 1956 congress. It was, however, in vain, according to Choe Chang-ik’s talk with ambassador Ivanov of 8 June.⁵¹ Choe Yonggeon and Kim’s loyalists even threatened that Li should be dismissed from the post of ambassador.⁵² Gim Dubong persuaded Kim Il Sung not to dismiss Li, and Li could return to Moscow.⁵³

Consequently, on 3 September Li appealed directly to Nikita Khrushchev in a letter.⁵⁴ In response, Soviet Vice Minister

of Foreign Affairs Nikolai Fedorenko met with Li two days later. Li asked that his letter to Khrushchev and his account of the present situation of the KWP be read by Khrushchev or Anastas Mikoyan. Li met again with the CPSU officials on 10 September and gave a fuller description of the political situation in the DPRK. Finally, he wrote a lengthy letter to the KWP CC in October, and its translation was given to Fedorenko.⁵⁵ Li pointed out in his lengthy letter that Foreign Minister Nam Il used the name of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party to suppress criticism of Kim Il Sung and Choe Yonggeon. The actual advice given by the CPSU had been kept secret by Kim Il Sung, Nam Il and Bak Jeongae, and those who had addressed the cult of personality were expelled from the party.⁵⁶

Li attributed Kim's cult of personality to the unconditional subordination to authority that Koreans had experienced under Japanese colonial rule. Moreover, cadres were scarce and Korean feudal traditions also promoted the tendency towards a personality cult. In order to bring together the four factions into a united KWP, Kim's authority had been enhanced artificially. Careerists and flatterers prevailed. The image of Kim was elevated to the status of Lenin or Mao Zedong. Even the vice chairman of the KWP complained that "those who criticize Kim would end their public life, and the door of the jail is open."⁵⁷

Kim Il Sung, Bak Jeongae, and Nam Il, according to Li, had tried to conceal the CPSU letter from the masses. Those who favored democracy were branded as conspirators or as members of the Yan'an faction, whose existence Li denied. "Is it a crime to speak against the cult and lack of democracy?" Li protested. "What is the difference between a king and Kim Il Sung, who is going to be a lifelong party leader and prime minister? Who appointed him as lifetime leader?"⁵⁸

Citing numerous individuals who were purged for speaking about political issues, Li declared, "We can no longer endure the fact that those communists who have no contact with Kim Il Sung are regarded as factionalists." Li pointed out that Kim's cult of personality violated both KWP and socialist statutes. He co-opted his followers by neglecting party rules, appointing Choe Yonggeon, formerly chair of the Democratic Party, as vice chairman and member of the KWP Politburo. This appointment meant a denial of the pluralistic party system, which rallied all patriotic forces into a united front. It also meant that all power was concentrated in the hands of Kim Il Sung. All key appointments, including those of Politburo members and vice ministers, were to be arbitrarily decided by Kim Il Sung.

Li cited numerous cases of violations of constitutional procedures within the party and the false arrest and imprisonment of more than 30,000 people. He noted the remarkable fact that one of every three hundred people in the DPRK were now criminals.⁵⁹ Even those who did no more than simply write on a picture of Kim Il Sung printed in a newspaper were deprived of freedom for five years. Kim even hinted that these persons should receive the death penalty.⁶⁰ Some peasants,

angry because all their grain was confiscated, complained to the local authorities. Pointing to the portrait of Kim, they said "You do not understand the real situation of the masses." For this they were deprived of freedom for seven years.⁶¹ Another example was Bak Ilu, Politburo member and minister of justice and a close associate of Kim Il Sung during the Korean War. Bak was arrested and jailed and his family sent to work in the mines because he opposed the tax in kind and the harsh measures against reactionaries.⁶²

Li also pointed out that Kim Il Sung falsified the history of the liberation from Japanese colonialism. Kim only mentioned the role of the Partisan faction, although the Chinese Communist Party had played an important role, especially in Manchuria. In fact, the Partisan faction had ceased to struggle against Japanese militarism in 1940. Moreover, this group had no roots among the toiling masses, while Chinese communists had taken an active role in underground activity. Li also cited examples such as the minor partisan attack at Bochoombo, which resulted in the deaths of only 13 Japanese policemen but which Kim and his faction glorified as an epoch-making event in the struggle against Japanese colonialism.⁶³ Another case was the Korean Fatherland Restoration Association in Manchuria (KFRAM) (*Jaeman Hanin Joguk Gwangbokhoe*), which was depicted as having been set up at Kim's initiative, but which in fact originated in the United Front tactics of the Comintern and the Chinese Communist Party. While Kim's supporters claim that this organization had spread into all Korean regions, it was in fact only a tiny organization of some 100 members.⁶⁴

Li charged that the cult of personality had also led to mistakes in economic policy. In particular, forcible grain procurement led 300 people to commit suicide.⁶⁵ The resulting food shortage was so severe that the tie between workers and peasants was destroyed. Nonetheless, Kim Il Sung maintained that his policy was correct, that only its implementation had been wrong.⁶⁶ Li Sangjo himself made an investigation at Kaesong and came to the conclusion that the proper target should be 150,000 tons of grain, instead of the official target of three million tons.

Moreover, food and consumer goods were expensive and the average living space for workers was only two and a half square meters.⁶⁷ During Kim Il Sung's visit to Moscow, Soviet comrades pointed out these conditions and gave "comradely advice" that living conditions should be improved, that Kim's cult of personality should be eliminated, and that party history and propaganda should be corrected on the basis of truth. Li Sangjo declared that he would struggle against the cult of Kim Il Sung from the point of view of adherence to collective leadership and party democracy, and expressed the hope that the KWP central committee would examine the recommendations he made to the party.⁶⁸

The Reaction of the CPSU and CCP to the Korean Crisis

Observing the growing tensions within the DPRK, the CPSU Presidium discussed the North Korean issue on 6 September 1956. Mikoyan chaired in Khrushchev's absence, with Malenkov, Kaganovich, Voloshilov, Suslov, Ponomarev, Brezhnev and Gromyko in attendance. The Soviet leaders heard Ivanov's reports on the KWP's August Plenum. They concluded that Boris Ponomarev, head of the Department for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties, should consult with the DPRK ambassador, and the Soviet delegation to the 8th Congress of the CCP, scheduled for that month, should consult with the Koreans in attendance in Beijing.⁶⁹ Thus, Ponomarev and Mikoyan, who had taken the leading role in purging the Hungarian Stalinist leader Matyas Rakosi that June, were dispatched to Beijing. They would then travel on to Pyeongyang, since Kim Il Sung had canceled his plans to attend the CCP Eighth Congress.

After consultations in Beijing, the Soviets and Chinese decided to send a joint delegation to Pyeongyang, headed by Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai, who had commanded Chinese troops in Korea during the war of 1950-53. The delegation went to Pyeongyang on 23 September 1956. Unfortunately, the available RGANI documents do not include any records on the Mikoyan-Peng mission. However, V. Kovyzenko, a Central Committee official who had been close to Kim Il Sung from 1945-48 and had accompanied Mikoyan to Pyeongyang, reported in an interview with historian Andrei Lankov in 1991 that Mao had asserted to Mikoyan during discussions in Beijing that Kim Il Sung had launched the "idiotic war and himself had been mediocre," and should be dismissed.⁷⁰ Peng Dehuai shared Mao's low estimation of Kim's military capabilities, while he highly praised Bak Ilu as a commander.

Attempting to preempt the Soviet and Chinese intervention, the DPRK leadership informed the Soviet embassy on 17 September, before Mikoyan and Peng arrived, that the KWP would reconsider its relations with the Soviet-Koreans.⁷¹ Mikoyan and Peng nonetheless asked Kim to convene a Central Committee Plenum immediately. At this September Plenum, Kim announced the revocation of the decisions of the August Plenum and engaged in some self-criticism. These resolutions were printed in *Rodong Sinmun* the following day.

Yet, Kim managed to remain in power as a result of the Soviet-Chinese intervention. Unlike the Hungarian case in June, Mikoyan was not well-informed about the situation in the KWP, and hence was less effective. Kovyzenko reported that Kim's faction had gained complete control over the party rank and file. There was no popular demonstration in support of reforms, since General O Chin-u had deployed the army to Pyeongyang to prevent such an occurrence. As a result, Mikoyan and Peng had to be satisfied with restoring the expelled dissidents to party membership and warning against further purges. Choe Changik returned to the capital, while Bak Changok was appointed manager of a cement factory. The

Soviet embassy reported that the September Plenum made a small step toward observance of Leninist norms.⁷²

Kim also managed to prevent the findings of the September Plenum from being published. Kim Il Sung, Mikoyan, and Peng Dehuai had agreed that all decisions of the plenum would be made known in the press. But Vice Chairman Bak Geumcheol explained to Ivanov on 27 September that a press release was not desirable, and suggested that they instead distribute special pamphlets to the local party branches. Bak explained to Soviet Charge d'Affaires V.I. Pelishenko that Kim had promised to publish the decisions, but the Central Committee was reluctant to do so. Even the rehabilitated party members were not informed of the decisions of the September Plenum.⁷³ On the day after the plenum, a short report appeared in the press, but important items were omitted.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, by October, Soviet authorities became preoccupied with the unrest in Eastern Europe. Consequently, Kim Il Sung and his supporters became bolder in resisting implementation of the decisions of the September Plenum. In a meeting with Ivanov on 8 October in Kim's suburban *dacha*, the North Korean leader declared that the promise to publish all the plenum materials should be revoked. He justified this action by claiming that there was no actual agreement to publish, but only an agreement to consider the possibility in the Central Committee, and the presidium had decided not to publicize the decisions.⁷⁵ In response to Ivanov's protests, Kim explained that the presidium thought that the advice of the Soviet and Chinese parties gave the impression of foreign intervention in the DPRK's domestic affairs. He added that if all the documents regarding the delegation of the fraternal parties were publicized, the DPRK regime would be damaged.⁷⁶ Thus, Kim requested that Mikoyan be informed that the KWP would not publicize the September Plenum decisions.⁷⁷

As the Hungarian reform movement turned into chaos and Soviet troops intervened to restore order, a backlash against the September Plenum developed in North Korea. The DPRK Foreign Ministry ordered ambassador Li Sangjo to return to Pyeongyang at the end of October.⁷⁸ Li's refusal exacerbated tension between Moscow and Pyeongyang. By 1957 Li began a position as researcher at the CPSU Higher Party School, which irritated the North Korean government. In March 1957 Foreign Minister Nam Il complained that Li's status in Moscow amounted to an indirect criticism of the DPRK on the part of the USSR.⁷⁹

By the end of 1956, the Kim Il Sung regime counter-attacked by criticizing the Soviet attempt at de-Stalinization. Gim Toman, deputy of the Central Committee's Agitation and Propaganda Department, stated that the Hungarian state and the party perished because they followed the Soviet model, they were ruined because they struggled against the 'cult of personality,' as did the Soviet authorities.⁸⁰

Concluding remarks

The political aftermath of the August and September plenums reveals that a nationalistic mood began to prevail in North Korea following the Soviet-Chinese intervention. Relations with China became so strained that a Soviet analyst in Beijing reported to Moscow that “at the present time, a lot of Koreans regard the Chinese Volunteer Army as an occupation army; Koreans assume that their long stay in the DPRK is no longer desirable and violates their sovereignty.”⁸¹

By November 1956, tension between Pyeongyang and Beijing intensified. The DPRK sent a memorandum regarding a proposed solution of the Korean issue through United Nations intervention that was absolutely unacceptable to the PRC. After consulting with Moscow, Beijing sent a memorandum to the DPRK on 8 December 1956 stating that UN involvement in a Korean peace negotiation was unacceptable since the UN had been a tool of US intervention in Korean issues and all the socialist countries regarded the UN as an enemy on this issue.⁸² The fact that Kim Il Sung advanced the idea of inviting the UN to resolve the Korean issue was a striking sign that the Korean leader preferred his own diplomatic strategy to reliance on his socialist big brothers. The Chinese Volunteer Army withdrew from North Korea in October 1958.

On 28 December 1956 Ivanov summarized the North Korean situation in a lengthy report to the Soviet leadership.⁸³ The year 1956 was a major turning point for the DPRK, the ambassador concluded. The Third Congress of the KWP never reflected the most important decisions of the CPSU Twentieth Congress, and at the KWP August Plenum, Kim evaded self-criticism. Kim labeled his critics a “faction aimed at power” and as a consequence, the serious defects of the party were not disclosed. Even though the CPSU and CCP sent a joint delegation headed by Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai to rehabilitate the ousted leaders, the decisions of the September Plenum were not published and purges of leading cadres continued. The repressive character of the Kim Il Sung regime was thus never corrected. As for economic policy, the three-year plan resulted in the recovery of agriculture to 1949 levels, but the living conditions of workers, peasants, and intellectuals did not reach the pre-war level.

Ivanov reported that the KWP had no recruits from 1954 because of the economic crises, and the purges of 1956 weakened the party even further. The cult of personality was strengthening, repressive measures were being taken against Soviet-Koreans, and relations between the KWP and CCP were deteriorating. The DPRK did not express gratitude to the PRC for its aid, for which Kim Il Sung himself was responsible.

In sum, while the extent to which Kim Il Sung was a creature of the Soviet Union in the early years can be debated, there is no doubt that he was advanced to the leading position by the Soviet occupation forces. However, ten years after his elevation to power, he became a more independent figure by refusing to implement Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization policies and Mao’s advice to orient toward the masses. By 1957 Kim had

become even more independent from his Soviet and Chinese patrons while his domestic control had become absolute.⁸⁴ His new position was reflected in the August 1957 election to the People’s Assembly in 1957, where participation as well as the support for the party was 99.92 percent. The replacement of Gim Dubong as Chairman of the Supreme People’s Assembly with Choe Yonggeon by October 1957 was only a nominal confirmation of the dictatorship Kim Il Sung and his partisan faction had established. The stormy wave of uprisings in Eastern Europe in 1956 gave Kim the opportunity to mobilize Korean nationalism to solidify his hold on power while carving out a greater sphere of autonomy within the communist bloc.



Notes

1. This essay was originally presented to the first conference on “the Cold War in East Asia” at the University of California, Santa Barbara in March 2005, as a shortened version an article published in Japanese. The author wishes to thank Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Kathryn Weathersby, and James Person for their advice and comments.

2. A. Lankov, *Severnaya Koreya*, Moscow, 1995; A. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung*, Rutgers University Press, 2002; *Crises in North Korea, The Failure of the De-Stalinization 1956*, Univ. of Hawaii, 2005.

3. Russiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii, or RGANI, esp. Fond 5, Opis 28 (otdel KPSS po svyazam s inostranimi kompartiyam).

4. N. M. Shesterikov diary from 14-24 September, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412.1.301-306.

5. Kathryn Weathersby, “Stalin, Mao, and the End of the Korean War,” in Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Washington and Stanford: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 1998): pp. 90-116.

6. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 24 May to 11 June 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411.1.215. Despite the coercion, the grain procurement campaign of 1955 yielded only 2,400,000 tons, a significant decrease from the 1949 total of 2,800,000 tons. To make up the shortfall, the Soviet Union and China agreed to give North Korea 200,000 tons of grain in aid.

7. Nobuo Shimotomai, *Moskva to Kim Il Sung* (Moscow and Kim Il Sung), Iwanamishoten, 2006, pp. 161-193.

8. Record of the talks with Vice Prime Minister and Presidium Member of CC KWP Bak Changok on 12 March, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, l. 76. Vice Minister Bak Changok leaked this fact to counselor S. N. Filatov.

9. Charles K. Armstrong, *The North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 218.

10. Results of the December Plenum of the Central Committee of the KWP, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411.1.15.

11. *Ibid.* It was Soviet Korean, Ho Kai or A. Hegai, who really made the institutional setup of the KWP. He had been associated with P. Postyshev, Stalin’s secretary in the early 1930s. (Nobuo Shimotomai, *Moscow Under Stalinist Rule*, MacMillan, 1991, p. 24, 47.)

12. Record of the talks with Vice Prime Minister and KWP CC Presidium Member Bak Changok on 12 March, RGANI, Fond 5,

Opis 28, Delo 410, 1.79.

13. Record of the Talks with Gim Sunghwa (Minister of Construction) on 3 March 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, 1.129-130. Kim Il Sung persuaded her not to speak openly, because if she dared to do so, Nam Il and other famous Soviet Koreans would follow (l. 130).

14. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 8 Feb. to 27 March 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.163.

15. Record of the Talks with Bak Uiwan on 21 February 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, 1. 72, 74.

16. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 8 Feb. to 27 March 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.164.

17. Diary of temporary ambassador Petrov from 2 to 14 March 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.178. Ambassador Ivanov's report is absent between 19 February and 19th March due to a trip to Moscow.

18. Report of the CC KWP delegation to the 20th Congress of the CPSU, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.187-222. The activity of this plenum was revealed by Soviet Korean and Minister of Construction Bak Uiwan who often visited and gave interesting news to the Embassy.

19. *Ibid.*

20. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 8 Feb. to 27 March 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.167

21. The Central Committee of the KWP, Decision of the March Plenum, 20 March 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.182.

22. Some Problems concerning the Study of the Khrushchev's Report at the 20th CPSU Congress, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1.186-87. This letter was translated into only fifteen copies and was dispatched to first secretary N. Khrushchev and the CPSU. Ambassador Ivanov commented that 'friends' did not make a proper conclusion in his report on 19 April to Deputy Minister of the Soviet Foreign Ministry (RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1.138.)

23. In the South, by way of contrast, a presidential election was held in 1956.

24. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 2 February to 27 March 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.168.

25. On the Cult of Personality in DPRK, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1.59.

26. On the Several Problems of the Internal Party Situation in the DPRK, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.137.

27. Diary of temporary Charge d'affaires Petrov from 2 March to 14 March 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.179.

28. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 18 April to 14 May 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, 1.215. Boris Ponomarev, head of the CPSU International Delegations Department, having characterized the personality and the case of Bak Hyeonyong, advanced the idea of raising this matter with Kim Il Sung during his visit to Moscow in May 1955. In fact, on 19 April 1956, Ambassador V. Ivanov told Kim Il Sung at the Third KWP Party Congress, that the KGB had advised that death penalty should be avoided. Kim seemed angry, according to Ivanov's diary (RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, 1. 215.)

29. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 24 May to 11 June 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.215.

30. Results of the Third Congress of the KWP, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.144.

31. *Ibid.*, 148.

32. To the CPSU CC, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 314, 1.214.

Record of the talks with Bak I.D. March-April 1955.

33. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 24 May to 11 June 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.204.

34. *Ibid.*, 1. 210-12.

35. Diary of ambassador Ivanov from 14 June to 20 June 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, 1. 254-60. He was educated in Japan and worked as a journalist in the South before he came to North to become a vice minister in 1948.

36. Report of the Work of the Governmental Delegation that visited Brother States and Several Tasks of Our Party (Report of Comrade Kim Il Sung at the CC Plenum of KWP 30 August 1956), RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1.227.

37. Report of the Work of the Governmental Delegation that visited Brother States and Several Tasks of Our Party (Report of Comrade Kim Il Sung at the CC Plenum of KWP 30 August 1956) RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 411, 1. 252.

38. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 6 August to 24 August 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1. 337.

39. *Ibid.*, 1. 345.

40. *Ibid.*, 1. 336.

41. *Ibid.*, 1. 342.

42. *Ibid.*, 1. 348

43. *Ibid.*, 1. 348.

44. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 29 August to 14 September 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1. 317.

45. *Ibid.*, 1. 318.

46. *Ibid.*, 1. 320.

47. *Ibid.*, 1. 318.

48. *Ibid.*, 1. 320.

49. *Ibid.*, 1. 330.

50. *Ibid.*, 1. 323..

51. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 24 May to 11 June 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1. 213; Li Sangjo letter to the KWP CC, Delo 412. 1. 238. Li asked for help from the CPSU in his meeting with the Soviet diplomat I. Kudryukov on 16th June.

52. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 24 May to 11 June 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1. 213.

53. Record of the talks with Kim Sek-pok (Ministry of State Control) on 31 May 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1.223-24

54. Dear N.S. Khrushchev, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1.227-28.

55. Reception of DPRK ambassador Li Sangjo on 5 September 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1. 224, 230. Li Sangjo letter to the Central committee of the KWP (ll.238-295).

56. Li Sangjo letter to the Central committee of the KWP, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1. 250.

57. *Ibid.*, 1. 251.

58. *Ibid.*, 1. 260.

59. *Ibid.*, 1. 271.

60. *Ibid.*, 1. 271. Deputy Minister of Justice informed this to Gim Dubong.

61. Li Sangjo letter to the Central committee of the KWP, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1. 272.

62. *Ibid.*, 1. 273-274.

63. *Ibid.*, 1. 277.

64. *Ibid.*, 1. 278.

65. *Ibid.*, 1. 282.

66. *Ibid.*, 1. 283

67. *Ibid.*, 1. 288.

68. *Ibid.*, 1. 295.

69. Presidium TsK KPSS 1954-64, tom 1, M., 2003, p. 961; tom 2, 2006, p. 421-422.

70. Vasilii Kovyshenko had been political officer of the 25th Army of the Red Army and was thus close to Kim Il Sung in 1945-8. Later, as a Japanese specialist, he was appointed by the March 1950 decision of the Soviet Politburo to watch the Japanese Communist Party (JCP), when the JCP was split by the Cominform criticism of S. Nosaka in January 1950. Perhaps he had been responsible in the CPSU Central Committee for both the JCP and KWP until 1963, when the JCP came closer to the CCP. He was to be replaced by the less sophisticated Japanologist I. Kovalenko.

71. N. M. Shesterikov diary from 14-24 September, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, 1. 303.

72. On the situation of the KWP and DPRK, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 486, 1. 1-17.

73. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 27 September to 8 October 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 486, 1. 22.

74. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 11 October to 29 October 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, 1. 344. Kim Il Sung said to ambassador Ivanov who came to convey the dissatisfaction from the Chinese and Soviet parties that they did not want to change the decisions by the pressure of the foreign parties (RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, 1. 345). The families of the refugee members were provided with food ration cards again, but Gim Chang-man said that they should not return to the DPRK.

75. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 27 September to 8 October 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 486, 1. 28-34. Kim Il Sung told that the publication would only profit the South Korean authorities.

76. *Ibid.*, 1. 36. Prior to this, the party meeting of the local party representative severely criticized the factionalists, according to Kim Il Sung.

77. *Ibid.*, 1. 18; To the CPSU CC, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, 1. 296.

78. Diary of ambassador V. I. Ivanov from 11 October to 29 October 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, 1. 347.

79. Record of the Talks with DPRK Foreign Minister Nam Il on 9 March 1957, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 486, 1. 72.

80. RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 486, 1. 46.

81. Report of the Soviet Embassy of the Chinese Peoples Republic for 1956, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 409, 1. 142. Chinese secret sources told the Soviet Embassy in Beijing that Officers in the Chinese Volunteer army had negated this rule and engaged in criminal acts, and had intervened in the Korean domestic matters (RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 409, 1. 412).

82. *Ibid.*, 1. 141.

83. On the situation of the KWP and DPRK, RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 486, 1. 1-17.

84. This issue again is raised by scholars, especially after the emergence of new documents on the Soviet historical sources, among others by A. Lankov. See also B. Szalontai (*Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era, Soviet DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism 1953-1964*, Stanford University, 2005).



DOCUMENT No. 1

Memorandum of Conversation with the DPRK Vice Premier of the Cabinet of Ministers and Member of the KWP CC Presidium, Bak Changok, 12 March 1956

[Source: Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (hereafter RGANI), Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 73-85. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by James F. Person.]

CPSU CC

Cde. Ponamarev B.N.

I am attaching for your consideration a memorandum of a conversation of the counselor of the embassy of the USSR in the DPRK, Cde. Filatov, with the Vice Premier of the Cabinet of Ministers of the DPRK, Bak Changok from 12 March 1956.

Attached: abovementioned on "12" pages, vkh. No 1288s-dv

From 16.4.56

/I. Kurdyukov/

"27" April 1956

No 615 / dv

[handwritten at the bottom:]

To the archive

The issue, stated in the memorandum of conversation, is elucidated in the information prepared for the delegation of the CPSU to the III Congress of the Korean Workers' Party.

I.S. Shcherbakov

7-V-56

[Illegible signature]

[Illegible signature]

From the diary of
Counselor of the Embassy of the
USSR in the DPRK
Comrade Filatov S.N.

Secret

Copy. No. 1

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION
with the Vice Premier of the Cabinet of Ministers of the
DPRK and Member of the KWP CC Presidium, Bak
Changok¹

12 March 1956

Having met at the initiative of the embassy, Cde. Bak Changok indicated that he had long prepared to meet with me to explain his thoughts about the decree of the Presidium KWP CC from 18 January of this year, “About the Future Struggle Against Reactionary Bourgeois Ideology in Literature and Art.”

Before sharing my thoughts on the abovementioned decree of the KWP CC Presidium, I would like to say that over the past ten years of working in Korea, that is, from the period of founding and strengthening the people’s authority in North Korea, I, of course, had shortfalls and made a number of mistakes. It is now easier to evaluate the path our party has already traversed; to assess the actions of individual party functionaries, hide the shortcomings and mistakes and outline a future course to strengthen the party as a guiding and leading force of the Korean people.

I always admitted to the mistakes that I made in my work, on numerous occasions, I personally revealed them and informed the Political Council and KWP CC Presidium.

It is necessary to point out, Bak Changok said, that in the Soviet Union I was involved in insignificant party work, but in Korea I was pushed into important party and state work. Without the necessary experience, I made a number of mistakes when deciding difficult matters of state. Furthermore, having arrived in Korea, I did not know the country, did not know the ruling officials of the party, and, it must be said, there were few, and when forcing me to take leading roles in work, I was faulted. What’s more, it must be said that the situation was complicated in Korea both before and especially during the war. A lot of difficulties continue to exist even now.

What I am going to tell you, Bak said, I have already declared on more than one occasion both in meetings of the Political Council and in the Presidium KWP CC.

Regarding the decree of the KWP CC Presidium of 18 January of this year, I would like to impart to you that I cannot agree with the line of accusations which were made against me in that ruling. First of all, Bak said, I never carried out factional struggle and never came out against the party line. I did not distort the party line in relation to the United Front, did not suggest reconciliation and collusion with enemies. I unselfishly struggled for the party line throughout all of the ten years I have worked in Korea

I asked Cde. Bak Changok how it can be explained that the KWP CC Presidium made such a decision.

He explained that the question of the work of Soviet-Koreans and especially of those who worked in the Political Council and the KWP CC should not be placed first. Even in 1953 after the death of [Former KWP Vice Chairman, Alexander Ivanovich] Hegai,² a number of local functionaries and especially cdes. [KWP Vice Chairman] Choe Yonggeon, [Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance] Choe Changik and Jeong Ilyong raised the matter of releasing me and Cde. [KWP CC Organization and Guidance Department Director] Bak Yeongbin from our posts in the apparatus of the KWP CC; but then Kim Il Sung did not agree with them and

spoke at the Political Council with criticism of their actions. In spite of this, Cde. Choe Yonggeon sought the dismissal of a number of leading army officers who came from the Soviet Union.

At the start of 1954, the above-mentioned functionaries once again discussed the need to dismiss a number of Soviet-Koreans from leadership posts. Cde. Kim Il Sung did not agree with them—however, after a month and a half he gave the order that a few functionaries from the Soviet Union should be demoted to more subordinate positions and this was done.

As you know, Bak declared, at the start of 1954, [KWP CC Vice Chairman] Gim Il and I served as vice-chairmen of the KWP CC, at the suggestion of comrade Kim Il Sung, we were reassigned to work in the Cabinet of Ministers—Deputy Premiers. At the same time I was confirmed chairman of the State Planning Committee and Gim Il as Minister of Agriculture. This transition did not go too smoothly. When Kim Il Sung spoke during a session of the Political Council with such a suggestion, [KWP CC vice chairman] cds. Bak Jeongae and [Supreme People’s Assembly Standing Committee Chairman] Gim Dubong expressed their opinions about the inexpediency of my and Gim Il’s move to positions in the Cabinet of Ministers.

My promotion to the post of deputy premier and chairman of the State Planning Committee brought me closer to Kim Il Sung. All matters related to the rehabilitation of our economy were decided in the government at the initiative of the State Planning Committee. Cde. Kim Il Sung always supported me and demanded that things be put in order in the ministries. I, said Bak, sought to neatly carry out the directives of comrade Kim Il Sung for which he repeatedly held me up as an example. This caused some stirring among a number of functionaries and especially among [Vice Premier and Minister of Heavy Industry] Jeong Ilyong, Choe Changik and others.

At the start of 1955 I started to notice that Cde. Kim Il Sung began to express dissatisfaction with me and my work. My attempts to determine the cause of his discontent in talks with Cde. Kim Il Sung did not lead to anything. Cde. Kim Il Sung did not desire to discuss this matter. I saw, said Bak, that someone had begun to influence Cde. Kim Il Sung. Furthermore, this influence adversely affected the work of the State Planning Committee.

It must be said that all of the members of the Political Council, with the exception of [KWP CC Cadre Department Chief] Bak Geumcheol, negatively related to Kim Il Sung’s suggestion about the appointment of Cde. Choe Yonggeon to the Political Council. Cde. Kim Il Sung did not strive to get the consensus of the Political Council in co-opting Cde. Choe Yonggeon into the Political Council and unilaterally went with the proposal to a plenum. It is necessary to mention that the majority of the members of the KWPCC recognized Cde. Choe Yonggeon as the head of a petty-bourgeois party and were surprised by his appearance at a plenum of the presidium.

I think that with his acceptance into the Political Council, the collection of materials against me, Bak Yeongbin, and

other Soviet-Koreans was started. Cde. Kim Il Sung began to express more and more displeasure with my work, the work of Bak Yeongbin, and even that of Bak Jeongae.

Last August, in my absence, Cde. Kim Il Sung summoned all of my subordinates in the State Planning Committee and ordered them to compile materials about the poor work of the State Planning Committee. Although they carried out his order, the material was so poorly prepared that Cde. Kim Il Sung decided not to even talk with me about the shortcomings in the work of the State Planning Committee.

On 21 November Cde. Kim Il Sung spoke during a meeting of economic advisors with harsh criticism of the work of the State Planning Committee and of me personally. I considered the points of his speech as guidelines and took measures to improve the work of the State Planning Committee.

Prior to the December KWP CC Plenum, Bak said, I was twice called to Kim Il Sung where he made a number of accusations against me.

First of all, he said to me that my attitude toward proletarian authors, including [Minister of Education] Han Seolya, was incorrect. I incorrectly supported writers who arrived from the south. He said that after the death of Hegai, I did not excuse a number of Soviet-Koreans from their posts who, together with me, composed a group, and all matters were decided like a family.

In response, I told Cde. Kim Il Sung that I did not do anything without the permission of the Political Council and his personal orders. Until the end of 1948, I was involved in inconsequential work and did not have any influence on the work of the KWP CC. Regarding those who came from South Korea, the Political Council of the Central Committee repeatedly made pronouncements demanding that the possibility to work be given to those people [southern Koreans] and that they be supported. Furthermore, you, Cde. Kim Il Sung, repeatedly instructed us and demanded support and correct relations with those workers who came from the south.

Regarding the Koreans who came from the Soviet Union, I did not place them in leading posts. That was done before me. Furthermore, all of them were confirmed by the Political Council and many of the functionaries were nominated to the leading posts at his, Kim's, initiative.

I directed Cde. Kim Il Sung's attention, Bak said, to the fact that all of the matters which he had raised related to the period 1947–1952, and that discussing them at the present time is hardly constructive, however, if at present a number of members of the Political Council consider that mistakes were made in these matters, then why must I carry all of the blame for these blunders? All of these matters were decided in the Political Council so it means that all of the Political Council should be responsible.

Cde. Kim Il Sung agreed with my thoughts and asked me to remain calm and continue to work actively in the Political Council and Cabinet of Ministers.

In spite of the meeting and agreement with my argument, at the end of the meeting of the December KWP CC Plenum,

comrade Kim Il Sung delivered a speech. His entire speech was devoted to the theme of the Soviet-Korean affair. I understood that political accusations were being made and I decided to once again speak with comrade Kim Il Sung and express my thoughts. In a discussion with me, comrade Kim Il Sung once again repeated the now notorious accusations. However, at the end of the discussion in which Bak Jeongae took part, comrade Kim Il Sung said you have already been criticized enough, continue to quietly work.

I learned that the speech Kim Il Sung delivered at the Central Committee plenum was distributed by the Pyeongyang City Committee, to all primary organizations, and it is being discussed in party meetings.

Bak said [that] on 27–29 December there was an enlarged plenum of the KWP CC in which over 400 people participated. At the initiative of comrade Kim Il Sung, I, comrades Bak Yeongbin, [Ministry of State Control Desk Officer] Gi Seokbok, Jeon Donghyeok and Cheon Yul were compelled to deliver speeches admitting our shortcomings. The gathering was prearranged; as I was the first to speak, I was given around 100 questions. I was accused of wanting to become the face of the state, and if not the face, then the second in command. For this, I rallied a number of dependable Soviet-Koreans cadres. Bak Yeongbin and I, taking refuge in the collectivity of the leadership, put ourselves forward and beseeched the role of the *vozhd*, Cde. Kim Il Sung. We were, as a number of participants demonstrated, conduits of bourgeois ideology to the Party.

I asked Cde. Bak Changok to describe the character of the speeches of a few members of the leadership.

Cde. Bak Changok explained that the speeches of Im Hae—representative of the Korean Communist Party attached to the KWP, and Han Seolya deserve mention.

Comrade Im Hae declared that he has at his disposal materials which describe the factional activities of Bak Changok, Bak Yeongbin, and other Soviet-Koreans.

Comrade Han Seolya said that Bak Changok wanted to become the first person in the state, advanced himself, and by his activities lessened the role of comrade Kim Il Sung. He said that Bak Changok and Bak Yeongbin did not permit the party and the people to express their good feelings and attitude to their *vozhd*, etc. Bak stated that all of these accusations I spurned as absurd and baseless.

At the end of the meeting, comrade Kim Il Sung delivered a speech that in an even harsher tone repeated what he said during the December Plenum of the Central Committee. He made a specific reference to 15 functionaries who arrived from the Soviet Union as followers of Hegai. His speech, like the previous one, was distributed to all primary organizations of Pyeongyang and the provincial committees and read aloud at party meetings. Once again the Soviet-Koreans were discussed everywhere.

On 30 December, Bak Changok said, I asked comrade Kim Il Sung to receive me and listen to my explanation. Cde. Kim Il Sung invited me to his home and we talked for over 5 hours. He produced the same accusations to me that he had previously. I

directed the attention of Cde. Kim Il Sung to the fact that only Soviet-Koreans are being discussed, then what of the mistakes made by local functionaries of which there is no mention anywhere. Furthermore, it has already been over two months that the party leadership and all local organizations have discussed the activities and mistakes of the Soviet-Koreans, distracting us from our primary duties.

Cde. Kim Il Sung argued with me for a long time. Later he invited cds. Bak Jeongae and Gim Il. He asked their thoughts on the question under discussion. They essentially agreed with me, and Kim Il Sung agreed with us that all of this needed to stop. He asked me to forget everything and continue to work actively in the post of deputy premier and head of the State Planning Committee.

However, on 18 January I was once again summoned to a meeting of the KWP CC Presidium where I was asked to read a draft decision of the presidium that had already been accepted by the Political Council. Cde. Kim Il Sung suggested that I express my opinion about the matter under discussion to all members of the Presidium. None of the members of the Presidium demonstrated that Bak Yeongbin and I had carried out factional anti-party activities against the party.

In my speech I did not agree with the abovementioned decision of the presidium but at the end of the meeting said that they should decide as they wish, and demanded that they relieve me from the duties of head of the State Planning Committee and demote me to ordinary work. I made this declaration because I was so worn out that I could not explain to the Political Council and comrade Kim Il Sung about the incorrectness of the line of accusations made against me and other Soviet-Koreans.

Kim Il Sung came out against my suggestion. On another day I once again asked to be relieved from all of my posts. Comrade Kim Il Sung considered my request as unwillingness to agree with the decision of the Central Committee Presidium. I twice raised the matter of being dismissed. The Political Council accepted my suggestion and released me from the posts I had occupied.

Bak explained that I once again asked comrade Kim Il Sung to send me to common work but he categorically rejected the suggestion.

Later, Bak indicated that comrade Kim Il Sung will soon become convinced of the incorrectness of several accusations produced against me, comrade Bak Yeongbin, and other Soviet-Koreans. He will also be convinced of what a few members of the Political Council are attempting to achieve through the removal of them/him, Bak Changok and Bak Yeongbin from the Central Committee and Cabinet of Ministers.

A number of functionaries who presently surround Kim Il Sung, I mean, Bak said, Choe Yonggeon, Bak Geumcheol and several deputy directors of the KWP CC are unqualified, and more importantly, are mean-spirited and un-objective workers.

Two days ago, Bak said, I was asked to visit comrade Kim Il Sung. All of the directors of the departments of the Central Committee were with him. Before them, he assigned me the

task of editing a section of a speech on industry to the KWP Third Congress. He ordered all with materials about the work of industry to deliver them to me. However, up to now, they have not given me anything. I informed Cde. Kim Il Sung of this. He promised to take measures.

I directed Bak Changok's attention to the address of Cde. Kim Il Sung in relation to the fact that he, Bak Changok, was on more than one occasion ordered to speak with criticism of his erroneous actions. Bak responded that no one had ever given him such an order. In October of last year during a conversation Cde. Kim Il Sung drew attention to the fact that I had to deliver a speech on the work of the union of writers of Korea. I replied that I am entirely unfamiliar with the literature of Korean writers. On that, the conversation ceased.

I asked Cde. Bak Changok to describe how the party functionaries in the KWP CC and the Cabinet of Ministers study the decision of the CPSU Twentieth Congress, the speech of cdes. N.S. Khrushchev and N.A. Bulganin, and what influences and impressions did they get from the CPSU Twentieth Congress.

Bak answered that the majority of party functionaries were still silent. They are waiting until Cde. Kim Il Sung himself talks about the line of issues, and especially about the personality cult, collective leadership, observance of intra-party democracy, revolutionary legality, etc. All of these questions are of supreme importance to the future work of our party and its strengthening.

The praise of Cde. Kim Il Sung is especially widespread in both oral and print propaganda in Korea, and if anyone comments on this matter, they are subject to punishment. I must acknowledge that what we members of the Political Council did, though feebly and timidly attempt to come out against this, but because of this we were accused of coming out against Kim Il Sung. Recently, since Bak Yeongbin left from the Central Committee Department of Propaganda and Agitation, the praise of comrade Kim Il Sung has significantly increased, and members of the Political Council "compete" in this action, attempting to outdo one another. Cde. Kim Il Sung sees all of this and relates to it highly. At his command and in consultation with him, preparations are being made for a film about his struggle against the Japanese colonizers. The study of the history of the KWP is conducted through the reports and speeches of Cde. Kim Il Sung. It would be possible to give even more examples characterizing just how far the matter of praising Cde. Kim Il Sung has gone.

The leading members of the party, Cde. Bak said, at the present moment are studying the decision and materials of the CPSU Twentieth Congress; discussions are taking place everywhere on the question of the personality cult, and I don't doubt that the majority of the leading cadres correctly understand all of the matters and attitudes advanced in the decision of the Twentieth Party Congress and reach the necessary conclusions. I also think, he continued, that Cde. Kim Il Sung will largely change the forms and methods of leadership. Without that, the further strengthening of the party and reinforcement

of its influence on the masses is inconceivable.

At the end of our discussion, Cde. Bak Changok informed me that he had a hand in the composition of the memorandum which Choe Yonggeon delivered to the Soviet government in February of this year. In this note, the Korean government asks the government of the USSR about the deferment and partial write-off of repayments of credits the Soviet Union had previously given to Korea.

Furthermore, we discussed the question of approaching the Soviet Government with a request to render the DPRK further material assistance. We think, said Bak, that it is necessary for us during the upcoming five-year plan to receive material assistance in the amount of one billion Rubles; we assume that this assistance will be rendered in roughly equal portions by the Soviet Union and China.

During a meeting of the Political Council, Comrade Kim Il Sung said on this matter that it is not necessary to appeal to the Soviet government now with the simultaneous requests for the deferment and partial write-off of repayments of credits and additional material assistance. It is necessary to decide, he said, first the primary question—the matter of the deferment and partial write-off of the repayments of credits. If the Soviet government complies with our request, then after some time we will appeal to the government of the USSR for additional material assistance. Members of the Political Council agreed with Cde. Kim Il Sung's suggestion.

I thanked Cde. Bak Changok for the information.

The meeting lasted for 4 hours.

Comments:

1. From the meetings conducted with Soviet-Koreans comrades Bak Changok, Bak Yeongbin, [Vice Premier and Minister of Light Industry] Bak Uiwan, [DPRK Minister of Construction] Gim Seunghwa, Gim Daewook, Jang Donghok, and others, it is clear that Cde. Bak Changok, much like Cde. Bak Yeongbin, Gi Seokbok, Jang Yul and Jang Donghok admitted to the fabricated charges made against them at the meeting of the Presidium of the KWP CC on 18 January on the grounds of what the KWP CC Presidium passed in the decree "About the Future Struggle Against Reactionary Bourgeois Ideology in Literature and Art."

It is necessary to consider that for over two months the KWP CC discussed the matter in plenary sessions of the CC Presidium and Political Council and also in primary party organs. The discussion of this matter, in point of fact, turned into a discussion of the activities of a number of leading Soviet-Koreans. What's more, coercive methods were employed in the discussions, creating an entirely incorrect public impression surrounding the Soviet-Koreans. All of this led to the abovementioned officials admitting to the accusations made against them.

2. For the past while, Cdes. Bak Changok and Bak Yeongbin tried to sort out the essence of the question under discussion and visited the embassy with the aim of explaining their thoughts on the well-known decree of the KWP CC Presidium from 18 January of this year. In the conversations

they denied their participation in factional and anti-party activities, and moreover in distorting the policies of the party in the realm of literature, art and the United National Front of Korea.

In altering their thoughts on the well known decree of the KWP CC Presidium, in my opinion, there were two influential factors: the historical decision of the CPSU Twentieth Congress and the change in the relations of the Political Council and Cde. Kim Il Sung himself in connection with cdes. Bak Changok and Bak Yeongbin and other Soviet-Koreans. It is well known that the Political Council repeatedly gave the order to provincial and city committees of the party to cease discussion of the activities of well-known Soviet-Koreans.

3. I think that the abovementioned Soviet-Koreans made a number of serious mistakes. First of all, they incorrectly and arrogantly associated with the local cadres, ignored them and did not promote [them] to leadership posts. Several functionaries such as Han Seolya and others were victimized.

However, in my opinion, one cannot accept the correctness of the decree of the KWP CC Presidium from 18 January 1956 in that cdes. Bak Changok, Bak Yeongbin, Gi Seokbok, Jang Yul and Jang Donghok carried out a factional anti-party struggle against the party and distorted party policies in the realm of literature and art.

Counselor of the Embassy

20 March 1956

S. Filatov

4 Copies sent

1- Cde. Federenko

2- Cde. Kurdyukov

3- Cde. Solodovnik

4- To the files

Composed by Filatov

1. *Editor's Note:* The document was composed in both the first and second person without quotation marks or any other indication of a change in person.

2. *Editor's Note:* Alexander Ivanovich Hegai was also called by his Korean sobriquet Heo Gai.



DOCUMENT No. 2

Remarks on the Draft Statutes of the KWP

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 22-25.
Obtained and translated for CWIHP by James F. Person.]

Secret. Copy No. 1

5 March 1956

Department of the CPSU CC

Comrade Shcherbakov, I.S.

I am sending you "remarks on the draft statutes of the Korean Workers' Party," prepared by the embassy of the USSR in the DPRK.

Attachment: referred to on three pages / your eyes only/
vkh No. 812s-dv/

Deputy Director of the Far Eastern Division of MFA USSR

/S. Suzdalev/

To the archive

The material was used in preparing the conclusion of the draft statutes of the KWP.

I-VP/NM

No. 567-DV

5.3.56

I. Shcherbakov

31-III-56

Remarks on the Draft Statutes of the Korean Workers' Party

The draft charter was studied by embassy officials and after an exchange of opinions it was decided to make the following remarks.

1st Paragraph 4. Remove the word "anti-Japanese" and substitute the following wording: "The Korean Workers' Party is the successor of the glorious revolutionary tradition of the masses of our country who fought for national independence and liberation against the foreign colonizers.

Such wording would more succinctly reflect the history of the national-liberation struggle not only against the Japanese, but also against the American colonizers and that this struggle was carried out not only by the working class, but also by the peasantry.

2nd Paragraph 3. Replace the wording with, for example, the following: "The Korean Workers' Party advocates all possible support to the people of south Korea in their struggle for lib-

eration from imperialism and feudal exploitation...", eliminate the words "American" and "pro-American."

Such a wording must not be interpreted as meaning that the KWP sets before itself a task with such a warlike character.

3rd Paragraph 1. The wording needs to be changed and the following given: "The Korean Workers' Party struggles for the future fortification of the peoples' democratic system and the defensive strength of the northern half of the republic, constituting the material base for the peaceful unification of the country and guaranteeing independence." Otherwise, the words "...and the military fortification of the revolutionary-democratic base" may be interpreted as a summons to an arms race.

In the 3rd paragraph the phrase "and for the strengthening of military preparedness of the country" should be eliminated since it is redundant.

4th Paragraph 1. The wording should be changed, making it similar to the analogous wording in the statutes of the CPSU: "Members of the Korean Workers' Party can be from any profession, being citizens of the DPRK, recognizing the platform and statutes of the party..." Such wording will not exclude from the Party craftsmen and the petty bourgeoisie.

5th Paragraph "b". In the expression "must wage an uncompromising battle with factionalists and all varieties of anti-party elements..." remove the words "attempting to divide the party" since it may be understood that there is a factional struggle within the Party and that it lacks unity.

In point "d" of the same paragraph, remove the stipulation: history, geography and customs of ones' native land.

6th Paragraph "v". Remove the stipulation "if a real reason exists, since it could serve as a well known loophole for suppressing criticism.

The third and fourth sections of the rules advisable to switch places, the fourth section place immediately following the twelfth paragraph and the third section in place of the fourth.

7th Paragraph "b". It is advisable to increase the length of party membership of those recommended to three years, and add, that those recommended must have known the recommender through association for not less than one year.

21. Remove from the rules entirely since it may be misunderstood by those without a party in the sense that the party conceals from them the offences of its members.

35th Paragraph 1: It is necessary to slightly alter the form and give the following version. "the extraordinary Party Congress shall be convened at the proposal of the Central Committee

of the Korean Workers' Party or at the request of no less than one-third of the total membership represented at the preceding Party Congress."

39th Paragraph 1: It is not necessary to elect vice chairmen to the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party since it is a superfluous bureaucratic level.

45. The functions of the Central Auditing Commission are very limited: It has been reduced only to the auditing of finances. It is advisable to also grant it the right of inspection over the expediency and correctness of work of the central organs of the party.

63rd Paragraph 1: Give for editing: "The executive committee of the primary party organization shall be formed in party organizations when there are 15 or more party members. Remove the words "probationer members."

Please consider these revisions and inform us about the possibility of delivering them to our Korean friends as they had requested.

Charge d' Affaires of the USSR in Korea

A. Petrov



DOCUMENT No. 3

Memorandum of Conversation with Kim Il Sung, 19 April 1956

[Source: AVPRF, Opis 12, Papka 68, Delo 5, Listy 64-65. Obtained for CWHIP by Nobuo Shimotomai and translated for CWHIP by James F. Person.]

DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR in the DPRK, Cde. Ivanov V.I.

19 April

I visited Kim Il Sung and gave him the telegram from the CPSU CC with thanks for the invitation to the Third Party Congress.

Later I informed him that the CPSU CC approved the order of the formation for May 1st demonstrations. It was considered useful to decorate Red Square and other locations of workers' demonstrations, and also the party committee buildings with the portraits of Marx and Lenin. Participants will march in columns carrying portraits of Marx, Lenin, and leaders of the Communist Party and the government of the USSR and portraits of leaders of communist parties and governments of the Peoples' Republics.

Moreover, participants in the demonstration will be given

the opportunity to carry portraits of Stalin and other figures at their own discretion.

I said that I told him this in order to keep him informed. Kim Il Sung thanked me for informing him.

Later, having explained to Kim Il Sung that Korean comrades twice visited our head advisor from the KGB and were interested in his thoughts regarding the Soviet position on carrying out the death penalty in relation to [former DPRK Foreign Minister] Bak Heonyeong, I said to him that according to the Soviet position, it would be advisable to refrain from such measures in relation to Bak Heonyeong, keeping in mind that from the moment the sentence was pronounced, a lot of time has passed and that Bak Heonyeong is politically ruined, isolated, and that carrying out the sentence now might lead to undesirable repercussions both in Korea and also abroad.

Having listened to my thoughts about that, Kim Il Sung was clearly perturbed and vexed. He indicated that, even in his time, Ambassador Suzdalev inquired with regard to the situation of Bak Heonyeong, but no answer followed from Moscow and we considered that the matter of Bak Heonyeong to be of no concern to Soviet interests. I was obliged to explain that even now the Soviet position is not interfering in the matter of Bak Heonyeong, I was only expressing my opinion in connection with the visit of Korean comrades to the head advisor from the KGB. In this case it would be expedient to act taking into consideration the present situation, which speaks in favor of the corresponding stance.

Kim Il Sung said that the comrades who were interested in the thoughts of the head advisor of the KGB on the Soviet position on the future condition of Bak Heonyeong, acted on their own behalf at the same time there exists a party decree to carry out the sentence in relation to him. Kim Il Sung noted that he will find out why that decree has not yet been carried out since a month and a half has already passed since Bak Heonyeong was required to describe some additional circumstances, that the order was given to the MIA [Ministry of Internal Affairs] to carry out the sentence.

An open trial was conducted in relation to Bak Heonyeong, he said, and there are no grounds or signals about the incorrect conduct of the affair. He admitted to all crimes he was accused of, both in the preliminary investigation and in court; he is a spy and the death sentence will be carried out. The Korean people unanimously approve and there will not be any undesirable consequences abroad.

Kim Il Sung said that his personal feelings have come to this; that it is necessary to carry out the sentence and there is no need to reconsider. But since there are other thoughts on Soviet appeals, we will discuss these circumstances in the Political Council.



DOCUMENT No. 4

Report by N. T. Fedorenko on a Meeting with DPRK Ambassador to the USSR Li Sangjo, 29 May 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, Listy 190-196. Obtained for CWIHP by Nobuo Shimotomai and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

Distribute to members and candidate members of the CC [Central Committee] Presidium and CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] CC Secretaries

30 May 1956 [illegible surname]

[Stamp:
CPSU CC
20340

[date too faded to read]
subject to return to
the CPSU CC General Department]

FROM THE JOURNAL OF
N. T. FEDORENKO

Top Secret Copy N° 10
30 May 1956
N° 104/nf

[Handwritten at the bottom of the first page: "To the archives. The document was used in the preparation of recommendations to the leaders of the DPRK arriving in Moscow in June 1956. V. Gorbunov. 25/VII. I. Shcherbakov. 23-VII-56. [one illegible signature]."]

RECEPTION

of LI SANGJO, Ambassador of the DPRK to the USSR

29 May 1956

[handwritten in the left margin:
"To Cde. Ponomarev. [M. Suslov]"

I received Li Sangjo at his request.

1. Li Sangjo reported that during his trip through Moscow on the way to the European people's democracies, Kim Il Sung is counting on meeting with the leaders of the Soviet government, at which time he intends to inform them of the difficulties being experienced by his country and to ask the Soviet Union for additional economic aid to the DPRK. During these meetings, the ambassador pointed out, the Korean delegation will raise the questions it has in order to discuss these issues on [their] return from Warsaw to Moscow after the Soviet

Government has studied them.

Li Sangjo then said that Kim Il Sung's trip to the European countries of people's democracy has as its goal an expression of solidarity for the aid which these countries are giving. In the GDR and Czechoslovakia, Kim Il Sung also intends to discuss several issues concerning trade volume between these countries and the DPRK.

In reply to the question of what specific issues Kim Il Sung intends to raise in Moscow, Li Sangjo said that evidently this will be about the economic difficulties of the country and the difficult material situation of the population of North Korea. The Korean leaders, said Li Sangjo, informed Cde. Brezhnev about this when he was in Pyongyang and Cde. Brezhnev said that if there are requests of the Soviet Union then it would be advisable to raise them before the Soviet Government.

2. Li Sangjo asked whether I knew about the upcoming trip to the USSR of a delegation of officials of the DPRK Ministry of Internal Affairs in order to study the work experience of the corresponding Soviet institutions. At the same time the ambassador asked that the corresponding Soviet organs devote some attention to this delegation and familiarize it with the latest approaches in the work of the USSR MIA. The ambassador stressed that the Korean officials of the public security organs are in great need of assistance from Soviet comrades inasmuch as an erroneous method of operation of the organs has existed to date in the DPRK and this ought to be decisively changed. It would be very important, said Li Sangjo, for these officials to become deeply familiar with and master in practice the CPSU CC's approaches regarding the strictest observance of revolutionary legality. They would understand what importance was attached to this question in the USSR and would draw the appropriate conclusions from this for their practical activity in the DPRK.

I replied to Li Sangjo that I will inform the appropriate organs about his request which, I hope, will offer the proper assistance.

3. In connection with the fact that Li Sangjo just returned from the DPRK, where he took part in the work of the KWP Third Congress as a delegate, I asked him to tell about the conditions in the country and how the Congress went.

Speaking about the conditions in the country, Li Sangjo stressed that the DPRK is experiencing very severe economic difficulties, a keen shortage of food, housing difficulties, a neglect of agriculture, etc. As regards the Congress, he continued, the KWP CC leadership thinks that the Congress "went well and revealed the complete unity of the party." But, Li Sangjo pointed out, this is only the official point of view of leadership of the KWP CC. Li Sangjo then said that as ambassador of the DPRK, he ought to have strictly limited himself

to this information. However, in fact, Li Sangjo stressed, there are other opinions and sentiments about this question and as regards his, Li Sangjo's opinion, he also thinks that there were substantial shortcomings in the work of the Congress that reflect serious abnormalities in the work of the [Korean] Workers Party and the DPRK government.

The unfavorable state of affairs is primarily indicated, Li Sangjo pointed out, by the fact that there was no genuine criticism or self-criticism at the Congress and that the Congress did not at all take place in the spirit of the issues raised at the CPSU Twentieth Congress. The leadership of the KWP CC thinks that the shortcomings in the matter of observing the norms of party life and in other areas revealed at the CPSU Twentieth Congress and, in particular, in the report of N. S. Khrushchev, "The Cult of Personality and Its Consequences," are characteristic of the CPSU and have no relation to the Korean Workers' Party. This policy of the leadership of the KWP CC also determined the entire course of the Congress.

However, many party members, including Congress delegates, said Li Sangjo, think otherwise but they decided not to say this openly at the Congress.

Moving then to an open discussion, Li Sangjo said that his position was quite delicate. As an ambassador he must not speak of these things, especially since he knows the point of view of the leadership of the KWP CC and he knows that one does not win plaudits for such conversations but, on the contrary, he also knows that as a party member he must talk with us about these issues openly and not conceal his opinions. Li Sangjo added at the same time that the leadership of the KWP CC knows his opinion since he has openly stated it and written about it to the KWP CC Presidium.

Li Sangjo then stressed that a cult of personality of Kim Il Sung actually prevails in the DPRK, there is no collective leadership in the KWP CC, everything is decided by Kim Il Sung alone, and the people around Kim Il Sung fawn over him.

The presentation of the issues of the revolutionary liberation struggle of the Korean people is done extremely one-sidedly and is directed at glorifying Kim Il Sung. Li Sangjo said that during the struggle in Korea against the Japanese colonizers, many partisan formations were active and underground revolutionaries operated in the cities, but now they talk and write only about the partisan forces of Kim Il Sung. The Museum of the History of the Revolutionary Struggle of the Korean People in Pyeongyang, Li Sangjo noted, has been in fact turned into a museum of the story of Kim Il Sung. The majority of exhibits and works of art in this museum are devoted to Kim Il Sung personally. A painful impression remains, Li Sangjo pointed out, when you see how the results of the long years of the struggle of many workers and the heroic efforts of the people are ascribed to one person.

In the published works of Kim Il Sung, Li Sangjo continued, many articles have been published that were actually written by other people and, in particular, by some Soviet comrades. Biographic materials about Kim Il Sung abound in flattering epithets referring to him such as "iron commander," "great leader," "genius," "wise," etc. Some comrades in Korea, said Li Sangjo, compare the role of Kim Il Sung in the DPRK with the role of Mao Zedong in China, although it is clear that these are not comparable figures.

As one of the examples of what obvious distortions of reality the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung is bringing, Li Sangjo said that, judging from the biographical sketch of one of the handbooks, it seems that Kim Il Sung led the anti-Japanese liberation struggle of the Korean people even in childhood.

Describing the entourage of Kim Il Sung, Li Sangjo said that Bak Changok, who earlier strongly glorified Kim Il Sung and took part in drawing up his biography, has now been subjected to "persecution" by Kim Il Sung. Whereupon, Li Sangjo added, the real reasons for the removal of Bak Changok hardly consist of his "administrative style" or mistakes committed by him about questions of literature. These reasons might turn out to be of another kind.

Li Sangjo gave a critical description of such people in Kim Il Sung's entourage as [Minister of Foreign Affairs] Nam Il and Bak Jeongae, who showed themselves to be fawning and obsequious.

Describing the unpreparedness and casual approach to issues by leading Korean cadre, Li Sangjo told how the preliminary plan for construction sites was drawn up for inclusion in the national economic plan. This issue, which demanded detailed preliminary study, was discussed and decided by the leadership of the KWP CC in a casual manner: almost any enterprise that came into the head of the participants right there at the KWP CC Presidium meeting was scheduled for construction.

There are many underage [troops] and often simply incompetent cadres wearing high military ranks in the Korean People's Army, in the words of Li Sangjo. This creates serious doubt, said Li Sangjo, about how prepared these personnel are in the event of military surprises.

Li Sangjo said in passing that during the successes of the DPRK at the front in 1950, Mao Zedong warned Kim Il Sung that the possibility of an American invasion needed to be considered and appropriate ideological training conducted within the party for this circumstance, but proper attention was not paid to these warnings of Mao Zedong. Li Sangjo added that this fact is quite secret and three people in Korea know about it - Kim Il Sung, former DPRK ambassador to the USSR Yi Jooyong, and himself, Li Sangjo, who heard about this from Mao Zedong personally.

During the course of the conversation Li Sangjo at times spoke with great excitement; it was apparent that he is deeply worried over the abnormal situation in the KWP and in the DPRK government.

Several times during the conversation he stressed that there is a keen need for the CPSU CC to give substantive ideological and political aid regarding the dangerous blunders being made to the leadership of the KWP CC and to Kim Il Sung especially.

B. N. Vereshchagin, adviser to the DVO [Far East Department], was present at the conversation.

DEPUTY USSR MINISTER
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

/N. FEDORENKO/

[signature]

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DOCUMENT No. 5

Memorandum of Conversation with Gi Seokbok, 31 May 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 222-223. Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

From the journal of G. YE. SAMSONOV [USSR MFA stamp]: Secret
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3/VI 1956

Memorandum of a Conversation
with Gi Seokbok, Desk Officer
of the Ministry of State Control of the DPRK

31 May 1956

I received Gi Seokbok, who visited the Embassy at his own initiative.

Gi Seokbok passed me his letter addressed to Ambassador V. I. Ivanov.

Gi Seokbok said that he would like to relate an interesting fact conveyed to him by Gim Seunghwa, DPRK Minister of Construction.

During the work of the KWP Third Congress, Li Sangjo, DPRK ambassador to the USSR, twice wrote notes to the Congress Presidium with a suggestion that the cult of personality that exists in the KWP be discussed. However, these notes were not publicized. After the Congress an important discussion was held with Li Sangjo at the apartment of Gim Changman, Deputy Chairman of the KWP CC. The former was accused of political carelessness and in desiring to mechanically apply the decisions of the CPSU Twentieth Congress to the KWP.

Li Sangjo rejected these accusations and in turn accused Gim Changman and officials like him of a reluctance to correctly understand the decisions of the CPSU Twentieth Congress.

Gim Changman informed Choe Yonggeon, [Party Cadre Department Chief] Bak Geumcheol, and Han Sangdu of this conversation, who favored recalling Li Sangjo from the post of ambassador to the USSR.

Having found out about such an opinion, Li Sangjo visited [Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly] Gim Dubong and told him the substance of the matter. The same day Gim Dubong expressed his disagreement to Kim Il Sung about the proposed recall of Li Sangjo and that this step was in no way justified. Kim Il Sung agreed with this and added approximately the following: Li Sangjo did not make any mistake, he simply openly wrote what he was thinking.

Only after this, said Gi Seokbok, was Li Sangjo permitted to return to the USSR.

Gi Seokbok said that the concluding speech of Gim Changman, Deputy Chairman of the KWP CC, at a meeting of the Pyeongyang City activists convened about the results of the KWP Third Congress contained threats against those who continue to talk about the existence of a cult of personality in the KWP. Gim Changman declared, for example, that whoever does not want to understand that there is now no cult of personality in the KWP would end up isolated and be repudiated by everyone.

Gi Seokbok also reported that some days ago he attended a lecture by Jang Gukil, Deputy Minister of State Control, in which he said in particular that Korea was liberated by the partisan detachments of Kim Il Sung, but Gi Seokbok said that this was a gross distortion of history.

Gi Seokbok was told that his letter would be passed to the ambassador.

FIRST SECRETARY OF THE EMBASSY

/signature/

/G. Samsonov/

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**DOCUMENT No. 6**
**Memorandum of Conversation with Vice Premier and
 Minister of Light Industry Bak Uiwan, 5 June 1956**

*[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 203-205.
 Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for
 CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]*

Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK
 No. 179
 "13" June 1956

Top Secret
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DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR in the DPRK, Cde. Ivanov V.I.
 For the period from 24 May to 11 June 1956.

Pyeongyang

5 June

I received Bak Uiwan at his request. Bak said that before the departure of the government delegation to the GDR he had raised the issue of leave with Kim Il Sung and asked to go to the Soviet Union since his wife needs a spa cure. At the same time, said Bak, he expressed doubt to Kim that, since he had accepted Korean citizenship, they wouldn't start accusing his trip to the Soviet Union of being a vacation. Kim agreed to the trip and said that he would give the necessary instructions to Choe Yonggeon.

I replied that the necessary steps would be taken to organize the cure for him and his wife.

Bak then expressed the hope that Kim Il Sung's trip would bring changes in economic policy and with regard to the people. He said that Kim had begun to change for the better but makes mistakes in leadership and it is hard for him to correct them and abandon them.

In maintaining his thought, Bak pointed out that three Soviet-Koreans were promoted to leadership posts at the 29 May political council meeting.

In recent times not one Soviet Korean was in leadership posts in the KWP CC apparatus since a certain policy had been pursued that only local Koreans ought to work in the Central Committee and therefore all Soviet-Koreans had been removed.

Completely unexpectedly for Bak, at the 29 May CC Presidium [SIC] Kim proposed the appointment of former chief of the First Department Go Himan as KWP CC Transportation and Construction Department deputy chief. Bak pointed out in spite of the appointment that Go Himan was not suited for this work. However, Kim did not agree and noted that Go Himan could be appointed Minister, he deserved it, but there were already many Soviet-Koreans in these posts, meaning Nam Il, Gim Seunghwa, Bak Hongseok, Bak Changok, and it was allegedly necessary at the same time to maintain certain proportions in appointing officials.

Bak Uiwan noted that Kim Il Sung continued to divide workers into Soviet, local, Southerners, and partisans, and thinks that necessary proportions need to be considered when appointing workers to leadership positions.

[Tak Yangik] was promoted to Deputy Chairman of Gosplan and Bak Wongu was promoted to the post of Deputy Minister of Machine building at this same CC Presidium meeting. Both of these comrades are Soviet-Koreans.

Then Bak pointed out that the Czechs are designing a general machine building factory for them, where cable products and electrical instruments are to be produced. At one time [Vice Premier and Minister of Heavy Industry] Jeong Ilyong had issued a plan to build a 300,000 m² factory. The Czechoslovak planners calculated and came to the conclusion that the cost of such a factory would be 200 million rubles. They can only give 100 million rubles in free aid. After long discussion it was decided to cut the amount of work in half, which made the Czechoslovak comrades very happy. However the issue of the construction is being delayed since the factory will have to be planned again.

Bak Uiwan also said that, when assessing [Deputy Prime Minister] Choe Changik, Kim Il Sung seriously insulted him in connection with the fact that Choe Changik had declared that worse than no position is taking a certain position in the party while feeling inside that he was not needed, a dead person, and he could not agree to such a role and was dissatisfied with his position.

Bak Uiwan also said that Hong Myeonghui is an eminent figure in Korea and the people consider him a genius. When

talking with Bak, Hong Myeonghui told him that he is 70 years old and, not being a party member, he does not serve just to make a living but because he loves the DPRK system. While he was younger he was not tempted by a Japanese offer and did not serve them. He was therefore surprised at the words of Kim Il Sung, who declared to Hong Myeonghui that he didn't work much, that there were many hard workers without him, and that they need him, Hong Myeonghui, as a figurehead [figura].



DOCUMENT No. 7

Memorandum of Conversation with Choe Changik, 5 June 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 206-207. Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK
No. 179
"13" June 1956

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DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR in the DPRK, Cde. Ivanov V.I.
For the period from 24 May to 11 June 1956.

Pyeongyang

5 June

A meeting was held with Cde. Choe Changik, Deputy Chairman of the DPRK Cabinet of Ministers. Our conversation lasted one hour and 10 minutes.

Cde. Bobylev, the chief of the group of Soviet specialists engaged in the construction of the meat-packing plant in Pyeongyang, was present at the beginning of the conversation. He informed Cde. Choe Changik of the progress of the construction and turned to him with a request to increase the number of workers at the construction site by 200 men in order to completely finish the construction of all production facilities of the meat-packing plant by 15 August. Cde. Choe Changik promised to grant this request.

The conversation then turned to the topic of the visit of the DPRK government delegation to the European people's democracies and the USSR. In response to the question of what results were expected from the visit to the USSR, Cde. Choe Changik said that this visit, like previous visits to the USSR, would bring the DPRK favorable results in the matter of its economic and political development. I noted that the USSR had always and

would henceforth give material aid and moral support to its friends and that the visit of the DPRK government delegation to the Soviet Union would unquestionably bring great benefit to the Korean people.

In reply to Cde. Choe Changik's opinion about the presumed nature of the meetings between the DPRK delegation and the leadership of the Soviet Union, Cde. Choe Changik remarked evasively that he could only share his personal ideas about this issue. Cde. Choe Changik said that it seems to him that, besides economic issues, the issues touched upon would be those associated with the political leadership of the party and the country in the interests of accelerating the social development of Korea. In reply to this, I noted that at the present time the party and country were being led by people who had very rich experience in revolutionary struggle, experience in economic policy in the post-liberation period, and also experience in fighting external aggression in the period from 1950 to 1953, and that if the collective leadership develops further, the DPRK would achieve new successes in solving the problems which are common to all the countries of the people's democracies and the USSR.

Cde. Choe Changik agreed with this comment but noted cautiously that, in spite of all the successes that had been achieved, it would be desirable to improve work in this direction inasmuch, as he put it, different opinions exist about whether collective leadership has been fully developed in Korea or not. The conversation ended with this. It was evident that Cde. Choe Changik has his own ideas on this issue and in view of this I proposed a new meeting to Cde. Choe Changik. We agreed to meet at my apartment on the evening of 8 June.



DOCUMENT No. 8

Memorandum of Conversation with Gim Seunghwa, 7 June 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, List 210. Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK
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DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR in the DPRK, Cde. Ivanov V.I.
For the period from 24 May to 11 June 1956.

Pyeongyang

7 June

[DPRK Minister of Construction] Gim Seunghwa, whom I had invited to dinner, visited the Embassy construction site in the evening. Gim Seunghwa passed on a letter from [Deputy Prime Minister] Choe Changik who asked [me] to organize a meeting with him at my apartment but expressed a desire that the conversation be conducted without an interpreter, with only him present.

I agreed with this proposal and set this meeting for 8 June at the dacha at Seopo.



DOCUMENT No. 9

Memorandum of Conversation with Choe Changik, 8 June 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 210-214. Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK
No. 179
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DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR in the DPRK, Cde. Ivanov V.I.
For the period from 24 May to 11 June 1956.

Pyeongyang

8 June

I received Deputy Prime Minister Choe Changik at the dacha at his request. In the conversation Choe said that he intends to express his opinion about the unhealthy, in his view, situation which has developed in the leadership of the party and the government.

During the conversation Choe noted that established procedure does not even give him, a deputy prime minister, an opportunity to meet with foreigners. Only the Minister of Foreign Affairs has this right. However, like several other senior officials, he is concerned about a number of issues of party and government policy which he would like to share.

Choe thinks that they have developed an incorrect and even harmful practice of selecting and assigning senior personnel. The selection of personnel is guided not by Marxist-Leninist principles, personnel are not selected for their professional and political qualities, but continue to be selected according to the principle of where they came from. In the process they continue to divide workers into groups: Soviet-Koreans who arrived together with [Former Vice Chairman of KWP

A.I.] Hegai; Chinese Koreans headed by [Former Minister of Internal Affairs] Bak Ilu, the partisans headed by Kim Il Sung, and local Koreans and Koreans who arrived from the South. The proportion of representatives of a particular group is taken into account when promoting workers. In his opinion, such a practice of selecting personnel engenders nepotism and a struggle between groups, which weakens the work of the party and government apparatus and does not promote the consolidation of the unity of party ranks.

Recently a great many people have spoken at plenums and at KWP CC Presidium meetings about Hegai, about the fact that he permitted nepotism in the selection of personnel and wrecked party organizational work. However, the party was led by the Political Council, which should be responsible for the mistakes which were made in governing the country. The leaders of the party themselves are afraid to admit the mistakes which have been made and blame Hegai for everything. There were many shortcomings in Hegai's work but he was a capable and energetic worker and he could have been set straight. The majority of senior officials correctly understand the reasons for the mistakes which have been made but are afraid to speak about this since they are held accountable for this.

At the same time Choe noted that essentially all the Soviet-Koreans are being discussed during the discussion of Hegai's mistakes, which is incorrect and harmful. Some Soviet-Koreans made a number of mistakes in their work and they needed to be set straight, which was not done in a timely fashion but it does not provide grounds for acting against all Soviet-Koreans, who for the most part carry out the responsibilities with which they are entrusted courageously and skillfully.

Choe Yonggeon, [Chief of the Party Cadre Department] Bak Geumcheol, Han Sangdu, and several other leaders are not taking into account the situation which developed after the liberation of the country when workers arrived from various places and did not know one another or have experience in party and government policy. In such a situation the KWP CC and Hegai in particular had a correct attitude toward the Soviet-Koreans who were tested and trained for party work, and this produced favorable results. It needs to be borne in mind that there were a great many resentful and dissatisfied workers at that time and now, 10 years later, Hegai, Bak Changok, and others are accused of nepotism for having promoted Soviet-Koreans to leadership posts.

Choe Changik also pointed out that he also cannot agree with the fact that Hegai's work and his mistakes are tied to the activity of [Former DPRK Foreign Minister] Bak Heonyeong and Yi Sungyeop. These are bad people, enemies of our people, and Hegai's mistakes ought not be equated with their malicious activity.

Choe expressed the opinion that at the present time a number

of workers have been elected to the KWP CC Presidium who cannot meet the demands imposed on their professional and political qualities. Jeong Ilyong, Bak Geumcheol, and [Deputy Chairman of the KWP CC] Gim Changman are regarded as such workers. They do not have the necessary education and work experience and handle the responsibilities with which they are entrusted poorly. Along with their poor training and insufficient experience they have strongly developed negative features such as sycophancy and servility. They are not able to take a principled position when discussing thorny issues. He considers the promotion of Jeon Donghyeok to the post of Deputy Prime Minister especially unjustified. His relatives worked in the Japanese police, and a number of his kinsmen are in the South at the present time. In his opinion, a majority of senior officials have a negative attitude toward the promotions of the above officials.

Choe then expressed the opinion that the work of the KWP Third Congress had not been permeated by the spirit of the CPSU Twentieth Congress. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union showed an example for all communist and workers' parties of how to disclose existing shortcomings and mistakes in [their] work and how to struggle to eliminate them. At the same time there was essentially none of the necessary criticism and self-criticism at the Third Congress which would have promoted the consolidation of our party.

Before the Congress Bak Geumcheol gave instructions not to make critical comments, reportedly under the pretext that the delegates from [foreign] Communist parties in attendance might draw the wrong conclusions about the internal political situation in the KWP. The speeches of all the speakers were examined for this purpose in the Central Committee Organizational Department and several delegates who wanted to make critical comments against the Central Committee were not permitted to speak.

Choe also considered it wrong that almost nothing was said at the Congress about the role of the Soviet Union in the liberation of Korea at the same time as a number of senior officials were essentially speaking against Soviet culture under the pretense of combating formalism and dogmatism.

The leadership of the Central Committee tried to prove that there is no cult of personality in the party and that the KWP observes Leninist principles of collective leadership. The harmful consequences of the personality cult in Korea are associated with the work of Bak Heonyeong in the South and with the work of Hegai in the North. Choe Changik thinks that this is wrong. He considers unjust the accusations made against Minister of Culture Ho Dongsuk that allegedly for sycophantic reasons, monuments and busts of Kim Il Sung were set up in the country at his instruction or that at his initiative squares and parks were named for him or that he was extolled in the press and literature. In fact there was a deci-

sion of the Political Council about these issues and the editor of the journal *Novaya Koreya* [New Korea] was removed and expelled from the party for reducing the excessive praise of the personality of Kim Il Sung.

There were attempts at the Congress to discuss the issue of the personality cult in the KWP. For example, [DPRK Ambassador to the USSR] Li Sangjo sent a note to the Presidium of the Congress that much work is being done in the Soviet Union to eliminate the consequences of the personality cult of Stalin and that it would be desirable to examine this question with regard to the KWP. However no steps were taken about this note.

At the present time all of Kim Il Sung's proposals at meetings of the Central Committee Presidium and the Cabinet of Ministers are adopted without question and therefore no opportunity is given to other officials to make proposals and if anyone tries to speak his comments are called into question and impossible working conditions are created for him.

Speaking of the difficult economic situation of the population, Choe expressed the hope that the DPRK would be given the necessary aid during the trip of the Korean government delegation to the countries of the people's democracies and the Soviet Union.

At the same time Choe Changik thinks that the situation which has been created in the party urgently requires that the CPSU CC help improve the situation, for he does not see the necessary forces inside the party which could put the situation right and ensure the further development of our party and country.

Choe said that the CPSU CC and the Soviet government have enormous experience in building Communism which the KWP lacks and therefore they ought to learn from the CPSU. He also expressed a desire that Kim Il Sung be given the necessary advice. He noted in the process that Kim Il Sung takes a close look at such advice and it would produce favorable results.

At the end of the conversation Choe expressed his desire to visit the Soviet Union and requested that he be given assistance in this.



DOCUMENT No. 10

Memorandum of a Conversation with DPRK Ambassador to the USSR Li Sangjo, 16 June 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, Listy 238-241, Obtained for CWIHP by Nobuo Shimotomai and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION
WITH DPRK AMBASSADOR TO THE USSR, LI SANGJO

16 June 1956

I received Li Sangjo at his request.

1. I familiarized the ambassador with the basic events included in the draft program of the visit of the DPRK government delegation to the USSR and asked him if he had any additional wishes to be included in the program. Li Sangjo said that he did not have any wishes except those previously expressed and already taken into consideration in the program.

2. Li Sangjo then said that if questions of a military and political nature are discussed along with economic issues in the conversations held between the leaders of the Soviet Union and the Korean delegation, then in his personal opinion, they ought to be discussed with the involvement of the largest possible number of members of the Korean delegation, for example, with all the members of the Korean Workers' Party who are in the delegation. If the discussion is to be held in a narrow circle with only Kim Il Sung, Bak Jeongae, and Nam Il then, in Li Sangjo's opinion, the results of the conversation will be less

than they ought to be since other leading Party officials will not be properly informed of the substance of the comments and the advice of the CPSU CC.

Li Sangjo said that the Workers' Party and its leadership need serious ideological help from the CPSU CC.

In reply to my question about the condition of the population in South Korea, Li Sangjo said that the economic situation in the South is somewhat better than in the North.

The standard of living of a worker in South Korea (assuming that he has work), is higher than the standard of living of a DPRK worker; however, the real wages of workers in the South are somewhat less than they were under the Japanese. Li Sangjo then said that, according to his observations, the material well-being of the workers in the DPRK is about 10 times less than in the Soviet Union.

In connection with this, Li Sangjo said, the incorrect direction of the propaganda being waged in the DPRK draws attention to itself. Day after day this propaganda tries to convince the people of the considerable increase in their standard of living, which in reality isn't there. As a result, the people might stop believing such propaganda, which is divorced from reality, and it can cause irritation and unrest.

Returning to the questions of the situation in the KWP, Li Sangjo said that obvious distortions in the description of the history of the revolutionary struggle are permitted for the benefit of the personality cult in Korea. The Museum of the History of the Revolutionary Struggle of the Korean People has been turned into a museum of the history on the revolutionary struggle of Kim Il Sung.

The partisan detachment of Kim Il Sung was only one unit of the revolutionary forces in the country and, moreover, far from the largest unit. Besides it, there was the partisan formation of [Former Minister of Industry] Gim Chaek and the partisan forces under the command of the Communist Party of China, and the latter were 10 times larger than the detachment of Kim Il Sung. Therefore, when the participants of the revolutionary movement in Korea see that all the efforts are ascribed to one man, Kim Il Sung, they have a feeling of bewilderment.

The ideological value of such a museum and such an incorrect interpretation of the history of the revolutionary movement in Korea, said Li Sangjo, is quite dubious. Praising the role and efforts of Kim Il Sung sometimes has an anecdotal nature.

We expected, Li Sangjo continued, that a study of the materials of the CPSU Twentieth Congress within the Workers' Party would serve as an impetus to improving the intra-party situation and to correcting the existing mistakes of the KWP

leadership. However, unfortunately the study of the materials of the Twentieth Congress in the KWP was done hastily and without the necessary depth. The shortcomings of the intra-party life of the KWP were neither criticized at the Congress nor after the Congress. Many members of the Workers' Party see and understand these shortcomings. They are inwardly dissatisfied with the situation in the party but decide not to openly criticize these shortcomings, fearing persecution.

Therefore, continued Li Sangjo, help is needed from the outside, and it would be best if Cde. Khrushchev or Cde. Mao Zedong talked with the KWP leadership about this issue. When doing so it is advisable that critical comments by Cde. Khrushchev or Cde. Mao Zedong become known not only to Kim Il Sung and the people close to him, but to a broader circle of KWP officials.

The statements of several comrades of the KWP leadership that there were no violations of legality in the DPRK are incorrect, Li Sangjo continued. In 1954, for example, many serious excesses and incorrect pressure on the peasants and low-level cadres took place during the collection of taxes in kind. In conditions where only 5% of the peasants had extra bread, almost everyone was forced to hand over grain. There were many cases of suicide among low-level party cadres in the countryside in connection with this, after which they were expelled from the party for their "inability" to ensure the fulfillment of tax in kind assignments. For example, in the province of North Pyeongyang where Bak Jeongae went and where there were many people expelled, 130 people committed suicide.

Serious violations of legality were also committed in the security organs and "Japanese" methods were employed.

In connection with this, Li Sangjo said, it is very important that they work closely with the DPRK MIA delegation in the USSR at the present time and familiarize it with the goals concerning the strictest observation of revolutionary legality.

It would also be very important, Li Sangjo pointed out, to exert appropriate ideological influence on the delegation of Korean journalists arriving in the USSR. This could facilitate a correction of the tone of DPRK press propaganda on the issue of the attitude toward the South.

At the present time this tone abounds in useless cursing and does not have the needed flexibility, which harms the cause.

Speaking of the reasons for the large number of mistakes committed by the KWP leadership and Kim Il Sung, Li Sangjo said that to a considerable degree they might be explained by Kim Il Sung's insufficient theoretical training.

Kim Il Sung, said Li Sangjo, is a young leader with a good

revolutionary past, but he studied little and does not have sufficient ideological training, and this leads him to mistakes.

B. N. Vereshchagin, adviser to the DVO, was present at the conversation.

Signed CHIEF OF THE FAR EAST DEPARTMENT
OF THE USSR MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs]
I. KURDYUKOV

Authenticated: [illegible signature]

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DOCUMENT No. 11

Memorandum of Conversation with the Head of the Department of Construction Materials under the Cabinet of Ministers, Li Pilgyu, 20 July 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 304-308.
Obtained and translated for CWIHP by James F. Person.]

Top Secret
Copy No. 3

DIARY

Charge d' Affairs of the USSR in the DPRK

Petrov A.M

For the period from 20 July to 3 August 1956

20 July

The meeting took place in the embassy at the initiative of Li Pilgyu. At the beginning of the discussion Li explained the following about himself.

From the age of 16 he took part in the revolutionary movement in China. Later, he came to Korea illegally, where he continued his underground revolutionary work. When in his twenties, he was arrested by Japanese Gendarme and sat in prison for 12 years.

After the liberation of Korea by the Soviet Army, he worked as the head of the department of state security under the Soviet military administration. From 1948 to 1950 he studied in the Party College under the CPSU CC. After returning from Moscow he worked as the Korean Peoples' Army General Staff deputy director, and later commanded the 6th Army. From the army he was sent to the Interior Ministry in the capacity of

first deputy minister. At one time he carried out the duties of the Minister of the Interior. He worked for a long time with [Former Minister of Internal Affairs] Bak Ilu and knows him well.

Further, Li Pilgyu said that in connection with the Bak Ilu affair, he was 'sacked' from the organs of the Interior Ministry and sent to the Chemical Industries Ministry as the head of administration, and later as deputy minister.

At the present moment he is working as the head of the department of construction materials.

Li claimed that he wanted to candidly express his thoughts on the leadership of the KWP and government, i.e. Kim Il Sung.

Li said that he knew about Kim Il Sung only in the 1930s when he, Li, was in prison. Li emphasized with much indignation that at the present moment, the history of the struggle of the Korean people for their liberation is being distorted. Li claimed that an opera called '*solgaegol*' is currently being staged in which one act portrays the liberation of political prisoners by the partisan army. This, according to Li, contradicts reality. The Soviet Army freed political prisoners. Furthermore, Li indicated that it is presently being alleged that '*Gwangbokhoe*' (The Korean Restoration Association in Manchuria) was in fact an early form of the Korean Communist Party. These claims are completely untrue. That is a falsification of history. '*Gwangbokhoe*' was a society of the democratic front. It is Li's opinion that the revolutionaries located in Korea worked completely independently, without the influence of Koreans located in China during that period. He said that the Comintern, Kim, and the Profintern sent people and directives to Korea only until 1936. In his opinion, if '*Gwangbokhoe*,' [which was] organized by Kim Il Sung, [who was at that time] a member at that time of the Chinese Communist Party, really played a large role in the revolutionary movement in Korea, then the Comintern should have concerned itself with that organization through the Chinese Communist Party. But that just didn't happen.

Further, Li stopped on the problem of Kim Il Sung's personality cult.

Li Pilgyu said that Kim Il Sung's personality cult has obtained an intolerable character. He does not tolerate any criticism or self-criticism. The word of Kim Il Sung is law. He has surrounded himself with sycophants and lackeys in the Central Committee and Council of Ministers. It would be safe to say that of the 18 ministers, 9 of them have a shadowy past. To this number is related, according to Li, the Minister of Metallurgical Industry, Gang Youngchan, the Minister of Light Industry, Mun Manok, the Minister of Chemical Industry, Yi Changho, Chairman of the State Planning Committee, Yi Changok, Minister of Education, Han Seolya and others.

Nothing is known of their struggle in the past for the freedom and independence of Korea to the Korean people. Li Pilgyu said further, that at the present moment an extraordinarily difficult atmosphere has been created. The Central Committee is spreading distrust between functionaries. Functionaries follow one another. There is absolutely no trust and friendship between functionaries in the KWP CC and Council of Ministers. In his opinion, a group of officials consider it necessary to undertake certain actions against Kim Il Sung and his closest associates at the earliest possible opportunity.

In response to my question about what exactly those actions would consist of, Li answered that the group sets before itself the task of replacing the present leadership of the KWP CC and government. In his opinion, there are two ways of doing this. The first way—that is sharp and decisive criticism within the party and self-criticism. However, Li said, Kim Il Sung will not likely be in favor of that way and he doubts the success of such an approach. The second way is forcible upheaval. That is a difficult path, Li said, involving sacrifice. In the DPRK there are such people who can embark on that course and who are currently making appropriate preparations.

To my question, could he name any from that group, Li evaded answering.

I asked him, in his opinion, which of the executives respectfully displays himself in work. Li gave the names of [Vice Chairman of the KWP] Choe Yonggeon and [Deputy Prime Minister] Choe Changik.

Choe Yonggeon, Li said, has recently demonstrated dissatisfaction with the activities of Kim Il Sung. Choe Changik—a person with an impressive revolutionary past. If a struggle with Kim Il Sung begins, then he would stand on the side of his opponents.

To my question on what position Li takes in connection to the abovementioned underground group, Li again evaded answering, but from the tone of his comments, I have surmised that he plays a significant role in that group.

I asked Li what the objective of that information was and he answered that it comes from the desire to alert the Soviet embassy to the fact that there is a possibility of one or another development taking place in the DPRK.

Regarding the life of the masses, Li explained that 80% of the population of Korea consisted of peasants. After the liberation of Korea, peasants were given everything possible for a better life, but they live very poorly. The government has carried out improper fiscal policies. Instead of 23-27%, more than 50% of tax in kind has been practically seized from the peasants. At present, this policy is continuing. There is nothing to say about the methods of collecting tax in kind in 1954-1955.

The collection was accompanied by beatings, murder and repression. On the spot party work is based not on persuasion, but on violence, collectivization occurs on the basis of violence. Workers live very poorly; there is not enough cereal and soy. The intelligentsia and students live under very difficult conditions. In the opinion of Li Pilgyu, the party must sincerely admit its mistakes in front of the peasant masses; honestly tell them that times are very tough. At the same time, tell them about the perspective future. Now they write in the newspapers and announce on the radio only one laudation; that everything is fine in the DPRK. That is an improper method of working.

Regarding individual members of the party leadership and government, Li Pilgyu said: [Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly] Gim Dubong was not a communist before and the Chinese Communist Party did not pay much attention to him. In general he is very quiet, industrious, but aware of his position. He will not blindly follow Kim Il Sung.

Choe Yonggeon was not with Kim Il Sung. They were together only in the USSR. Choe Yonggeon has a brilliant revolutionary record. By rank he was higher than Kim Il Sung. Choe Yonggeon is a person with his own intelligence. He has recently demonstrated dissatisfaction with several of Kim Il Sung's activities.

Gim Il—Kim Il Sung's protégé. He will always side with Kim Il Sung.

[Chief of the Party Cadre Department] Bak Geumcheol—he is a young worker. It would not be worth promoting him too high at all.

Bak Jeongae—she will be content with the present situation since she is afraid of her past. Many have doubts as to why the Japanese allowed a person who graduated from communist schools in the Soviet Union to be left in peace. This means that she pledged to the Japanese not to become engaged in revolutionary activities.

Choe Changik—a person with a revolutionary past and independent wit. If a struggle against Kim Il Sung ensues, he would come to the side of Kim Il Sung's opponents.

Bak Changok—he still has a lot to do to make up for his faults. He was the very first to exalt Kim Il Sung as matchless, praising him to high heaven. He is the founder of Kim Il Sung's personality cult.

[Vice Premier and Minister of Light Industry] Bak Uiwan—a good person. He possesses good qualities in his work, has authority among the leading functionaries.

[Deputy Chairman of the KWP CC] Gim Changman—he

is the most hateful person. He persistently demanded shooting Bak Ilu.

Han Seolya—he should be shot. He should be put away for his book *History*. He is a very ghastly, injurious man. A Kim Il Sung sycophant.

Li requested that I consider the contents of our conversation strictly confidential and to not, under any conditions, inform the Korean leadership of them.

The discussion lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. The translator of the discussion was the embassy interpreter, Gim Dubong.

Charge d' Affaires
Of the USSR in the DPRK /A. Petrov/

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DOCUMENT No. 12

Memorandum of Conversation with DPRK Minister of Foreign Affairs Nam Il, 24 July 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 301-303.
Obtained and translated for CWIHP by James F. Person.]

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DIARY

Charge d' Affaires of the USSR in the DPRK
Petrov A.M

For the period from 20 July to 3 August 1956

24 July

I met with Nam Il at his suggestion, who explained in the meeting that on the very first day after the return of the government delegation to the DPRK, i.e. 20 July, he met in his apartment with [Chairman of the State Planning Committee] Bak Changok who before that had never come to him at his apartment.

Bak told Nam Il that a group of leading functionaries, including Choe Changik, Gim Seunghwa and a number of others are prepared, in the coming plenum of the Central Committee, to speak out with severe criticism of Kim Il Sung.

The main issues of criticism will be the erroneous methods of leadership of the KWP CC and of Kim Il Sung personally, Kim Il Sung's personality cult, incorrect dealings with the Soviet-Koreans, and other issues in party and state life. Bak expressed confidence that if he and also if Choe Changik and Gim Seunghwa speak out with that criticism, then he will receive support from individual members of the presidium and also from several heads of local party organizations. Bak said that it would be desirable for Nam Il to join that group and speak out with sharp criticism of Kim Il Sung at the KWP CC Presidium and at the Central Committee Plenum. The possibility of [Vice Chairman of the KWP] Choe Yonggeon taking part in the criticism of Kim Il Sung has not been ruled out.

In connection with this, Nam Il, in his own words, wanted to seek advice on what position he should take. He thinks that serious criticism of Kim Il Sung from Bak Changok and others would be improper. Such sharp criticism of the problem of the personality cult in the Korean context as Bak Changok and others are preparing to do would lead to undesirable consequences. It might undermine the authority of the existing leadership of the party and government, discredit Kim Il Sung in the eyes of party members and the entire nation and stimulate considerable discussion within the party.

Further, Nam Il noted that the observations of the KWP CC about several shortcomings and mistakes in the work of the KWP were correctly and frankly perceived by Kim Il Sung. Kim Il Sung told Nam Il and several other members of the government delegation that he would take measures in order to completely and fully amend these errors and shortcomings, including the issue of the personality cult. In the opinion of Kim Il Sung, these shortcomings and errors will not be eliminated immediately, not by discussing these issues in a full-scale investigation in the Central Committee Plenums or in discussions in party organs, but little by little without involving the entire party in the discussion of these issues.

He, Nam Il, and additional members of the Presidium render Kim Il Sung all kinds of assistance in eliminating errors and deficiencies and take measures to regularly prompt Kim Il Sung to quickly and in the most appropriate manner rectify them. Nam Il stressed that in spite of all of Kim Il Sung's shortcomings and mistakes, there is nobody in the DPRK who could replace him, Kim Il Sung was always quite correct in relation to Marxism-Leninism, the general line of the KWP Central Committee is correct, and Kim Il Sung personally, although a bit distressed, correctly perceived the criticisms directed at him by the leadership of the CPSU CC.

In connection with the visit of Bak Changok, he, Nam Il, feels himself in a very awkward position. On the one hand, he should, as a member of the Central Committee Presidium, inform Kim Il Sung about the conversation that took place with Bak Changok and identify him as one of those active-

ly preparing to speak out against Kim Il Sung, while on the other hand, since Bak Changok is a Soviet-Korean, he would not like to inform Kim Il Sung, since he, Kim Il Sung, might improperly connect the demonstration against him with the Soviet-Koreans.

I expressed my personal feelings that the danger of Nam Il in connection with the severe criticism of Kim Il Sung deserves a great deal of attention, that the position taken by Bak Changok on that issue is clearly incorrect, that initiating severe criticism of Kim Il Sung from the Soviet-Koreans may be interpreted incorrectly and it may cause an undesired reaction both inside the country and on the international arena. I said that he should in some way influence Bak Changok, Gim Seunghwa and other Soviet-Koreans so that they reject the urge to speak out against Kim Il Sung.

Regarding the question of Nam Il informing Kim Il Sung about the above-mentioned conversation with Bak Changok, that, as I explained, was his own business, but that it would be expedient to refrain for now from naming Bak Changok and Gim Seunghwa.

Nam Il agreed with me. He thinks that it would be good to warn Kim Il Sung and the Central Committee Presidium now so that Kim Il Sung would engage in self-criticism at the Plenum in connection with his report about the results of the government delegation's trip to the USSR and People's Republics.

Nam Il again stressed that he and other members of the Presidium will help Kim Il Sung in every possible way to prepare a speech containing self criticism.

The discussion lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes.

Charge d' Affaires
Of the USSR in the DPRK

/A. Petrov/

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DOCUMENT No. 13

Memorandum of Conversation with Charge d' Affaires of the Chinese Embassy, Chao Kaelyan, 4 August 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 313-314. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by James F. Person.]

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DIARY

Charge d' Affaires of the USSR in the DPRK
Petrov A.M

For the period from 20 July to 3 August 1956

3 August

I met with the charge d' affaires of the Chinese embassy, comrade Chao Kaelyan at his initiative.

Cde. Chao asked me to inform him about the results of the trip of the DPRK government delegation to the USSR. I explained about the additional economic aid of the USSR to the DPRK and then in turn asked Chao if the Korean friends had not asked the Chinese government about granting additional economic aid. Chao replied in the negative, though noted that in conversations with individual workers in the State Planning Committee, a proposal from the DPRK government, after being examined by the DPRK government, will be given to the government of the People's Republic of China. As far as Chao knows, the embassy of the DPRK in Beijing submitted a draft protocol for the deliveries of commodities for 1957 between the PRC and the DPRK. According to this draft, the PRC must send to Korea various commodities totaling 200 million yuan in 1957, while, according to the draft it is proposed that from the side of the DPRK, goods totaling 40 million yuan will be sent. In Chao's opinion, they plan to cover over the gap, as aid from China which they of course plan to ask for.

During the discussion, cde. Chao further mentioned that individual Korean comrades show interest in how matters stand with the cult of personality in China in their discussions with officials at the Chinese embassy. In response to my question, how the Chinese comrades answered that question, Chao said that in answering they quote the well known decree of the CC Chinese Communist Party, published at that time in the newspaper *Renmin Ribao*.¹

The character of the meeting was friendly.

Charge d' Affaires
Of the USSR in the DPRK

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1. *Editor's Note:* Chao is likely referring to the article "On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" published in *Renmin Ribao* on 5 April 1956.



DOCUMENT No. 14

Memorandum of Conversation with Bak Uiwan, 29 August 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, List 317-319. Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK
No. 251
"15" September 1956

Top Secret
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DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR to the DPRK V.I. Ivanov for the
period from 29 August to 14
September 1956

Pyeongyang

29 August

[Vice Premier and Minister of Light Industry] Bak Uiwan visited the embassy and said that on 28 August the draft report of Kim Il Sung to the CC Plenum to be held on 30 August was examined at a meeting of the KWP CC Presidium.

Kim Il Sung's written report is estimated at 1 hour and 10 minutes and consists of three sections: the results of the trip to the Soviet Union and the countries of the people's democracies; the economic situation of the DPRK, and party and government measures for the five-year plan to expand industry and agriculture and improve the economic situation of the population; and the intra-party situation and the tasks of the KWP.

Bak said that in the section of the report about the intra-party situation, as in the first two sections, great attention was devoted to the party ensuring the early fulfillment of the three-year plan, and great achievements and successes are being stressed. However the serious economic situation in the country is also noted. The enormous importance of the Twentieth Congress in overcoming the cult of personality of Stalin and

its consequences not only for the CPSU but for all fraternal parties is also noted in this section. In following the CPSU, the KWP did not have a critical attitude toward the cult of personality and therefore the cult of personality was widely practiced in the KWP. It was expressed in the glorification of the person of [Former DPRK Foreign Minister] Bak Heonyeong and has been retained to the present time in various aspects of ideological work. The KWP CC is correcting the consequences of the personality cult, but not everything has yet been done. Bureaucratism and other shortcomings in intra-party work are also pointed out.

At the end of the report the existence of the remnants of cliquishness [*gruppyrovshchina*] and factional activity are noted, in view of which it contains calls to struggle against these influences and to strengthen party vigilance.

The draft report was adopted. [Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly] Gim Dubong and Choe Changik made comments about the need to speak more sharply about the existence of the personality cult in the KWP and to weaken the formulations about factionalism, explaining this by the fact that the situation in the party demands that less be said about factionalism and more about the cult of personality and its harmful consequences.

In giving an assessment of the report Bak Uiwan said that the report in the form in which it was adopted at the Presidium meeting did not touch on the main, pressing issues of intra-party life and party members were waiting for a solution to them. But the report will provide grounds to begin a discussion on these issues at the Plenum inasmuch as they were raised in one form or another.

Bak Uiwan then said that during these days Kim Il Sung, [Chairman of the Central Committee for the Election of the Second Supreme People's Assembly] Bak Jeongae, and Gim Il had each called him twice and [Minister of Foreign Affairs] Nam Il and Minister of Internal Affairs Ban [Haksae] once. They tried strongly to get Bak to refrain from speaking at the Plenum, presenting pressing issues and, in their expression, "not getting involved in a dirty business." Other senior officials who were of a mind to expose the shortcomings and mistakes of the leadership were also subjected to such treatment.

Bak noted that at the present time cases of reprisals against dissenting officials are already being observed. Just two days before the Plenum, Minister of Construction Gim Seunghwa was sent to the Academy of Social Science in Moscow to study so that he did not make critical remarks. Kim Il Sung refused to receive him for a conversation because Gim Seunghwa "had gotten involved in some unsavory business and had to leave."

During a meeting with Bak Uiwan, Gim Dubong said that Kim Il Sung and those close to him are going in the wrong

direction. They view all the pressing issues like the existence of the personality cult, the shortcomings in the work of the Central Committee, and the serious economic situation in the country only as the result of intrigues, cliquishness, and the factional activity of individual people.

Gim Dubong, in Bak's words, expressed resentment at the state of affairs where, knowing that matters in the KWP are going in the wrong direction, comrades from the CPSU CC do not want to come and help them figure things out and set them right. In reply to Bak's comments that the CPSU cannot interfere in the internal affairs of the KWP, Gim Dubong declared that it was not a matter of government interference but relations between two fraternal parties.

Describing his opinion, Bak said that the progressive forces inside the KWP needed to forge a path. Kim Il Sung does not want to boldly undertake a struggle against the shortcomings and will exert every effort to keep malcontents in check.

On 28 August Kim Il Sung threatened Bak Uiwan that if the malcontents continued to speak against the leadership there was a lot of compromising material on them in the KWP CC and that he, Kim Il Sung, was well known in Moscow and that he would receive support there.

Ambassador of the USSR in the DPRK

/V. IVANOV/

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DOCUMENT No. 15

Memorandum of Conversation with Kim Il Sung, 1 September 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listi 319-321. Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK
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"15" September 1956

DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR to the DPRK V.I. Ivanov for the

period from 29 August to 14
September 1956

Pyeongyang

1 September

Today Kim Il Sung invited me and told me about the results of the KWP Plenum which was held 30-31 August.

Kim said that in personal conversations during the course of the preparations for the plenum with Choe Changik, [Trade Union Federation Central Committee Chairman] Seo Hwi, and others dissatisfied with the KWP leadership, the issues they would be raising were identified: the incorrect assignment of personnel, the cult of personality, and some others. As a result of the exchange of opinions in the private conversations and the discussion of pressing issues in the Presidium, we came to a unanimous opinion and no contentious issues remained.

They decided to hold the Plenum with a report about the trip of the government delegation to the USSR and countries of the people's democracies. The report included the issues about the results of the trip of the government delegation; the economic situation in the DPRK in light of the economic policy experience of fraternal republics; and the improvement of party work in the KWP. The report covered the issues of the personality cult, the improvement of intra-party democracy, the struggle against bureaucratism, and the improvement of intra-Party work. Choe Changik even thought that the issue of the personality cult had been formulated very strongly. [Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly] Gim Dubong agreed with the content of the report.

The central issue of the Plenum was that of personnel, not the cult of personality. During study of this issue it turned out that the arguments of the discontented personnel were not well-founded. The accusations against Bak Jeongae and [Chief of the Party Cadre Department] Bak Geumcheol were not borne out. Therefore Gim Dubong, who had raised the issue about personnel, agreed not to raise it for plenum discussion. The Central Committee Presidium came to the conclusion that the accusations against the individuals had been directed at undermining the leadership. Kim further said: taking advantage of your presence, I would like to tell you that in a conversation with me, Gim Dubong referred to the fact that a fraternal communist party shares the formulation of the question about personnel. In response to my question about which communist party he was talking about, Kim Il Sung replied that Gim Dubong did not say, but commented that "don't think anything bad about the Soviet Embassy." Kim Il Sung allegedly explained to Gim Dubong that the fraternal communist party is sending its opinion to us officially. [*Translator's Note:* "us" was not specified, but only makes sense here if it means the Koreans.]

At the Plenum, after the report, the question of [Minister of Trade] Yun Gongheum arose. In his speech he brought accusations that the Workers' Party had rejected the decisions of the Twentieth Congress and does not follow the principles of Marxism-Leninism; he described matters such that the very serious consequences of the personality cult are being retained inside the KWP and had repudiated the general line of the party.

In Kim's words, the participants of the plenum were outraged at the provocative nature of Yun's speech at the plenum and demanded that the floor be taken away from him. Choe Changik supported Yun. Others who spoke exposed the anti-party nature of Yun's speech at the plenum and cited instances of his anti-party conduct before the plenum.

Seo Hwi, Li Pilgyu, and Deputy Minister of Culture Gim Changil who, according to Kim's statement, left the plenum, crossed the border, and at the present time are being detained by Chinese border guards in Andong [Dandong], [and] had engaged in behind the scenes anti-party activity along with Yun.

Seo Hwi, Yun Gongheum, Li Pilgyu, and Gim Changil have been expelled from the party for anti-party activity. Choe Changik has been removed from the Central Committee Presidium. Bak Changok has been removed from the post of Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and removed from membership in the Central Committee. The question about him has been referred to the Central Committee Party Commission for a decision. At this point Kim declared that the party leadership had not intended to take such steps with respect to Choe Changik and Bak Changok; however, having exposed their anti-party activity, the participants of the Plenum demanded that organizational conclusions be adopted with respect to these officials.

With regard to Gim Dubong, Kim Il Sung said that they think that, having been deceived, he was under the influence of this anti-party group. At the present time Gim Dubong holds correct party positions and proof of this is allegedly Gim Dubong's demand for the removal of Choe Changik from CC membership which he made even before the Plenum, to which Kim Il Sung then did not agree.

Kim Il Sung then declared that, having studied the activities of the anti-party group, we could not have acted otherwise and think that our decision was correct. We have consolidated our forces in this struggle and achieved party unity. Thus the complex issues which surfaced in our party are now solved.

The state of health care was examined at the Plenum where the issues of public health education, the construction of a network of medical institutions, and the improvement of medical work were discussed.

In conclusion, Kim Il Sung pointed out that during a meeting with Embassy Counselor Petrov on 2 August, the latter expressed the concern which the CPSU CC is displaying in connection with the situation in the KWP. Kim Il Sung asked that the CPSU CC be informed of the decisions that were adopted. The report and the decisions will be sent to the Embassy after they are translated.

In connection with Kim Il Sung's report concerning Gim Dubong's comment about a fraternal Communist Party, [Vice Premier and Minister of Light Industry] Bak Uiwan explained to us that Gim Dubong's remark in the Presidium had been distorted by Kim Il Sung. Gim Dubong only said that it was not imperative to engage in questioning witnesses at the Presidium and that Kim Il Sung could be charged with talking with them; such methods are feasible and they are employed in fraternal parties.

Ambassador of the USSR in the DPRK

/V. IVANOV/

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DOCUMENT No. 16

Memorandum of Conversation with Chinese Ambassador to the DPRK, Qiao Xiaoguang, 4 September 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 322-325. Obtained and translated for CWHIP by James F. Person.]

Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK

No. 251

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DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR to the DPRK V.I. Ivanov for the period from 29 August to 14 September 1956

Pyeongyang

4 September

During a reception on 2 September organized by the Vietnamese Embassy in the DPRK on the event of the 11th

anniversary of the declaration of the Republic, I approached the PRC ambassador to the DPRK, Qiao Xiaoguang with a request to meet for a discussion. The meeting took place on 4 September at the embassy.

Qiao said that he came to share his thoughts on two issues. Regarding the issue of providing further support to the DPRK from the PRC, he said that on 21 August of this year, Kim Il Sung told him in a conversation that the Korean government could not accommodate the material needs of the people in the new Five-Year Plan and requested further support from the PRC. Concrete figures of the amount of support that the Korean friends would like to receive from the PRC in the coming Five-Year Plan were not mentioned in the discussion. However, while specifying the plan for trade between the two countries for 1957, it became known that the aggregate output of supplies to the DPRK from the PRC in 1957 must consist of 185 million yuan, from which 85 million should be used to cover commodity circulation, 50 million to the expense of remaining unpaid labor, and the PRC government requested to allocate 50 million yuan.

Qiao said that the question that was advanced by the Korean side related to additional assistance was transmitted to the government and that he had still not received an answer.

Coming to the second issue, Qiao told me that during the work of the KWP CC Plenum an extremely serious event occurred concerning the relations between the DPRK and the PRC. On 3 September, the DPRK Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yi Donggon explained that on the night of 30-31 August of this year, 4 Korean citizens: the Minister of Trade Yun Gongheum; the United Unions CC Chairman Seo Hwi; the Deputy Minister of Culture Gim Changil; and the Department of Construction Materials Head Li Pilgyu crossed the Korean—Chinese border in the region of Andong [Dandong] and were detained by Chinese border guards. Yi Donggon lodged a petition from the Korean government about returning the guilty individuals to the DPRK.

Qiao said the government of the PRC was immediately informed about what occurred. Korean border guards urged the above-mentioned individuals to return to the DPRK; however, they all categorically refused.

In response to the request of the Korean government, it was announced that the noted individuals are not simple border crossers and that their forcible return was impossible.

At the same time, Qiao said that on 1 September he was invited by Choe Yonggeon and Gim Changman, who told him about the course of events at the plenum. Minister of Trade Yun Gongheum spoke during the discussion of Kim Il Sung's address. His speech contained malicious and libelous attacks on the leadership of the KWP. He accused the leadership of

the KWP of poorly implementing the decree of the CPSU Twentieth Congress about the personality cult, and as a result the leadership of the KWP has supposedly committed serious mistakes by incorrectly distributing cadres in the absence of intra-party democracy, and by incompetently handling the difficult welfare situation of the Korean people. Yun's speech was cut short, and after lunch, he, together with the three other above-mentioned individuals did not show up at the meeting, and, as has become known, ran away to China. At the demand of the participants, Yun was expelled from the ranks of the Party.

Qiao also told me that he was informed that the anti-party activities of the abovementioned individuals were noticed before the departure of the government delegation to the Peoples' Democratic Republics, however, they became more obvious during Kim Il Sung's absence. Before the plenum, Gim Changil traveled several times to the town of Haeju supposedly to prepare for escaping to South Korea. However, after being convinced that it would be difficult to carry out, he fled to China.

Qiao asked what my thoughts were on the course of the work of the plenum, and also about the four individuals.

In answering, I informed Qiao that Korean functionaries shared several sides of the work of the plenum in talks. They said that even before the opening of the plenum, Seo Hwi and other individuals spoke with a series of rather serious accusations directed at the KWP CC and in particular about the issue of cadres. However, all of these issues were touched upon in the address of Kim Il Sung and approved by all members of the Presidium. Nonetheless, at the plenum these issues were once again raised. Yun Gongheum raised the issues, about which Qiao spoke.

Choe Yonggeon and Gim Changman also informed him that several disgruntled functionaries who visited the Soviet Embassy claimed that the CPSU CC sent a special official to the Soviet Embassy who was entrusted with the task of investigating the status of overcoming the personality cult in the KWP. At the beginning of the conversation, the incorrectness of such a message was explained to Qiao and also that the Korean leadership was informed of this by the Charge d' Affaires, with which it [the KWP leadership] agreed.

Concerning the course of the work of the plenum and answering Qiao's question about my thoughts on all of the incidents, I said that the issues which arose in the KWP are serious and were not stimulated by any outside factors, Soviet or Chinese, but were a domestic process taking place within the KWP.

Qiao expressed total agreement with the observations I made, at the same time asking a second time about my thoughts

on the individuals who fled to the PRC. I commented that since the mentioned individuals are located in the PRC, the Chinese side is apparently more aware of their reason for leaving. I added that I do not know those individuals personally and do not yet have anything to say about the reason for their fleeing. I also know that the Korean government accuses them not only of anti-party activities, but also of disrupting work, of amoral crimes, and of embezzling state funds.

Qiao commented that from the moment of his arrival in the DPRK, he had meetings with Seo Hwi and Yun Gongheum, and added that he was also aware that the embezzlement of about a million Won has been attributed to Yun Gongheum and others.

The meeting was attended by and translated by Attaché Kurbatskii M.N. and translator Wang Baomin.

Ambassador of the USSR in the DPRK
/V. IVANOV/

4 Copies issued
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No. 2-Cde. Federenko
No. 3-Cde. Kurdyukov
No. 4- to the files
Drafted by Ivanov
Typed by Alekseev
No. 940



DOCUMENT No. 17

**Report by N. T. Fedorenko on a Conversation with
Li Sangjo, Ambassador of the DPRK to the USSR, 5
September 1956**

*[Source: RGANI, Delo 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 224-228.
Obtained for CWIHP by Nobuo Shimotomai and translated
for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]*

[Stamp:
CPSU CC
32165
[11 Sep 56]
subject to return to
the CPSU CC General Department]

FROM THE JOURNAL OF
N. T. FEDORENKO

Top Secret Copy N° 10
5 September 1956
N° 134/nf

[Handwritten at the bottom of the first page: "To the archives. The letter of Li Sangjo was distributed to members of the CPSU CC Presidium. See of 6 and 15 September 1956 [SIC, a caret at the bottom of the reproduced page suggests that a document reference was inserted at this point] for the decision on the question of the situation in the DPRK [signatures and dates are off the reproduced page]."]

RECEPTION

of LI SANGJO, Ambassador of the DPRK to the USSR

5 September 1956

[handwritten in the left margin:
"To Cde. Ponomarev; [M. Suslov]"

I received Li Sangjo at his request.

1. Li Sangjo made a request to pass to N. S. Khrushchev his personal written statement about the situation in the KWP in connection with the plenum that was held. Li Sangjo added at the same time that if N. S. Khrushchev is not in Moscow, he asks that this statement be passed to A. I. Mikoyan.

Having noted that the statement he delivered contained a request for N. S. Khrushchev or A. I. Mikoyan to receive him, Li Sangjo said that in the event such a conversation took place, KWP CC member Gim Seunghwa, who had come to Moscow to study at the Higher Party School, could serve as interpreter.

Li Sangjo expressed the hope that the CPSU CC and CCP CC will help the Korean Workers' Party in the difficult situation that has arisen as a result of the hasty and unjustified repressions committed by the leadership of the KWP CC against comrades who expressed criticism.

2. Li Sangjo asked whether it was true that the CPSU CC had sent instructions to Nam Il via Ambassador Cde. Ivanov forbidding criticism of Kim Il Sung in view of the fact that this would damage the authority of Kim Il Sung and indicate criticism of the political line of the KWP. In response to my question as to where and when Nam Il spoke about such instructions, Li Sangjo replied that Nam Il referred to the existence of these instructions at presidium meetings and at the KWP CC Plenum.

Li Sangjo replied that he personally knew nothing about such CPSU CC instructions.

3. Li Sangjo repeated with indignation that Nam Il and Bak Jeongae deceitfully used the name of the CPSU CC in order to help Kim Il Sung and Choe Yonggeon take revenge on the comrades who criticized the leadership of the KWP CC.

He added that a situation of threats and terror has been created in the party. For example, Kim Il Sung told Bak Uiwan that he has many compromising materials against him, Bak Uiwan, about the squandering of government resources and threatened to circulate these materials if Bak Uiwan criticized the KWP leadership.

4. Li Sangjo told how he had heard that it was admitted at the KWP CC plenum that many displays of the personality cult had occurred in propaganda but at the same time Kim Il Sung and Choe Yonggeon declared that there were no harmful consequences of the personality cult in Korea. Such a statement is sharply contradicted by the facts, Li Sangjo pointed out. For example, people were arrested in the DPRK for printing portraits of Kim Il Sung on paper of insufficient quality or [doing so] carelessly, and there were cases of an arrest of a person for wrapping a book in a newspaper with a portrait of Kim Il Sung. Several thousand people have been arrested for things of a similar nature.

All this, Li Sangjo stressed, testifies to the existence of the most negative consequences of the personality cult in the DPRK.

5. Li Sangjo then said that he had received a second summons to Pyongyang and obviously he would have to go there for some time. Meanwhile, he had informed the DPRK MFA that he was ill. Li Sangjo added that he had still not decided about the question of visiting China for some time. He did not explain how the Chinese comrades would view such a request by him. Li Sangjo added that he had decided to return to the DPRK although he knows that reprisals await him there. Kim Il Sung, in Li Sangjo's words, has given instructions that any citizen might be given any punishment for any deed on the testimony of two witnesses, even so far as execution.

In reply to my question about the possible date of his return, Li Sangjo said that he intended to wait until the CPSU CC's attitude toward his statement was clear.

B. N. Vereshchagin, adviser to the Far Eastern Division, was present at the conversation.

Attachment: copy of Li Sangjo's letter to Cde. N. S. Khrushchev.

DEPUTY USSR MINISTER
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

/N. FEDORENKO/

[signature]

30 copies were issued/ng

N° 286-nf

5.IX.56

Dear Comrade N. S. KHRUSHCHEV!

I hope you have received a report from Pyeongyang in which you were informed of those serious events that are occurring in the Korean Workers' Party. You probably know well that our party has committed serious mistakes and blunders in its activity. Therefore, some comrades pointed out his shortcomings to Cde. Kim Il Sung in the form of comradely criticism in order to eliminate the mistakes and shortcomings. He was also subjected to comradely criticism at the Central Committee Presidium meeting. However, he did not take the opinions of the comrades into consideration. Then this issue was raised at the Central Committee Plenum held on 30 August, at which severe party criticism developed.

The substance of the criticism at the plenum comes down to the following:

The cult of personality in our party was subjected to criticism at the plenum in order to overcome the consequences of Kim Il Sung's personality cult.

Those sycophants and careerists who spread the cult of personality in every way were subjected [to criticism] at the plenum. Workers on the ideological front who falsified the history of our party under the influence of the personality cult were also subjected to criticism at the plenum. The comrades who were critical at the plenum pursued only one goal: to eliminate the serious consequences of the personality cult in our party and completely ensure intra-party democracy and collective leadership in complete accordance with the statutes of our party.

However, the comrades who were in power took revenge on those who courageously and in a party way offered criticism directed at the elimination of the consequences of the personality cult and the elimination of the serious shortcomings in our party.

Several Central Committee members, including Central Committee Presidium members who had a wealth of experience in revolutionary struggle were unjustifiably expelled from the party. These events created a serious and complex situation inside the party.

In those conditions where intra-party democracy is not being ensured, it has become impossible not only to eliminate the shortcomings in the party through internal strength but also [has become] impossible to prevent events that very negatively reflect on the activity of the party.

In connection with the above, I submit my personal rec-

ommendations to the CPSU CC, which I request be seriously considered. Please send a senior official of the CPSU CC to Korea to convene a Workers' Party Central Committee Plenum at which all members of the CC should be present, including those who were expelled. The intra-party situation is to be studied at such a plenum more deeply and comprehensively and specific steps worked out directed at removing the shortcomings in our party.

If such a possibility is precluded, then please invite to Moscow senior representatives of the Workers' Party Central Committee and those comrades who were expelled, who will examine the current situation in the Workers' Party together with members of the CPSU CC Presidium and will work out specific steps to remove the shortcomings in the party.

If this possibility, too, is precluded, then please send a written appeal to the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee in the name of the CPSU CC that would describe the substance of the issue. Such a comradely comment would be more effective if the Chinese Communist Party CC were to subscribe to it.

If these steps are possible, then please receive me and I will describe the situation in Korea in more detail.

[DPRK Ambassador to the USSR]
/LI SANGJO/

3.IX.56



DOCUMENT No. 18

CPSU CC Presidium Protocol "On the Situation in the KWP," 6 September 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 3, Opis 14, Delo 410, List 3, published in AA. Fursenko ed., *Arkhiy Kremlya (Archives of the Kremlin), The Presidium of the CPSU CC, 1954-1964: Resolutions, 1954-1958 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2006) 421-422. Translated for CWHIP by James F. Person.]*

Protocol No. 39 from 6 September
71.0

Resolution of the Presidium CPSU CC
"On the Situation in the Korean Workers' Party"

P39/VIII

6 September 1956
Strictly secret

1. Having attached serious importance to the events that occurred at the plenum of the KWP CC, the CPSU

CC considers it necessary to exchange opinions on these matters with the leadership of the Korean Workers' Party and with the CC Chinese Communist Party.

2. The CPSU delegation to the 8th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party has been entrusted with exchanging thoughts with the leadership of the Korean Workers' Party and the Chinese Communist Party in connection with the situation in the Korean Workers' Party.
3. Cdes. Suslov and Ponamarev are entrusted to, within three days, prepare and deliver to the CPSU CC a draft declaration of the CPSU delegation to the Chinese Communist Party Eighth Congress on the Korean question.



DOCUMENT No. 19

Memorandum of Conversation with Bak Uiwan, 6 September 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 327-332. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by James F. Person]

Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK Top Secret
No. 251 Copy No. 3
"15" September 1956

DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR to the DPRK V.I. Ivanov for the period from 29 August to 14 September 1956

Pyeongyang

6 September

[Vice Premier and Minister of Light Industry] Bak Uiwan told me the following about the work of the KWP CC Plenum:

In Kim Il Sung's address, the problem of the personality cult was touched upon only in connection with the status of work in the area of propaganda. It was mentioned by Bak that both with and without any reason, many cried "hurray" to the leader and also glorified him in various textbooks and literature.

In the discussion on the speeches, the first to speak was the Chairman of the State Planning Committee, Yi Jongok, who spoke in a sycophantic tone about the massive feats achieved

in the DPRK.

The second to speak was party provincial committee secretary from the province of Northern Hamgyeong, Gim Daegong. He also talked about the successes achieved in the provinces under the leadership of the KWP. It merits mentioning the fact that he singled out and sharply criticized the work of the Ministry of Trade and the activities of the unions in his speech. It was clear that the speech was prepared well in advance.

The third to speak was the Minister of Trade, Yun Gongheum who excitedly and in a harsh tone declared that the spirit of the CPSU Twentieth Congress was absent from the KWP Third Congress. Kim Il Sung immediately cut him off, accusing him of slandering the party. Continuing, Yun said that the KWP CC does not put the ideas of Marxism-Leninism into practice with integrity and dedication. From the Presidium came remarks such as "what are you slandering" and "is the KWP a fascist or bourgeois party[?]."

Further, Yun declared that Choe Yonggeon is the leader of another party and was immediately named to the post of KWP Deputy Chairman, a clear violation of party democracy. At that point Choe Yonggeon stood and called Yun a dog and insulted him in every manner.

Choe Changik came forward to the defense of Yun, however, as everything was prepared to finish off Yun, Choe Changik could not speak, not being permitted to talk.

At the evening session, Minister of Finance Yi Dyuyyeong spoke. He illuminated the victory and success attained thanks to the policies of the Workers' Party. In particular, he said that there is not one country in the Socialist camp other than the DPRK that could raise the wages of workers at once by 35%. Regarding Yun's speech, he said that the statement deviates and is factionalist and characterized him as counterrevolutionary and anti-party.

The next to speak was Nam Il. He spoke in general phrases, simply pointing out the truth that unfortunately the decree of the CC March Plenum, where Kim Il Sung talked about the personality cult, was not brought to the attention of the members of the party. Repeating the well known party slogans about the need to expand party democracy and struggle with the personality cult, he didn't say anything of substance on that issue in the KWP. At the same time, he rained down on Yun with crushing criticism.

The Union of Democratic Youth Central Committee chairman, Bak Yongguk spoke for a very long time, stating that the KWP Third Congress, guided by the decree of the Twentieth Congress, successfully put into effect the principles of Marxism-Leninism. He stressed that the cult of personality was spread and supported not by Kim Il Sung, but by Bak

Heonyeong who was practically compared with God. He also said that there was no need to belittle. Talking about democratic perversions inside the party, he pointed out that they are the legacy of Heo Gai [A.I. Hegai] and do not pertain to the practical work of Kim Il Sung. He characterized Yun's speech as counterrevolutionary, directed against the existing state structure, and suggested removing Yun from the ranks of the Central Committee, expelling him from the party and putting him on trial.

There was nothing negative in Choe Changik's speech. He pointed out that the policies of the party were correct, but that it is necessary to talk about the personality cult, a sore issue for the party. He also pointed out that the KWP CC made individual errors in its work. He was given a large number of questions, from which it became clear that he subscribes to the ideology of the factional group.

The Southern Pyeongan party committee chairman Gim Mangeum talked about the condition of the economy in the provinces and expressed his full support for the speech of the Union of Democratic Youth Central Committee chairman. He also noted that Yun's speech was a planned speech of the anti-party group headed by Choe Changik and that that group should be investigated and all of them jailed.

In his speech, Gim Changman said that all activities of the leadership of the KWP have been correct. He characterized Yun not only as anti-party, but also as a person who is morally corrupt, who does not eat any meat other than veal, who squanders large sums of money, and who is a thief and a swindler.

Speaking next, Kim Il Sung recounted the history of the rise of discontent with the leadership of the KWP, underlining that Choe Changik and Bak Changok lead the group of malcontent. He also said that rumors reached the leadership of the KWP before the meeting that, apparently, a person who leads the malcontent and considers the policies of the KWP incorrect is at the Soviet Embassy. The leadership of the KWP was obliged to send Bak Jeongae and Nam Il to the Soviet embassy to clarify the situation. It turned out that those rumors were antagonistic and spread by the anti-party gang. Following that, a letter of the CPSU arrived in which it was indicated that in individual countries where the problem of the personality cult was being examined, certain individuals took advantage of that, expressing their discontent with the leaders. He did not speak about the intra-party problems that were coming to a head, but only concentrated on the anti-party group, making it their aim to overthrow the leadership and seize power in their hands.

The speech of the province of South Hamgyeong Party Committee chairman Hwang Dongmin was directed against those who expressed discontent.

The KWP CC department of propaganda and agitation head Yi Ilgyeong pointed out that the Third Congress was completely guided by the ideas of the Twentieth Congress and following it, the KWP CC in turn resolved the shortcomings connected with the personality cult. Several individuals accused us of discontinuing radio programming from the Soviet Union. However, it is well known to all that in those countries, which developed and matured, absolutely nothing is transmitted from the Soviet Union. We have also grown, and therefore discontinued broadcasts from the Union.

In his speech Choe Yonggeon pointed out that Yun presented to the plenum a concentrated program against the party and government. In a truncated form, the factionalists presented to the plenum all issues of the party: its history; the issues of the country's economic conditions; the personality cult and the placement of cadres. The factional activities of those individuals are a continuation of the principal work of the group of Bak Ilu. Choe Yonggeon pointed out that it was Yun Gongheum, Choe Changik and others who mounted the campaign against the Soviet-Koreans, starting to thrash out at Soviet-Koreans. They prepared this in a bomb shelter at Central Committee Agricultural Department director Bak Hunil's [home] in 1952, where Bak Ilu, Choe Changik and others were, in order to work out a program of activities against Kim Il Sung. To do that they had to unite with Bak Heonyeong, and they united. Seo Hwi told two Koreans coming from China that they would work for ten years in the DPRK not getting a higher title than Major-General.

Choe Yonggeon said that Li Pilgyu came to the KWP CC and said that they were led by Choe Changik and Bak Changok and that if measures to improve welfare standards were not taken, then there would be major dissatisfaction and that they would have another Poznan on their hands. He was indignant at the fact that Bak Ilu, to this day, is being held in jail.

Choe Yonggeon also named Gim Changkil, the Minister of Communication, whom he cautioned so that others would not consider him a representative of any faction, while at the same time attacking individual leaders of the party and state. Of Bak Changok, he said that this person is a deep-seated factionalist and in connection with that gang, and that he sent Yun to the Soviet Embassy.

Following that, Bak Changok spoke, explaining that he thinks that the KWP CC December Plenum took a very strict and unfair position in relation to him. He indicated that he is not connected with any group. He was interrupted by the remarks coming from the Presidium and from the hall and was not permitted to continue speaking.

In closing, Kim Il Sung spoke, suggesting organizational measures in relation to Choe Changik, Bak Changok and

other individuals about whom the plenum accepted a well known decree.

In closing Bak Uiwan said that the Plenum was held under very trying and oppressive conditions. In the country a massive battle has begun, severe repression is called for in the questioning of security workers, drivers and servants. Essential issues in the party were distorted and matters were presented before the members of the party in such a manner that the malcontent, it would seem, prepared a serious conspiracy, something similar to a palace coup. At present, the discontent have been driven deep down, by its inner strength the atmosphere in the party, he said, will not be relaxed.

Bak noted that the functionaries, against whom organizational measures were taken, were bad people. But it is impossible to work under conditions of systematic mutual mistrust of leading functionaries toward one another, things don't get done and the work is not close to your heart. He said that knowing his feelings, although he recently switched over to Korean citizenship, he requests that I relay to the Soviet government, that after he returns he would like to be granted Soviet citizenship once again and restored to the ranks of the CPSU.

Ambassador of the USSR in the DPRK

/V. IVANOV/

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Drafted by Ivanov

Typed by Alekseev

No. 940



DOCUMENT No. 20

Memorandum of a Conversation with DPRK Ambassador to the USSR Li Sangjo, 10 September 1956

[Source: RGANI, Delo 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 230-232. Obtained for CWIHP by Nobuo Shimotomai and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

with Cde. Li Sangjo, DPRK ambassador in Moscow and candidate member of the Central Committee of the Korean

Workers Party, held in the CPSU CC Department for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties on 10 September 1956

Cde. Li Sangjo asked that his thanks be sent to the CPSU CC for the help given the Korean Workers' Party and said that he basically wants to report the same thing that he said in a conversation with Cde. Fedorenko and wrote in a letter to Cde. Khrushchev. In addition, said Li Sangjo, I sent a letter to Cde. Mao Zedong.

Li Sangjo then expressed the opinion that at the present time the issues with which the party is now faced cannot be solved by the internal forces of the Workers' Party itself. It is difficult to generate criticism in conditions when honest, good communists are expelled from the party for criticism. For example, all critical comments about the cult of personality are viewed as anti-party statements. I hope, said Li Sangjo, that the CPSU and the Communist Party of China will look into Korean affairs together and help correct the current abnormal situation in the KWP.

There are many shortcomings in the Workers' Party, said Li Sangjo, and this is what is to be criticized. Cde. Kim Il Sung has by no means given an account of the CPSU CC recommendations to the KWP CC. I know about this from Central Committee members. At a conversation in the CPSU CC in July of this year, Bak Jeongae and Nam Il were present besides Kim Il Sung; the remaining Central Committee members do not fully know the substance of the conversation. Kim Il Sung, said Li Sangjo, admitted to the CPSU CC the correctness of the comments addressed to the KWP leadership but on return to Korea he began to act to the contrary.

Li Sangjo reported that he intended to send a letter to the KWP CC Plenum with a description of his point of view on the state of affairs in the party, but Nam Il informed him that Kim Il Sung's report at the Central Committee Plenum was well prepared and on the advice of several Korean comrades, said Li Sangjo, I did not send this letter.

Li Sangjo stated that, as Nam Il informed him, the CPSU CC letter, which discussed the statements of several Soviet communists after the CPSU Twentieth Congress (meaning the CPSU CC letter about the results of the discussion and fulfillment of the decisions of the Twentieth Congress), was described at the KWP CC plenum. In connection with the one-sided interpretation of the CPSU CC letter by Nam Il, Li Sangjo asked that he be familiarized with the contents of this letter.

The contents of that part of the CPSU CC letter about the results of the discussion and fulfillment of the decisions of the Twentieth Congress in which it talked about the individual incorrect statements that occurred after the Twentieth Congress were explained to Li Sangjo.

Cde. Li Sangjo was told that his report about the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee Plenum and also the information that we have from the Communist Party of China

Central Committee about the transfer of four senior DPRK officials to the PRC and the reports of our ambassador in Pyongyang deserve the most serious attention. We are alarmed by all the events that have taken place. A CPSU delegation to the Communist Party of China Eighth Congress has instructions to discuss this issue with the Korean delegation and talk with the Chinese comrades about the situation in the Korean Workers' Party.

Li Sangjo was told that, as he obviously knows, during Cde. Kim Il Sung's visit to Moscow, a conversation was held with him in the CPSU CC Presidium. Cde. Kim Il Sung stated that he agreed with the CPSU CC advice about the need to overcome the cult of personality in the DPRK and develop intra-party democracy and self-criticism.

In connection with the fact that Cde. Li Sangjo is raising the question about the need for advice and recommendations on the part of the CPSU and the Communist Party of China to the leadership of the Workers' Party about intra-party issues, he was told that in principle fraternal communist parties can give advice and recommendations, but it needs to be borne in mind that the Korean Workers' Party is an independent party. Therefore, there cannot be interference in its affairs and internal life, and the complexity of the situation needs to be understood when determining the steps and measures by the CPSU and CCP with regard to advice to the Korean Workers' Party.

Cde. Li Sangjo then said that it would be useful to speak out in the press in whatever form, where the shortcomings in the activity of the Workers' Party and the critical comments could be described, even if only in general form.

Cde. Li Sangjo was told in reply that the issue of the critical statements by Cde. Li Sangjo or any other statements about the leadership of the KWP CC ought not to be discussed in this conversation.

In conclusion Cde. Li Sangjo expressed gratitude for the reception and the conversation in the CPSU CC.

The conversation was recorded by [signature] I. Shcherbakov

3KK



DOCUMENT No. 21

Letter from Li Sangjo to the Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party, 5 October 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, Listy 233-295. Obtained for CWIHP by Nobuo Shimotomai and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

[Stamp:
CPSU CC
35293
5 Oct 56

subject to return to
the CPSU CC General Department]

TO THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE

DPRK Ambassador to the USSR Cde. Li Sangjo delivered to Cde. Fedorenko, USSR Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, a Russian translation of a letter to the Korea Workers' Party CC with a request to send the translation of this letter to the CPSU CC Department [for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties].

Cde. Li Sangjo reported at the same time that he intends to send the original of the letter to Pyongyang in the middle [v desyatykh chislakh] of October.

I thereby submit the Russian text of the letter of Cde. Li Sangjo to the Korean Workers' Party CC.

Chief of the CPSU CC Department for /signature/
Relations with Foreign Communist Parties I. Vinogradov

5 October 1956

Nº 25-S-2136 [handwritten]: Seen
I. Shcherbakov
31.X.56

[to the] archives

Reported to Cde. I. T. Vinogradov [illegible signature]
V. [Voronin] 31/X.56
13 X 56 [illegible signature]

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

of the letter of Cde. Li Sangjo, Candidate Member of the Korean Workers' Party CC and DPRK Ambassador to the USSR to the Korean Workers' Party CC

In his letter, Cde. Li Sangjo basically describes the issues of the situation of the Korean Workers' Party already known to the CPSU CC and adds some new facts.

Cde. Li Sangjo expresses his disagreement with the decisions of the KWP CC Plenum held in August 1956. He thinks that the following questions should have received solutions at the plenum:

1. A review of previous plans to restore and develop the economy in order to stress the development of [practical] measures directed at the material improvement of the population.
2. The elimination of the consequences of Kim Il Sung's personality cult in order to ensure genuine intra-party democracy and collective leadership in the party.
3. Restoration of the history of the national liberation struggle of the Korean people that was falsified under the influence of Kim Il Sung's personality cult.
4. The elimination of the shortcomings in the field of party propaganda, which even today is divorced from the reality of the party.
5. The removal from leadership positions of a number of people who are interfering with the strengthening of the unity and cohesion of the party.

However, these questions did not receive solutions and with regard to the comrades who tried to raise them, they were subjected to repressive measures.

Cde. Li Sangjo tells how the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung developed and that a majority of the "works" of Kim Il Sung were not written by him, but by other comrades. Thanks to the spread of the personality cult, Cde. Kim Il Sung has concentrated all power in his hands and has ended up above the party and the government.

If intra-party democracy is not ensured and Leninist principles of collective leadership are not completely restored, Cde. Li Sangjo concludes, then still more honest communists will become victims of tyranny and lawlessness.

In the opinion of Cde. Li Sangjo, at the Central Committee Plenum, Cdes. Kim Il Sung, Bak Jeongae, and Nam Il did not make known the valuable advice which was given them at the CPSU CC. Comrades who spoke critically at the Plenum were declared "conspirators" trying to overthrow the leadership of the party and the government. At the same time a rumor was spread in the KWP that supposedly the CPSU CC had sent a letter to the KWP CC that expressed a desire that Cde. Kim Il Sung not be subjected to criticism.

Even before the Plenum, several comrades in a private conversation with Cde. Kim Il Sung told him their critical comments and he gave assurances that he accepted their comradely comments, but at the same time a "case" about factional activity was created against them. Covert surveillance of many officials has been instituted and therefore they are afraid to visit one another lest they be accused of "conspiracy."

KWP CC member Cde. Gim Seunghwa, who had planned to speak critically at the August plenum, was quickly sent to Moscow to study.

More than 500 career officials occupying posts of chief of a directorate or department of ministries and other [organizations] are being accused of belonging to the "Yan'an group." All were old communist cadres who fought in Korea in the past. They have been characterized under various names by groups, casting the shadow of anti-party activity on them. Korean Communists who had come from the USSR were called "the nepotist group" and those from China "the Yan'an group." Only the partisans who had fought under the leadership of Kim Il Sung and members of the "Korean Fatherland Restoration Association in Manchuria" did not belong to groups and comprise the main backbone of the party.

It appears, writes Li Sangjo, that all the revolutionaries who do not have ties with Kim Il Sung must wear the stigma of factionalist.

Cde. Li Sangjo then pointed out that at the KWP Third Congress, it was declared that the cult of personality in the Workers' Party had not spread; however, at the August plenum, in view of the discontent of a considerable number of party members, in the decision about the report of Kim Il Sung, it was written "...the cult of personality has spread to a negligible degree in the ranks of the Workers' Party. It has found its expression chiefly in the ideological work of our party where one personality has been excessively glorified. However, the cult of personality could not have influenced the highest principle of party leadership, the collective nature of the leadership which the Central Committee has consistently upheld, nor the line or policy of the Workers' Party."

Cde. Li Sangjo cites other incidents of the violation of the party statutes and socialist legality.

In violation of a requirement of the party statutes, a number of officials were coopted into membership in the Central Committee without the permission of the Congress, and several of them then became members of the Politburo and deputy chairmen of the Central Committee. This was the case with Cde. Choe Yonggeon, who was Democratic Party Central Committee chairman.

An atmosphere of pressure and Kim Il Sung's tyranny pre-

dominates in the party. Even the most senior officials have been forced to work in an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. The texts of speeches at Central Committee Plenums are being strictly monitored in order that the speaker says what “is necessary.” This is also being done for deputies. The texts of the speeches of the delegates of the KWP Third Congress were carefully checked and unceremoniously corrected without asking for the opinions of the delegates.

The Constitution is being violated in the country, writes Cde. Li Sangjo. A majority of the representatives of provincial people’s committees are not deputies of local people’s committees, but according to regulation they must be elected.

There are more than 30,000 people in prisons as a result of the violation of socialist legality. In the army alone the number of those arrested is more than one division. Eight thousand have been accused of counterrevolution and about 10,000 have been convicted of other crimes. Thus, one out of every 300 people in North Korea is a criminal.

This fact tells what “counterrevolutionaries” are. Two thousand people were released from confinement before the plenum, among whom there was a “criminal” sentenced to five years for only having made a book cover from a piece of newspaper containing Kim Il Sung’s portrait.

Kim Il Sung gave instructions according to which the existence of two witnesses is sufficient to convict a person for any term of punishment, including the death penalty.

Cde. Li Sangjo then writes that Cde. Bak Ilu (a former member of the Politburo) was arrested and his family expelled from Pyeongyang for daring to object to Kim Il Sung about the issues of the tax in kind and the party policy about reactionaries, declaring that severe repressive measures cannot be employed without review.

The letter talks about the distortion of the history of the national liberation struggle of the Korean people in contemporary literature. The role of the partisan detachments of Kim Il Sung, which actually ceased to exist in 1940, is exaggerated. The personal merits of Kim Il Sung are inflated and the routine partisan raid at Bocheonbo is presented as a great battle. The role of the “Korean Fatherland Restoration Association in Manchuria,” whose membership did not exceed 100 men, is also exaggerated.

In addition, the activity of the Korean communists who fought together with the Chinese against the Japanese, Jiang Jieshi’s forces, and the American interventionists is ignored.

Enormous mistakes have been made in economic policy and in the issue of increasing the material and cultural level of the population. For example, the construction of an automobile

plant, the Pyeongyang meat-packing plant, a cannery, etc. was planned, but there were no raw materials for these plants in the country. At the same time, the country is experiencing great difficulties with food, housing, and essential goods.

Cde. Li Sangjo writes about his conversation with Cde. Mao Zedong during the first period of the war in Korea, when the People’s Army had successfully advanced into the south of Korea. Cde. Mao Zedong was then already alarmed about the possibility of an invasion by a large force of American troops. Cde. Li Sangjo reported this to Kim Il Sung, to which the latter replied that we do not expect to make a retreat and therefore there is no need to listen to this advice.

At the end of the letter Cde. Li Sangjo states that he is not against Cde. Kim Il Sung remaining in the party leadership, but inasmuch as the questions of principle that he pointed out were not properly resolved at the August Central Committee Plenum, he requests that the Korean Workers’ Party Central Committee inform the members and candidate members of the Central Committee of this written statement.

Translation from the Korean

TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE KOREAN WORKERS’ PARTY

The recently held Korean Workers’ Party Central Committee Plenum attracted the universal attention both of Korean communists as well as fraternal communist and workers’ parties. The discussion of issues at this plenum about the visit of our government delegation to fraternal countries and other issues, did not achieve resolution at the Korean Workers’ Party Third Congress, the resolution of which would have permitted the elimination of the serious shortcomings in party and government work. In particular, a discussion of the issue about overcoming the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung and its consequences which have become widespread in our country was expected at the plenum. In doing this we should have relied on the historical decisions of the CPSU Twentieth Congress which decisively spoke out against the cult of personality and the other decisions that exerted an enormous positive influence on the international workers’ movement. All the fraternal parties have launched a broad ideological struggle to eliminate the cult of personality and its consequences on the basis of the historic decisions of the CPSU Twentieth Congress.

As more specifically regards those issues which required their resolution at the plenum, they boiled down to the following:

1. The issue of reviewing previous plans to restore and develop the economy in order to stress the working out of practical steps directed at an improvement of the material

well-being of the population.

2. The issue of the elimination of the consequences of Kim Il Sung's personality cult in order to ensure genuine intra-party democracy and collective leadership in the party.

3. The issue of the restoration of the history of the national liberation struggle of the Korean people that had been falsified under pressure of Kim Il Sung's personality cult, whose merits were incredibly inflated.

4. The issue of the elimination of the shortcomings in the field of party propaganda, which even today is divorced from the reality of the people.

5. The issue of the removal from leadership positions of sycophants who are preventing the strengthening of the unity and cohesion of the party.

These issues might naturally evoke a lively discussion and the opinions of many party members might not agree with the opinions of individual sycophants and careerists. By no means can administrative and organizational measures be used to solve these issues. On the contrary, an opportunity needs to be given to everyone to express themselves on the issues [I] have touched on since they are of principal importance both from the viewpoint of theory and the viewpoint of practical activity.

Only through a comprehensive collective discussion of the issues can the correct solution be found to strengthen the organizational and ideological unity of the party.

In bringing up these issues I am by no means belittling the merits of our party and individual leaders in the cause of strengthening people's power and in leading the struggle of our people against foreign invaders during the war years. Our party was and remains the guiding force of the Korean people in its struggle for a bright future. In addition, I do not deny a certain positive role for Cde. Kim Il Sung in the revolutionary struggle of the Korean people.

The essence of the issues is to reveal the shortcomings that undoubtedly exist in our activity and multiply the indisputable successes achieved by the workers of our country. It is for this reason that party members should in every way reveal and eliminate shortcomings in the work and not get drunk on success and then ascribe these successes to the merits of one personality.

However, the results of the plenum not only did not justify the hopes of Korean communists and other fraternal parties but, on the contrary, led to the completely opposite result.

All those comrades who, guided by Leninist organizational

principles, expressed principled criticism of Kim Il Sung's personality cult, who harmed our party, were classed as "anti-party factionalists" trying to overthrow the government and the leadership of the party. But at the same time, it is clear that these comrades were setting the goal of expanding intra-party democracy in order to ensure collective leadership in the party, restore the history of our party that was falsified under the influence of the personality cult, remove the careerists and sycophants from the leadership of the party and the country, and work out specific steps directed at increasing the standard of living of the population.

Under crude pressure from those comrades against whom the criticism was directed, those who spoke in the midst of discussions were deprived of their say and therefore they could not fully describe their ideas at the plenum. The "leading" comrades managed to expel from the ranks of the party honest communists who had courageously and openly spoken against the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung, through deception and threats against Central Committee members.

Is this really not a "strange" matter?

All the repressed comrades are senior officials of our party and state. Among them were: Choe Changik, member of the KWP CC Presidium and Deputy Prime Minister of the DPRK, and Bak Changok, member of the KWP CC and Deputy Prime Minister, who were removed from all their posts and whose case was sent to the KWP CC Party Control Committee for examination. Yun Gongheum, member of the KWP CC and Minister of Trade; Seo Hwi, Chairman of the Trade Unions CC; Li Pilgyu, candidate member of the KWP CC, and others were expelled from the party. Inasmuch as they were not given an opportunity at the plenum to finish speaking, the other comrades who had also planned to speak on this issue were deprived of their say.

Thus, a gross outrage was committed in violation of the statutes of our party.

They say that these [people] criticized Cde. Kim Il Sung privately or at a Central Committee Presidium meeting: Gim Dubong, DPRK Supreme People's Assembly Presidium Chairman; Bak Uiwan, Deputy Prime Minister of the DPRK; Gim Seunghwa, former Minister of Construction; Gim Changhup, Minister of Communications; and others. Crudely trampling on the intra-party democracy guaranteed by the statutes of the party, Kim Il Sung and his supporters through uncerecermonious pressure have managed to get the comrades who spoke critically against Kim Il Sung classed as "anti-party" elements and "criminals" who tried to "overthrow" the government and the party.

After this can one agree without remorse with the argument of Kim Il Sung and [his] sycophants, who said at the Third

Party Congress and afterwards that there is no cult of personality in our party and the specific vehicle [*nositel'*] of the personality cult is Bak Heonyeong?

Can we say that only the Korean Workers' Party can avoid those serious errors that resulted from the cult of personality, which became widespread in the worker's movement? It is clear that the Korean Workers' Party, like other fraternal parties, could not avoid such errors. Nevertheless, our delegation that attended the CPSU Twentieth Congress, in its report about the CPSU Twentieth Congress, declared upon return to our Motherland that the cult of personality had become widespread in the activity of the CPSU. However, as indicated in this report, there can be no cult of personality in the ranks of a genuinely Marxist-Leninist party, but the KWP is one in which the cult of personality is supposedly absent and therefore it has avoided those errors which result from it. Such a statement does not correspond to reality and is aimed at deceiving party members. It cannot fail to be classed as an action that ignores the opinion of an overwhelming majority of party members.

I. The formation of Kim Il Sung's personality cult in Korea and its expression in various areas of public life. Can one really agree with that arrogant argument that, as Kim Il Sung and his supporters put it, "favorable" conditions have developed in Korea that permit the Workers' Party, being a genuinely Marxist-Leninist party, to avoid the cult of personality in its ranks? If one agrees with such an argument, then one ought to think that the remaining fraternal parties are not genuinely Marxist-Leninist parties.

Isn't this really a laughable theory?

To tell the truth, in Korea historical conditions have developed which have facilitated the formation of Kim Il Sung's personality cult, not to mention that we did not have such exceptional conditions that permitted [us] to avoid serious errors from the cult of personality.

It is well known that Korea, which for a long time was under the yoke of Japanese colonial domination, did not know what a democratic way of life was. The Japanese colonizers "educated" the population of Korea in the spirit of unquestioning obedience to Japanese bureaucrats in every way. All this became routine for Koreans. After the liberation of Korea by the Soviet Army, power passed into the hands of the people.

In a situation where there were not enough senior officials in the country who had received revolutionary hardening in the course of the liberation struggle, new cadres were promoted to senior positions who had not yet received a sufficient revolutionary education. One cannot fail to recognize that this fact, which is an objective condition, facilitated the spread of bureaucratism, sycophancy, and the cult of personality in Korea. In Korean conditions, where vestiges of a feu-

dal education were deeply rooted in the consciousness of the people, there was fertile ground for the cult of personality to flower. Who can deny that the basis of feudal education was unquestioning obedience to the king and his cult? The king embodied the state. Someone who spoke against the king was declared a traitorous "criminal." All these vestiges still find their expression in Korean reality. According to the "theory" of sycophants, it turns out that someone who criticizes Kim Il Sung is trying to "overthrow" the government and the party. Then what is the difference between a "theory" that "the king embodies the state" and what the sycophants of Kim Il Sung stubbornly preach? Such an idea has become widespread in our party. Is it really not a vestige of consciousness formed in the epoch of feudalism and colonial domination? In other words, it is an accursed legacy of feudalism and Japanese colonial domination. It has "the absolute obedience of the people to bureaucratic power" at its base. All these circumstances could not fail to promote the formation and development of a cult of personality in Korea. It should be added that by the time of the liberation of Korea by the Soviet Army, there was no united communist party in the country representing the working class and acting as the recognized leader of the revolution. The underground communist groups who were fighting at that time in the conditions of the brutal police repression of Japanese imperialism did not have fixed communications among themselves. Thus each communist group had its own leaders and Kim Il Sung was one of them. Cde. Kim Il Sung, who returned to the Motherland with our liberators, the Soviet Army, enjoyed the universal support of the population at that time. This is understandable. We communists who felt whole-hearted trust in the Soviet comrades warmly welcomed and defended Kim Il Sung, whom the Soviet comrades also supported.

If one considers the issue of the leadership cadre who joined the various revolutionary organizations at that time, then it ought to be said that they basically were divided into four groups. The first group included the Communists who fought in Korea itself. The second group was Korean Communists who were in the USSR and operated under the leadership of the CPSU. The third group was the Communists who participated in the partisan movement in Manchuria, which ceased in 1940. The fourth group was Communists who fought in China under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. This was the situation at the moment of Korea's liberation. Although there were those among the communists who fought in Korea itself who opposed promoting Kim Il Sung as the leader, nevertheless a considerable social force supported Kim Il Sung and measures were developed that were directed at increasing and strengthening his authority. His portraits hung everywhere next to the portrait of Stalin, and many articles were published in the name of Kim Il Sung, including a 20 point program for the revival of the country.

And at the present time, when the historic decisions of the Twentieth Congress have rocked the entire world, there are

still officials who try to ascribe all credit to one “boss.” These circumstances played a decisive role in the formation and development of Kim Il Sung’s personality cult. All power was concentrated in the hands of one personality, in violation of Leninist organizational principles. All power was concentrated in the hands of Kim Il Sung, especially during the war when the foreign invaders who had intervened in the Korean War expanded the scale of [their] military operations.

In wartime conditions, an excuse was found for a restriction on democratic principles in the party and in the country. But when the country entered the period of peaceful development, such a restriction gave rise to negative consequences for the party and the country. Nevertheless, in our country the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung has not only not been overcome, but on the contrary, attempts have been made to reinforce it. As a result, Cde. Kim Il Sung has set himself above the party, the government, and the people, and he himself has ended up as an untouchable personality.

In light of these facts, might it be said that there were exceptionally favorable historical conditions in Korea that allowed [it] to avoid those errors which give rise to a cult of personality? It needs to be recognized that in Korea not only were there no such conditions, but on the contrary all the objective conditions in our country facilitated the formation and spread of the personality cult in greater measure than in other fraternal countries. However, instead of respecting the opinion of those comrades who had worked in various communist groups in the past in order to assure and strengthen party unity, Cde. Kim Il Sung has such a high opinion of himself that he has completely stopped considering the opinions of comrades.

With the appearance of the personality cult, as night follows day, all kinds of careerists and sycophants follow Kim Il Sung who try to fight their way to power at any price. They have raised the name of Kim Il Sung to an unattainable height by all permissible and impermissible means. If one explains one aspect of the personality cult by the presence of sycophants, then another invariable condition for the existence of a cult of personality is the encouragement of sycophants by leaders. When we analyze the cult of personality from these two aspects then we must recognize that there are sycophants and careerists in our party and that Cde. Kim Il Sung, as leader, has encouraged them and thereby facilitated their emergence. Can one assume that the words “Great leader,” “military leader of genius,” “outstanding leader,” and similar words of praise appeared in the pages of the press without the knowledge and consent of Kim Il Sung?

Can one believe what was said at the Third Congress of our party about the issue of the personality cult?

It was said that there is no cult of personality in the theory and the practice of the Workers’ Party.

To deny the existence of Kim Il Sung’s personality cult in the Workers’ Party means to embark on the road to a conscious deception of the party and the people, and it means ignoring the opinions of party members.

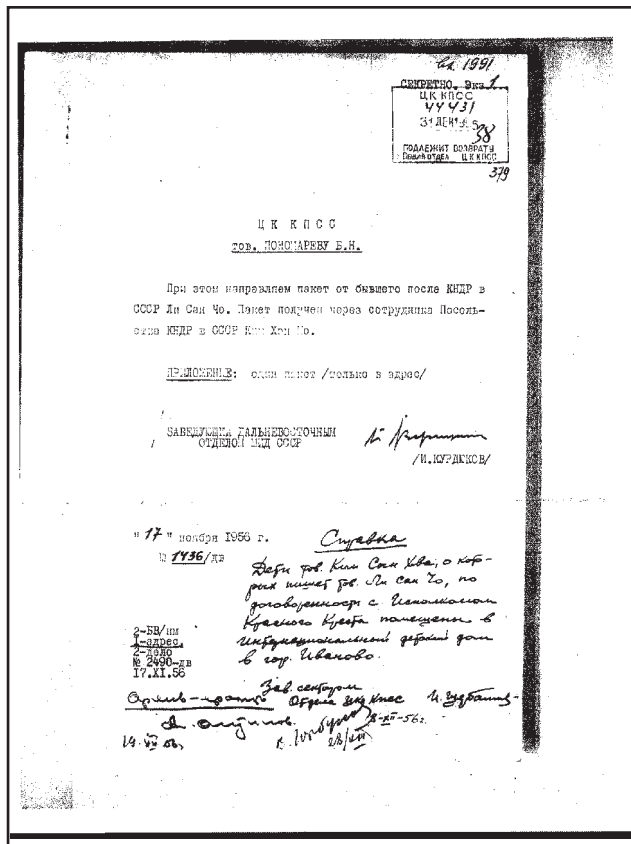
If one analyzes newspaper and magazine materials, school textbooks, fictional literature, and works of art, then we easily see the cult of personality here, there, and everywhere, that is, the name of Kim Il Sung is raised higher than the names of kings in bourgeois countries. The name of Kim Il Sung is celebrated in many songs. The democratic reforms carried out in Korea have been described as if the people received liberty and the peasants received land by the will of Kim Il Sung. He is still relatively young and living a busy life but his name has been given to Pyeongyang University, and streets and squares of cities. And as if this weren’t enough, the young Kim Il Sung is called the father of Korean youth. Is all this not a manifestation of the personality cult in our party? We must vigorously oppose attempts to depict Kim Il Sung as suffering from immodesty as the “Korean” Lenin or the “Korean” Mao Zedong.

Is it not funny when Kim Il Sung is compared with the great Lenin or with Cde. Mao Zedong? Only one who has finally got a high opinion of himself or has lost all conscience can compare himself with the great Lenin or Mao Zedong.

Let’s talk about the works of Kim Il Sung published in his collected works. The fact that the overwhelming majority of his “works” were written by other comrades who are active advocates of the personality cult is no secret to anyone. People ask, how much did Kim Il Sung write himself?

I don’t even intend to give an assessment of the quality of these works. Whoever studies party and government materials closely and systematically knows that many documents drawn up on the basis of a report or a speech by Kim Il Sung did not consider the immediate prospects for the development of events. Therefore, they had to make many efforts to draw up additional reports that could correct the mistakes in the main report. This is what Cde. Kim Il Sung, who considered himself above everyone and played an important role in the management of the country, did. We can identify many such government documents that contain statements which are contradictory. But meanwhile, the sycophants and careerists promoted these works of Kim Il Sung as outstanding creations having no equal. I suggest that highly qualified party officials and researchers reexamine the works of Kim Il Sung in order to identify the positive and the negative and then publish them as collections of party reports and not as works of Kim Il Sung. The remaining materials ought to be called upon as a textbook for studying the politics of the party.

In connection with the cult of personality one cannot fail to cite anecdotal facts that shed light on the spread of the person-



Cover note from the CPSU Foreign Ministry to the Central Committee, forwarding the asylum request of Li Sangjo, former DPRK Ambassador to the Soviet Union, who was recalled to Pyongyang in September 1956

ality cult in Korea. Until recently there was a rule to issue as a booklet all the speeches of Kim Il Sung that touched on even minor issues. Statements about insignificant issues put forward in the publications immediately became political slogans of the party. The statements he made without any preparation became a party appeal that they hung on every street. For example, the words “rice is socialism” or “spinning is an art” which he threw out became party slogans. Artists were mobilized to reflect these slogans in paintings. All this provokes laughter from sensible people. It is not enough that these slogans are hung on city streets, but dramatists have been found who have written a play on the basis of the slogan “spinning is an art,” which was staged in Pyongyang. Similar facts not only provoke laughter but also pain.

Thanks to the spread of the personality cult Cde. Kim Il Sung has concentrated all power in his hands and his authority has turned out to be above the party, government, and the people. Any speech of his at any meeting, whether it expresses the opinion of a majority of party members or not, is considered an “ultimate truth.” Even if his final decision contradicted the party statutes and established law, no one would be so bold as to oppose it. As the recent plenum has just shown, Kim Il Sung and his supporters crudely trampled on the party statutes and other norms of intra-party democracy. Therefore, the fact that the Central Committee Deputy Chairman openly declared that

“whoever is against Kim Il Sung, their political life is over; the doors of the prisons where they put enemies of the people are open to them” is no accident. Does this really cause no serious alarm in the party? Does this all really not undermine the unity of our party?

We all remember well how at every conference and meeting Cde. Kim Il Sung abused the name of one comrade who was known in the past for his active factional activity. But at one party activists’ meeting after the CPSU Twentieth Congress he had only to declare that Cde. Kim Il Sung is the true pupil of Lenin, after which he was immediately appointed a minister. Where is the party fidelity to principle here? It is no great difficulty for Cde. Kim Il Sung to violate the party statutes, government laws, and communist principles. He never seriously listens to the voice of the party members, not to mention that he does not consider the opinions of the overwhelming majority of party members. If we say that “force is truth” for Cde. Kim Il Sung and that his opinion is more authoritative than any government law, then this would not be a great exaggeration. If such an idea had predominated before the CPSU Twentieth Congress, then after it everyone began to understand that this is not the party style of operation. The popular masses, who blindly believed in Kim Il Sung as a god, have gradually begun to purge their consciousness of the personality cult. Some leading comrades, in defending the position of fidelity to party principles, expressed their critical remarks to Kim Il Sung and organized criticism of the personality cult.

Instead of heeding the comradely criticism as befits a communist, he embarked on the path to merciless reprisals against those who bravely and openly criticized the cult of personality. For Kim Il Sung and his supporters, the documents of the CPSU Twentieth Congress about the issue of overcoming the cult of personality have become scarier than a tiger and therefore they hate them.

Can a real Communist regard the most important document of the CPSU Twentieth Congress this way? If we do not eliminate a negative phenomenon in our life like this, if we do not ensure intra-party democracy, and finally, if we do not completely restore the Leninist principle of collective leadership, then many more honest communists will become victims of tyranny and lawlessness.

II. The August Central Committee Plenum did not resolve the principal issues about overcoming the consequences of the personality cult in our party.

It is well known that the August Central Committee Plenum should have become a plenum of vigorous struggle against the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung and overcoming its consequences. But it did not become such a plenum.

During a visit to fraternal countries, our government del-



**Roundtable Discussion: The Cold War in Asia
National University of Singapore, November 2006**

Anthony Reid, director of the Asia Research Institute (NUS), chairs a roundtable discussion on the Cold War in Asia. The roundtable, held from 6-7 November 2006, included scholars based in China and Southeast Asia. Christian Ostermann participated on behalf of CWIHP.

egation had a full opportunity to familiarize itself with the life of the people of these countries which are building socialism. They met often with party and government leaders who directly and indirectly informed our delegation of the issue that disturbs all honest party members, the issue of overcoming the cult of personality and its consequences.

The leaders of the CPSU and the Soviet government, as has become known to me, expressed extraordinarily important comradely comments to our party. These comments touched on the issues of an increase in the standard of living of the population, overcoming the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung, and also other [issues]. The Soviet leaders noted that one needs to be on one's guard against sycophants and careerists, that you can't present the history of the person Kim Il Sung as the history of the party, and finally they told of the harm of party propaganda divorced from reality. The value of these comments is without doubt. Every time shortcomings are observed in fraternal parties, another fraternal party criticizes from a position of communist principle in order to eliminate the shortcomings. The Soviet leaders expressed their valuable comradely wishes to the Workers Party Central Committee, and not to Kim Il Sung himself. It is clear that Cde. Kim Il Sung, Bak Jeongae, and Nam Il, knowing of these wishes, were obliged to report them to the Central Committee Plenum in order to discuss them and eliminate those serious shortcomings that exist in our party and government work. But meanwhile, there was an attempt to conceal these CPSU wishes from the party Central Committee. In this regard, we ought to follow the example of the practical activity of the Soviet comrades after the CPSU Twentieth Congress.

I cite one instance as an example.

For example, in the Soviet Union, after the trip of Comrades N. S. Khrushchev and N. A. Bulganin, their formal report about the talks with the leaders of Great Britain was communicated to primary party organizations. So why do we not inform our party organizations of the comradely wishes of the CPSU?

This is evidence of the desire of the Soviet leaders to broadly inform the party community [*obshchestvennost*] of the most important issues of government and party activity and to rely on the energy of the masses. Every party member knows what issues were discussed during the talks and were raised by the British leaders and what answers were given by the Soviet leaders in reply to the questions that were raised.

All this says that the activity of Soviet leaders relies on the creative initiative of the popular masses and their desire to receive a proper assessment from the party masses. Such a work style is one of the specific manifestations of Leninist principles in party organizational work. So why can we not imitate such a Leninist style of party work? The reply to this question can be found in only one thing: either our leaders openly ignore the interests of the party or they are afraid to communicate the valuable comradely wishes of the CPSU to the broad party community.

In addition, we should clearly realize that the CPSU wishes were addressed to our Central Committee. However, there are people who think that the Workers' Party Central Committee is Kim Il Sung, Bak Jeongae, and Nam Il, or that the entire party is embodied in them. It would be a big mistake to take such a position. Every honest party member cannot fail to agree with these comradely comments which were made to our Central Committee by the Soviet leaders.

The recently concluded KWP CC Plenum had a serious nature and because it was held after the valuable comradely comments by the CPSU were made to us, and after our government delegation visited fraternal countries. During their stay in Moscow, our comrades assured the CPSU CC that they took note of the comradely comments by the CPSU and would consider them. But as the Central Committee Plenum shows, they deceived the CPSU CC: not only did they not take effective steps to correct the mistakes that have been made, but they took revenge against those who criticized the cult of personality.

Perhaps all this can be forgiven. The comrades who spoke at the discussions criticized Cde. Kim Il Sung and various sycophants in the spirit of those comments that were made by the CPSU. In response to such healthy criticism, Cde. Kim Il Sung and his supporters took revenge on the comrades who spoke, declaring them "the anti-party Yan'an group" and "conspirators" trying to overthrow the party and the government.

Thus the so-called Yan'an group, which opposed the cult of personality and which in fact did not exist in nature, was

fabricated. As a result, intra-party democracy and party unity were undermined even more.

It is well known that some comrades have already criticized Cde. Kim Il Sung privately and he assured [them] that he accepts these comradely comments. And somewhere behind the backs of these comrades, fictitious “cases” were created about their factional activity, calling them the Yan’an “group.” Therefore, at the Central Committee Plenum an open intra-party political struggle developed instead of a discussion of pressing issues.

In conditions when the elementary norms of intra-party democracy are not observed, the comrades who openly criticized Kim Il Sung and his sycophants performed a genuinely courageous act. In spite of the threat that hung over their fate, in the interest of the party and the people they bravely and openly criticized Cde. Kim Il Sung and various sycophants. By no means can their actions be assessed as an attempt to seize the posts of prime minister or chairman of the party Central Committee, although there are people who have lost all conscience and are representing their actions as such an attempt.

The comrades who spoke knew that the automatic majority of the plenum collected by threats and intimidation would expel them from the party. Already on the eve of the plenum supporters of Kim Il Sung openly declared that those who criticized the “leadership” of the party would be expelled. Were the comrades who spoke really concerned about their own personal interests? No. Those who criticized the cult of personality were only guided by the interests of the party and were trying to restore the truth.

These repressive measures on the part of Kim Il Sung and his small number of supporters have added a shameful page to the history of our party that is unprecedented in the history of the international workers’ movement. Can such reprisals be considered measures taken in the interest of the party and in the interest of strengthening international ties with other fraternal communist and workers’ parties?

It needs to be said frankly that such measures promote neither the strengthening of party unity nor international ties with other fraternal parties. These repressive measures weaken the ties with other fraternal parties and run counter to Marxist-Leninist truth.

By their unprecedented actions, Kim Il Sung and his supporters have ignored the valuable comradely wishes of the CPSU. Moreover, they have spread rumors that the CPSU CC supposedly sent a letter to the KWP CC in which it expressed a desire that Cde. Kim Il Sung not be subjected to criticism. The letter needs to be read closely. Where did it say there that it was not necessary to oppose the cult of personality? On the contrary, it states the correctness and need to struggle against

the cult of personality, during which great success has been achieved in all fraternal parties. These shameful acts were committed by Nam Il, who spread the false rumor, and Gim Changman, who supported him on this issue.

Can all these really not be classed as the acts of a coward, a deceiver? Kim Il Sung and his supporters stated that the Korean communists who returned to the motherland from China have formed their own “group,” which they called the “Yan’an group.” The absurdity of such statements is so obvious that they are not worth refuting.

One can only be surprised at their political shortsightedness when they associate “factional activity” in the Korean Workers’ Party with Yan’an, the revolutionary base of the Chinese Revolution, which enjoys the deep love of 600 million Chinese people and the universal respect of communists of the entire world. Let’s look at the arguments with the aid of which they accused honest communists of factional activity. The supporters of Cde. Kim Il Sung say that the comrades who spoke at the plenum had discussed questions of party policy long before the plenum, behind the back of the Central Committee. Such statements do not withstand criticism. Everyone knows well that even before the plenum, the now-repressed comrades made critical remarks to Kim Il Sung in a private conversation with him and then spoke at the Central Committee Plenum. In view of the lack of intra-party democracy, the comrades who spoke in the discussions were deprived of their say at the Central Committee Plenum. Some other comrades could not participate in the discussions for this reason. Can one find traces of a “plot” against the government and the party here? After this, how can one say that the elementary norms of intra-party democracy are being observed in our party?

Their other favorite arguments are that criticism of senior party and government leaders unavoidably leads to “plotting” in the interests of “overthrowing” the party and government. Is it really a “crime” when a party member expresses criticism directed at eliminating the shortcomings which exist in the actions of senior comrades?

The statutes of our party provides for intra-party democracy. It permits criticism of any party member regardless of the post he holds if it, the criticism, is supported by facts. Not one Communist or workers’ party accepts such a situation where individual leaders who have become untouchable prove to be beyond party criticism.

The classics of Marxism-Leninism do not consider it a “crime” when an individual party member criticizes a leader. Where can you see party members, who comprise the party, almost go on their knees before the authority of an individual leader? It is even impossible to display comradely criticism inside the Central Committee and, what is more, inside the Central Committee Presidium. Even in the era of feudalism,

in order to strengthen their dominance, bring public opinion to their side, and head off extreme anti-people activities on the part of individual bureaucrats, individual kings created a state council in their court whose members had the right to speak out against unjustified actions of the king.

So it is asked, why can we party members not initiate criticism directed against individual leaders? Those leaders who persecute criticism from below are trying to subjugate all party members and with the aid of authority demand unquestioning obedience. For it is clear that Kim Il Sung and his supporters are not yet the entire party and not the entire government.

Let's even assume that someone spoke openly against Kim Il Sung and individual leaders. Can such an act be called an act directed at overthrowing the party and government? Of course not. To overthrow the party and the government in the true sense means a change of the existing people's democratic system. If one takes such a position then one ought to explain the changes in the leadership in a number of fraternal parties as an overthrow of the previous parties and governments. If one thinks that Kim Il Sung is the Leader [*vozhd*] and should be in the post of prime minister and chairman of the Central Committee for life, then what is the difference between him and a king? Who appointed him to the post of prime minister and chairman of the Central Committee for life? And if someone had suggested releasing Cde. Kim Il Sung from the posts he holds in order to eliminate the shortcomings that exist in improving the material situation and cultural life of the population, in order to overcome the cult of personality and its consequences, in order to correct the falsification of the history of the liberation struggle of the Korean people, and in order to ensure the collective leadership of the party and country in practice, then there is nothing anti-party or criminal here. However, the comrades who were expelled did not advance such a demand, but limited themselves to a suggestion to release several sycophants from the positions they hold who are harming the party and the people by their improper actions. What is criminal and anti-party here?

The supporters of Kim Il Sung say that one ought not to hold private conversations on political topics. Is this really not an absurd demand? Are there political leaders who do not hold private conversations amongst themselves on political topics? There are no such leaders. Is there a communist or workers' party that prohibits holding private conversations on political topics? There are no such parties. Does Kim Il Sung himself really not hold private conversations on political topics? I have personally talked privately with Kim Il Sung about politics over a dinner table on more than one occasion. Can such an act be classed as factional activity? Every party member feeling a responsibility for his party cannot agree with such a classification of factional activity. With the exception of Cde. Kim Il Sung and several of his supporters, each of us has been afraid to meet together in order to eat dinner or celebrate some

occasion, since they have been searching for signs of a "plot" in any "assemblage." Does the covert surveillance of career officials really serve the basic principles of party organization work? Cde. Li Pilgyu privately expressed critical comments to Kim Il Sung even before the plenum. When this became known to KWP CC Organizational Instructors Department Deputy Chief, Cde. Gim Yeongju (he is a younger brother of Kim Il Sung), the latter demanded that the primary party organization chairman in which Cde. Li Pilgyu was registered establish unrelenting monitoring of him and then suggested expelling him from the party, although Cde. Li Pilgyu is a candidate member of the Central Committee, whom according to the statutes only a Central Committee Plenum has the right to expel from the party. Can such demands be called justified? On the eve of the Central Committee Plenum it became known that Central Committee member Cde. Gim Seunghwa intended to speak at the plenum on the question of the personality cult and he was then immediately sent to Moscow to study in order to get rid of him.

Let's take another case.

Even before the start of the plenum Cde. Kim Il Sung called Deputy Prime Minister and candidate member of the Central Committee Presidium Bak Uiwan to his office, who also expressed critical comments to Kim Il Sung. Kim Il Sung intimidated him, saying that he had economic materials that supposedly compromised Bak Uiwan. Was Kim Il Sung really acting in a party manner? If there really are materials which compromise Cde. Bak Uiwan then it was hardly necessary to wait until the materials were examined with the expectation of using them for the purposes of intimidation at a "suitable" moment. And here is the tragedy of the Korean Workers' Party.

At a time when the slogan "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let all Schools of Thought Contend" was disseminated throughout the whole world, why were completely opposite events unfolding in Korea? It is true that Workers' Party Central Committee Deputy Chairman Gim Changman, who was responsible for ideological work, fought everywhere for party members to speak about everything without fear. But who will dare to speak when they are expelled from the party for the slightest critical statement to strengthen party unity, as in these circumstances?

Rumors are already spreading that more than 500 career officials who occupy posts of chiefs of directorates and departments of Ministries and higher are being accused of belonging to the Yan'an "group."

In conditions when they shout from all the rooftops that they need to root out the Yan'an "group," who will dare to tell the truth directly? We think that many more than 500 people in our Party oppose the cult of personality. And when the mil-

lion-member party vigorously opposes the cult of personality, the time will come when all party members will be free of the personality cult. It is possible in this event that the entire party (more than 1 million members) will be accused of “forming cliques [*gruppyrovshchina*].” Of course, this is impossible. The entire seriousness of the issue is contained in this. The current intra-party struggle clearly expresses the collision of progressive ideas with an old idea. As a result, a so-called Yan’an “group,” unprecedented in the history of the party, was artificially created. But this could not fail to weaken the organizational and ideological unity of our ranks.

Why in our time should we close [our] mouths, ears, and eyes to party members, including members of the Central Committee Presidium and the party Central Committee?

Many of us embarked upon the path of revolutionary struggle without sparing our lives, and fought in the name of personal freedom, in the name of eliminating the exploitation of man by man, and in the name of improving the life of the working people. This is the primary goal of the people’s revolution. If there is one person in our party like a king he will pompously mouth the truth and concentrate power in his hands but the rest will go on their knees before his power and then many honest party members will be found who will fight this without sparing their lives. Then such a struggle will not be limited to the Workers’ Party but will be unleashed on the international level as a constituent part of the ideological struggle.

The supporters of Kim Il Sung are opposed to a private meeting with Soviet and Chinese comrades. They have spread the rumor that one of the expelled comrades had written a private letter to the CPSU CC and the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee. How can a private meeting of Korean communists with Soviet or Chinese Communists be classed as an anti-party act?

Can it really be accepted as a crime when an individual party member writes a letter to a senior leader of a fraternal party?

We still do not know of such a case when a foreign communist who wrote a letter to Kim Il Sung was accused of an anti-party, anti-government crime.

Cde. Kim Il Sung needs to think a little about the fact that many honest party members who know well the shortcomings and mistakes of our Central Committee are sick at heart and are afraid to speak, since repression follows such an act.

The imaginary case fabricated against the now-repressed comrades shows what the “case” against the group that received the name Yan’an [actually] is. As a result of this, all the communist groups that fought in the past in Korea have been classified under various names: (the Hwayohoe [Tuesday Society]

group, the M-L group, the Northern group, the Communist group, and the Hamnam group).

The Korean Communists who returned from the USSR were called the nepotist group and those from China, the Yan’an group.

Thus only the partisans who fought under the leadership of Kim Il Sung and members of the “Korean Fatherland Restoration Association in Manchuria” did not belong to a group, and they compose the base of our party.

Can one agree with such a classification? Of course not. It turns out that all the revolutionaries who did not have ties with Kim Il Sung must bear the stigma of factionalists. I think that this issue ought to be resolved from a position of principle. Finally, it is necessary to distinguish honest party members from real factionalists in order to assess their revolutionary merits correctly and in a party way.

Even in Korean conditions, where intra-party democracy is not assured, where the rights of party members are being trampled, and arbitrariness is permitted with respect to individual party members, the comradely comments and wishes of the CPSU CC could not fail to evoke a certain reaction on the part of the sycophants who, having formally accepted these wishes, in fact do not contemplate putting them into effect.

Everyone knows that at the Third Party Congress, where representatives of a number of fraternal parties were present, Cde. Kim Il Sung and his supporters openly declared that the cult of personality had not spread in the Workers’ Party.

At the August Plenum they admitted that in reality the cult of personality had spread somewhat in the Workers’ Party. Was this really not a deception of the party? They say one thing at the Congress and another at the plenum. Can one believe their words after this?

At the August Central Committee Plenum they were forced to record in the Central Committee Resolution what was not said openly in front of the party at the Third Party Congress, in order to suppress the dissatisfaction of a considerable number of party members. It is interesting to go over this section in our letter:

“As the March Central Committee Plenum of our party recognized (referring to the Central Committee Plenum at which the report of the CPSU Twentieth Congress was heard), the cult of personality has spread in the ranks of the Workers’ Party to a negligible degree. It found its expression mainly in the ideological work of our party where one personality has been exalted above what is proper. However it, the cult of personality, could not exert an influence on the highest principle of party leadership, the collective principle in leadership which

the Central Committee has consistently upheld, and on the line and policy of the Workers' Party." This is what was recorded in the Resolution of the August Central Committee Plenum of our party.

On the basis of this Resolution it seems that the cult of personality has spread in the activity of the Workers' Party to a negligible degree, but as regards its consequences, there are none. Thus, having formally accepted the existence of the personality cult, in fact they have refused to eliminate its consequences.

Those facts that we have already used are sufficient to show how the cult of personality, which became more widespread than in other fraternal parties, has exerted a pernicious influence on the activity of the party.

Can we accept the actions of those senior comrades who spoke at the August Central Committee Plenum in spite of threats and intimidation as anti-party acts directed at "overthrowing" the party and government and as acts directed at forging an anti-party group? The more so because they were inspired to these deeds by the historic decisions of the CPSU Twentieth Congress and the measures of fraternal parties directed at overcoming the harmful consequences of the personality cult in their ranks.

By their crude tyranny the supporters of Kim Il Sung have trampled on the Leninist principles of party life—intra-party democracy and the principle of collective leadership in the party.

Can such tyranny in the party be accepted?

Below we try to show the pernicious consequences of the personality cult in the activity of our party.

III. The consequences of Kim Il Sung's personality cult.

Sycophants say that the cult of personality has not spread in our party and therefore the party is not experiencing its consequences. But this does not correspond to reality.

I will cite some cases that attest to the gross violations of the party statutes and socialist legality. It often occurs in our experience that people are coopted into Central Committee membership without the approval of party statutes, in violation of a requirement of the party statutes, and then such a comrade immediately becomes a member of the Politburo and deputy chairman of the Central Committee, even though he was not a candidate member of the Central Committee.

I will cite only one case which is no secret to anyone.

All Koreans know well that Cde. Choe Yonggeon is

Democratic Party Central Committee Chairman. But at the Workers' Party Central Committee Plenum he was elected a Central Committee member and then a member of the Politburo and Deputy Chairman of the Central Committee. Was there a need to elect him a Central Committee member if one considers the situation that Korea is divided into two parts and that our party is pursuing a policy of a united front of all patriotic forces? All these illegal decisions were made at the suggestion and insistence of Cde. Kim Il Sung, who has concentrated all power in his hands. All the party members are aware that such a decision violates the party statutes. Such a decision was made not because Central Committee members are ignoramuses but because the atmosphere of Kim Il Sung's pressure and tyranny dominates the party. Even Politburo members, Deputy Prime Ministers, and ministers are appointed and released from [their] posts at the will of Kim Il Sung. And therefore even the most senior officials have been forced to work in an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. Can it be said after this that there were no consequences of the personality cult in our party?

There is no possibility of recounting all the cases of violations of the Constitution of our country. I will only cite one case that sheds light on this gross violation.

The overwhelming majority of the chairmen of provincial People's Committees at the present time are not deputies of local people's committees, whereas according to a regulation only a deputy can be elected People's Committee Chairman. For Cde. Kim Il Sung and his supporters, the Central Committee elected by the Congress and the Supreme People's Assembly are some "democratic ornament." Their lofty phrases about Central Committee members actively participating in party work and monitoring the activity of party organizations in accordance with the party statutes, or a deputy of the Supreme People's Assembly exercising his authority in accordance with the constitution as the elected representative of the people, are indeed empty words.

During the Third Congress, the texts of the delegates' speeches were subjected to careful inspection and unceremoniously corrected without asking the opinion of the authors. Cde. Bak Changok, who played a major role in the past in the creation of Kim Il Sung's personality cult, planned to offer self-criticism at the Congress. When this became known he was not given an opportunity to speak at the Congress. Can all these be called legitimate acts?

Where can one exhibit creative initiative if others at the discussions even write the text for a speech so that a Central Committee member and deputy says what is "necessary." If someone does the writing himself, such a text is subjected to careful inspection and correction by Central Committee officials beforehand. One can often hear complaints by comrades who always half-jokingly say that they were performing the role of parrots.

In conditions where the basic norms of intra-party democracy are lacking, any speech differing from the opinion of the leading comrades is viewed as factional activity and “anti-State” crimes. Where is the creative initiative of ordinary party members here? Can collective leadership be ensured in the party in the conditions of an absence of freedom of speech? It will be no exaggeration if we say that in the past, at meetings of a leading party body one person pompously mouthed the truth and others just listened and supported him.

When they began to stress the need to strengthen the principles of collective leadership after the Twentieth Congress, Cde. Kim Il Sung said one day: “Collective leadership is not like that. No one favors it.” In fact, who dares to oppose a suggestion of Kim Il Sung with their own opinion? It is clear to everyone that after such a critical statement it is hard to stay in one’s job. Naturally, Kim Il Sung, who considers himself above everyone, increased his opinion of himself and began to take on airs.

After the CPSU Twentieth Congress, Cde. Kim Il Sung began to say that holding meetings ensures collective leadership in the party. In a situation where intra-party democracy is not assured, it is impossible even to consider holding a thousand formal meetings as a sign of collective leadership.

The cult of personality in Korea has also led to a gross violation of socialist legality, as a result of which thousands of people have been illegally arrested and put in prison. At the present time, the number of prisoners in Korea is more than 30,000 people. It has been established that in the army alone the number of those arrested is more than one division. In addition, 8,000 people have been accused of crimes stipulated in Articles 72-76 of the DPRK Criminal Code, on the basis of which people are convicted of counterrevolutionary crimes. It will not be a big mistake if we say that besides this number, about 1,000 people have been convicted of other crimes. If one compares the total number of the population of North Korea (9 million people) with the number of people convicted then every 300th person is a criminal. Is this not a striking fact?

I will cite several facts that describe a “counterrevolutionary.” Two thousand people were released before the plenum under pressure from comrades recently expelled from the party, and also [from] public opinion. Among them was a “criminal” who had been sentenced to five years only because he made a book cover from a magazine page on which a portrait of Kim Il Sung was drawn. There was even a case where an honest comrade, from good motives, corrected a badly drawn portrait of Kim Il Sung. For this he was sentenced to five years imprisonment. Is this not a scandalous matter?

There is no way that these cases can be put in the framework of ordinary court cases. All these facts are confirmed by reliable materials that were reported by the Deputy Minister of

Justice in the course of a conversation with one senior leader. (Cde. Gim Dubong informed Deputy Minister of Justice Gim Taehyon of this). There was an order from Kim Il Sung according to which the presence of two witnesses was sufficient to convict a person for any term of punishment, including the death penalty. The nature of the crime and the degree of reliability were not taken into consideration in the process. Can one call such an order correct from a standpoint of maintaining socialist legality?

After all these facts, can we believe the words of Kim Il Sung, Gim Changman, Bak Geumcheol, Han Sangdu, Yi Ilgyeong, and others that there are no consequences of the personality cult in the Workers’ Party?

I cannot fail to cite one more scandalous case of lawlessness.

During the grain purchases of 1954-1955 grain was taken from peasants by force with the aid of threats. One peasant, who had had his last bit of grain taken away, could not restrain his indignation and went to the district people’s committee. A portrait of Kim Il Sung hung there. The peasant, pointing his finger at the portrait, loudly shouted: “You are poorly informed about the condition of the people, you are tormenting the people in vain.” He paid dearly for this. He was sentenced to seven years imprisonment. After this how can one say that we have observed socialist legality? Now everyone knows well for what Cde. Bak Ilu, who was a member of the Central Committee Politburo, Minister of Internal Affairs, and Deputy Chief of the Joint Command of the Korean People’s Army and Chinese Volunteers, was repressed. His entire “criminal” activity consisted of his daring to object to Kim Il Sung about the issue of the tax in kind and the Party policy with respect to reactionaries. For this he was expelled from the party and was accused of [being part of] an anti-party group. The court materials that were carefully examined did not confirm his anti-party crimes. A case against him was then fabricated about a waste of physical assets and now he has to bear legal responsibility for this. Judging from rumors that he supposedly tried to seize the post of Prime Minister, one can expect a new legal case against him. His family has also been repressed and expelled from Pyeongyang to a coal mining region. Before and during the war, Bak Ilu played the role of Kim Il Sung’s right-hand man. During the retreat of our troops in 1950, I had to retreat together with Cde. Kim Il Sung and Bak Ilu. We all ate together at one stop and talked among ourselves. Then we were the very closest of friends. But as soon as Bak Ilu expressed critical comments to Kim Il Sung, he was immediately arrested and put in a prison run by the same ministry which he himself had headed. These facts give a picture of how much socialist legality is observed in Korea. Is all this not the result of the personality cult? If not, how can one explain it?

According to our contemporary literature, only the partisan

movement of Kim Il Sung and the activity of the “Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland” constitute the history of the national liberation struggle of the Korean people.

However, the facts say otherwise. An armed anti-Japanese struggle broke out even before the appearance in Korea of the partisan detachment of Cde. Kim Il Sung. A workers’, peasants’, and students’ movement developed under the influence of the Great October Socialist Revolution [in Russia]. The [1919] March First Movement, the unending wave of peasant unrest (uprisings in Dongcheon, Myeongcheon, Yeonri, Hwangwan, Dokcheon, and other [locations]), inspiring a strike movement of workers (Wonsan, Hanam, Seoul, Busan, Pyeongyang, and other [locations]) - serve as indicators of the growth of the national liberation struggle.

As everyone knows, these events were in no way connected with the name of Kim Il Sung. But as regards the armed struggle, it sprang up in Northeast China after the “righteous army” [*uibyeong*] and “army of independence” movement. This armed struggle did not spring up under the leadership of Kim Il Sung but as an element of the armed anti-Japanese struggle headed by the Chinese Communist Party.

An entire constellation of leaders of the partisan movements arose as a result of this struggle.

Kim Il Sung became better known inasmuch as the operations of his detachment were associated with Korea. This struggle undoubtedly has great importance. But to identify this movement with the name of Kim Il Sung alone and to ignore the role of the party leadership means to distort the facts.

It is well known that the operations of the partisan detachment of Kim Il Sung had ceased by 1940 for all practical purposes.

When we analyze any movement, especially the anti-Japanese armed struggle, from the standpoint of a principled revolutionary, then we also must stress those shortcomings that were inherent to it along with the positive aspects of this movement.

From this standpoint, the anti-Japanese armed struggle in Northeast China suffered from certain shortcomings, one of which was that the combat operations of the Korean partisans had essentially ceased by 1940. Of course, in so doing we cannot deny a number of objective facts that did not allow this struggle to continue. This was a time when the Japanese imperialists who occupied Northeast China were attacking China on a broad front and preparing for a great war against the USSR. In order to “strengthen” their rear, the Japanese imperialists undertook severe punitive measures, which created a threat to the existence of partisan units.

At the same time, another issue also arises. Were all opportunities used in the existing conditions to strengthen and expand the partisan movement? I think that not all the opportunities were fully used.

One needs to search for the main reasons that led to the cessation of combat operations by the partisans by 1940 in the organization of partisan detachments itself and in the leadership of this movement.

It is known that in the more difficult conditions of China, (not meaning the Northeast) where unlike Northeast China there were no mountains and no forests, an anti-Japanese base was created and, in addition, the Chinese comrades defended this base to the end in a difficult struggle with Japanese troops.

It is asked where lies the reason for the cessation of the activity of the partisan detachment of Cde. Kim Il Sung. The fact that the partisan movement of Kim Il Sung was not associated with a mass movement and did not have deep roots in the people ought to be considered as one of the most important reasons for this. In contrast with this, the partisan movement in China had the closest contact with the people and was supported by them.

The partisan detachment of Kim Il Sung ceased to exist at a time when the underground struggle of patriotic forces in Northeast China continued.

Many comrades under the leadership of the party took an active part in the underground struggle until liberation.

At the request of the party, beginning in 1942, I worked in Northeast China. Other comrades who participated in the underground struggle in Korea could testify to the existence of the underground in Korea.

One cannot distort history.

There is a need to briefly examine the actual events at Bocheonbo and the activity of the Korean Fatherland Restoration Association in Manchuria, for these events and facts are falsely described by such people as Bak Geumcheol, Han Sangdu, Yi Ilgyeong, Ha Angcheon, Yi Chongwon, and others.

The battle at Bocheonbo is presented in fact as an attack by a partisan detachment on a police station, as a result of which three policemen were killed. As is clear, this was a small clash between partisans and police forces. During the retreat of the partisans after the clash, 10 more Japanese soldiers were killed, according to the newspaper reports of that period. And the above falsifiers of history are trying to present this clash as a great battle having important strategic significance in the

Korean revolutionary movement. While conceding the entire political significance of this raid by Korean partisans, it is however impossible to agree with such an assessment, as we want to remain in the framework of Marxist-Leninist historical science.

All these facts testify to the excessive inflation of the personal merits of Cde. Kim Il Sung and the attempts to create a personal history of Kim Il Sung.

For an example we again turn to the materials of the Pyeongyang Museum of the National Liberation Struggle.

The entire territory of Manchuria and Northeast China was shown as an area of combat operations of the partisan detachment of Kim Il Sung. This does not correspond to reality.

Some words about the “Korean Fatherland Restoration Association in Manchuria.” The matter is presented this way, as though the Society exercised overall leadership in the Korean revolution, but again this is incorrect. Further, the platform of the Society is called a general platform of the principles of Kim Il Sung. The historical facts say that the Society’s platform was based on the decisions of the Comintern about a united people’s front and of the Chinese Communist Party about a united national front. How can these documents be called the creation of Kim Il Sung?

To say this means to falsify history. The supporters of Cde. Kim Il Sung are trying to depict the matter this way, as though “Korean Fatherland Restoration Association in Manchuria” had its local organizations in all corners of Korea. This also does not correspond to historical reality. Who does not know that this society contained an extremely insignificant number of revolutionaries? Let those people tell of this who were really in the society. Then it will be clear to everyone.

If one is to believe Kim Il Sung and his supporters, then it turns out that this Society united tens of thousands of revolutionaries around itself.

At the same time, whoever acted at the instructions of this Society in villages and district centers (and this fact needs to be viewed as exaggerated), the number of its members did not exceed 100.

There was no organization in the history of the underground revolutionary movement in Korea that would have united tens of thousands of revolutionaries. In addition, one needs to consider that in the conditions of an underground struggle, a revolutionary organization does not have the task so much of increasing its membership as of increasing the combat effectiveness of the organization.

Every historian describing the issue of the activity of the

“Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland” is obliged from a Marxist standpoint to cover such questions as the length of time this society existed, how many members were in this society, what kind of movement it developed, and how long it continued. After taking these facts into account, a historian will be able to give a proper assessment of the activity of this society. In bringing up these questions about the history of the national liberation struggle of the Korean people, we want the partisan movement headed by Cde. Kim Il Sung, a constituent part of the anti-Japanese struggle of the popular masses of Korea, to receive a correct historical assessment. Are we doing the correct thing when we represent the anti-Japanese partisan movement headed by Cde. Kim Il Sung as the story of the entire liberation struggle of the Korean people of 30 years? As regards the anti-Japanese armed struggle of the Korean people, we cannot discount the armed struggle of the Koreans in China against the Japanese imperialists. Korean military subunits not only fought against the Japanese, but also fought against Chiang Kai-shek’s [Jiang Jieshi] troops and the American interventionists. Five divisions of these Koreans participated in the Korean War, not to mention others who performed important work in Korea and China.

The entire Korean people know about the heroism and courage of the Korean divisions who arrived from China. This fact testifies to this: almost all the commanders of these divisions received the rank of Hero of the DPRK and high state awards, not to mention the corps commanders. However, a negligible number of these people remained in the army after the war. But if someone remained in the army, then he is in a less responsible post.

How are we to accept as correct such cases as the falsification of the history of the liberation struggle of the Korean people and the disregard of the revolutionary struggle of a number of comrades who fought in China, in Korea itself, and in other countries? Such actions not only do not strengthen the organizational unity of the party but, on the contrary, weaken it. In order to elevate the name of Kim Il Sung, sycophants have created the so-called Gapsan plan [*skhema*], according to which the partisan detachment of Kim Il Sung and the “Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland” actively operated in the region of North Korea. According to this plan the “Association for the Restoration of the Fatherland” also included those comrades who had no connection with it.

A small clash of a local nature was presented as an event having an all-Korea nature. Matters have come to the point that some comrades were instantly promoted only for their names figuring in the Gapsan plan.

We did not hear earlier about such scandalous cases of the falsification of history from real factionalists whom we not only do not support, but even hate.

When I was at the Third Party Congress, I went especially to the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War Museum. During the visit to the Museum, I asked the Museum director: "Who drew up the Gapsan plan and did Cde. Kim Il Sung see it personally?" The director replied that the plan was drawn up in the Central Committee, and as regards Cde. Kim Il Sung, he recently visited the Museum and was satisfied with the exhibits and the materials. I was seized with indignation when I heard about this. After the Third Party Congress they were forced to remove this plan from the wall of the Museum under the pressure of public opinion.

Thus the history of the liberation struggle of the Korean people has been unceremoniously falsified. The reasons that caused Bak Geumcheol, KWP CC Deputy Chairman, Han Sangdu, Central Committee Organizational Instruction Department Chief, Yi Ilgyeong, Central Committee Department of Agitation and Propaganda Chief, Ha Angcheon, Central Committee Department of Social Sciences Chief, and Cde. Yi Chongwon to systematically describe our history in a distorted and anti-historical manner ought to be cleared up.

I propose the creation of an authoritative commission composed of party members having a wealth of experience in the revolutionary struggle and who would be engaged in the restoration of the genuine history of the liberation struggle from the standpoint of scientific Marxism-Leninism.

As a result of the dominance of the personality cult, which precludes collective leadership and intra-party democracy and promotes the spread of bureaucratism, we have committed enormous mistakes in economic development and in the issue of increasing the cultural and material standard of living of the population. I will cite some facts.

The mistakes committed in economic development in the last two years are great, not to mention our oversights in the past. Let's take the question of grain purchasing. We drew up a bureaucratic plan to carry out grain purchases without proper scientific assessment and inspection in the provinces, as a result of which serious mistakes were made. The forcible collection of grain from peasants led to 300 people committing suicide. And what a response these events received among the peasantry of our country.

Are these not serious oversights in our work? It was proposed to collect 3 million tons of grain as a result of this mistaken campaign.

This event unfolded two months after Cde. Kim Il Sung boastfully declared to one senior foreign comrade that we were in a position to solve the grain problem.

Any person who has the slightest understanding of politics realizes that under the conditions of an acute shortage of miner-

al fertilizers and labor force, and a reduction of cultivated land, it is impossible to gather a harvest of 3 million tons of grain, which is equal to the amount of grain in the highest prewar harvest year. To this ought to be added the fact that in that year the peasants in the provinces of North and South Hamgyeong were left without grain as a result of natural disasters.

At the instruction of Cde. Kim Il Sung, a forcible campaign of grain purchasing was begun, disregarding the real situation in the provinces. It soon became clear that the peasantry was vigorously opposing this campaign. People committed suicide and handbills appeared calling for resistance to this campaign, but in spite of all this the campaign of forcible collection of grain continued, as a result of which 20,000 tons of grain were collected. This campaign led to the peasants in some places even being deprived of seed stock, and as regards domestic animals, they died from a shortage of feed. The sycophants continued their anti-people activity in this forcible campaign in order to display their "merits" in this scandalous affair.

When it became clear that the event was serious, the Government was forced to issue grain to peasants from its own reserves. How can such actions be assessed? In the direct sense of the word, they undermined the very basis of our system, the alliance of the working class and the working peasantry.

Many peasant families ended up on the threshold of starvation as a result of all this. The Chinese people's volunteers came to the aid of the peasants, saving a certain amount of grain each day from their own rations to help the Korean peasants. The Korean people will never forget this noble international act of the Chinese volunteers.

We know that in this difficult time, the command of the Chinese volunteers issued an order which gave instructions to each unit and subunit commander that in case of the death of a Korean peasant from starvation the commander whose unit was stationed in that locality would bear responsibility. And in spite of this entire tragic picture, some leaders, including Cde. Kim Il Sung, continue to maintain that "the policy was correct, but the responsible officials [*ispolniteli*] misinterpreted our correct line."

Therefore the party responsibility was borne by those officials who carried out this mistaken instruction in the provinces. While working in the military armistice commission, I had to encounter the difficult situation of the peasants in the area of Gaeseong. I engaged in an investigation of the real situation of the peasants in this area. On the basis of the materials I collected and the investigation, I came to the conclusion that after deducting for food and the tax in kind, each peasant had 0.5% of marketable grain left.

Based on this numerical data we made a calculation that showed that in the course of the grain purchases, the peasants

could get only 150,000 tons of grain (instead of the 3 million tons provided by the plan).

I reported to Cde. Kim Il Sung personally about this serious situation of the peasants and expressed my opinion that in the event the grain purchase campaign was carried out in the area of Gaeseong, this campaign could only be conducted here by force. In addition, I added, the forcible grain purchase in newly liberated areas was leading to some weakening of the ties between the party and government and the popular masses and causing unrest among broad sections of peasants. They agreed with my argument and the grain purchase campaign was not conducted in the area of Gaeseong. Can this policy be called a correct Marxist one, meeting the interests of the people and the state? Of course not. Nevertheless, Cde. Kim Il Sung and some other leaders continue to maintain that “the policy was basically correct.” In spite of this obvious fact, Cde. Kim Il Sung still has not once spoken self-critically on this issue. He thereby is ignoring the interests of the party and state and once again shows himself to be a party member standing above everyone and not subject to party criticism.

I recently asked a question of a DPRK Deputy Minister of Agriculture: “How many days in a year do peasants work for labor service [*trudovaya povinnost*] without compensation?” He replied that on average the peasants work 50-60 days a year for the labor service. But this year they will work somewhat more than 40 days. If one does the calculation, it turns out that the peasants work once a week for the labor service. All this is being done after the end of the war in Korea, and after this, how is one to believe the statements of those leaders who say that the peasants are voluntarily going to work for the labor service?

I want to touch on another question, the question of tax policy. A tax policy directed at eliminating private commercial and industrial enterprises has been implemented without any preparatory work or consideration of the real conditions in the country. Has it really become easier for the people and the state that our statistics mention the 100% socialist sector economy? Not at all. In conditions where the country is divided into two parts, such a policy should be implemented on the basis of a deep, comprehensive study of the problem. After some time the Cabinet of Ministers was forced to adopt another solution to this problem, inasmuch as this decision did not correspond to the real state of affairs in the country. In publicizing such facts, I am not at all undertaking the task of classifying these acts as a leftist deviation in our policy. I only want to say that any decision made by the government needs to be discussed collectively and prudently with consideration for all the circumstances of putting the government decision into effect. But these facts are evidence that the decisions were made solely by Cde. Kim Il Sung with the support of several comrades. They can [not] object to the fact that the decisions I am talking about were made at meetings of the Central Committee Politburo

and the Cabinet of Ministers.

But in an atmosphere of fear for one’s future fate, who is bold enough to express his opinions in opposition to Cde. Kim Il Sung?

This whole tragedy is a result of the personality cult, sycophancy, and bureaucratism. Can one expect that these officials have radically changed their style of work in the conditions of an atmosphere of fear and unquestioning obedience?

The consequences of the personality cult have also caused great harm to economic development in our country.

After the conclusion of the armistice in Korea the Soviet government decided to give free aid to the Korean people in the sum of 1 billion rubles. At that time several leaders, including Cde. Kim Il Sung, made decisions about the construction and restoration of factories and mills in [their] offices on the basis of subjective opinions and without proper consultation with specialists. The construction of an automobile plant, the Pyeongyang Automobile Plant, a cannery, and other [facilities] was planned at the initiative of Cde. Kim Il Sung and several other leaders. Of course, Korea needed these plants. Of this there is no doubt. However, it is known that in deciding any question it is necessary to proceed from the objective state of affairs and not make your plans on the basis of subjective opinions.

It is clear to everyone that in Korea, where the industrial sectors that supply the automobile industry with the necessary material are poorly developed, the construction of the plant was a wasted effort; if you build one it cannot manufacture products for long. Was there a need to design such a plant whose production cost is neither in keeping with our capabilities nor with the interests of our economy?

Here’s another example. The construction of a meatpacking plant, a cannery, and other [facilities] was planned in Korea. But meanwhile everyone knows that in Korean conditions, where animal husbandry is poorly developed, the construction of such plants was also a big mistake. The meatpacking plant built in Pyeongyang is not able to supply itself with raw material for even one month, since there is no such quantity of meat in Korea. To this it needs to be added that a kilogram of meat costs 400-500 won in the market even though workers receive an average of 600-1000 won a month. Based on this, one can imagine how much sausage made at this plant would cost. All these facts are evidence of how much damage the hasty decisions of the leaders, which take into account neither the real standard of living of the population nor the objective situation of the country, cause the economy of the country.

These facts testify that they are all a result of the personality cult, with whose dominance there is no genuine intra-party

democracy and which promotes a spread of bureaucratism in the party. After this, how can one deny the existence of the personality cult in the theory and practice of our party?

Everyone knows that the standard of living of our people is extremely low. Of course, this is explained by the fact that a considerable part of industry was ruined and agriculture suffered serious damage in the course of the fierce three-year war that was inflicted on us from without. At the same time, we ought to say that our party is displaying insufficient concern about improvement of the life of the population. There is no need to mention that our manual laborers, peasants, and office workers are experiencing enormous difficulty in the problem of food and industrial goods. But we know that certain efforts are being undertaken in this direction after the return of the government delegation to the motherland and after the wishes of the CPSU were expressed to our party.

We are also experiencing great difficulty in the housing issue. It is sufficient to say that a considerable number of the population are huddled together in hovels, warehouses, and mud huts that are completely unsuitable for housing. The housing conditions of industrial workers are such that there are 7.5 square meters for each family of three people, in other words, there are 2.5 square meters per person. Speaking of the material condition of the people, we cannot fail to note that right now in Korea there is an average of 5.4 meters of fabric and 2.1 shoes a year for each person. All these issues require a quick resolution, for in current conditions, considering the existing division of our country, they are acquiring special political and social importance. The wishes of the CPSU CC expressed on this issue are completely justified and it is necessary to implement them as quickly as possible. In raising these issues we are not at all thinking of belittling the importance of heavy industry in the construction of the foundations of socialism. Unquestionably [we] ought to continue to direct attention to the construction of heavy industry. But [we] need to approach the solution of this issue reasonably and with consideration for [our] real capabilities. But the tragedy is that we are directing a considerable amount of capital to the construction of heavy industry and thereby disrupting the planned character of the proportional development of all industrial sectors. Cde. Kim Il Sung is not averse to giving lip service to the effect that we are developing both heavy industrial sectors and light industry in a smooth manner. But when we analyze the total amount of capital investment in various industrial sectors and the number of workers employed in heavy and light industrial enterprises we easily see a shocking disproportion.

Economic development in our country is also determined by the fact that Korea is in the socialist camp system and this dictates the need to keep in step with all the socialist countries. A very close economic and cultural policy [*stroitel'stvo*] has now been established between the socialist countries, which permits the coordination of their own economic plans with

the plans of the other countries. In light of this, are we acting correctly when we take a so-called "independent" position on the issue of economic planning? It seems to me that all these issues need to be decided from the standpoint of the interest of the state and the entire socialist camp.

We have already said above that some of our leading comrades have a disdainful attitude toward the valuable comradely wishes of fraternal communist parties.

Critical comments and comradely wishes were expressed from the CPSU CC to our party through Cdes. Kim Il Sung, Bak Jeongae, and Nam Il in time. These comments and wishes touched on the issues of improving the material situation of the population, overcoming the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung in our party, the elimination of sycophants and careerists, the history of our party, and party propaganda.

There is no need to demonstrate the seriousness of these issues. Only a quick elimination of all these shortcomings in our party work will permit us to strengthen the organizational and ideological unity of the party and our ties with the popular masses. However, as the facts indicate, we have formally accepted these desires of the CPSU while in fact we are essentially ignoring them.

I have found out that the Chinese Communist Party also expressed its own wishes to our party during the war. But these valuable wishes were concealed in every way under the pretext of party secrecy and not turned into reality. Or a narrow circle of people knew about them but the entire party did not know about this.

As soon as the war began, at the instruction of Cde. Kim Il Sung I went to Beijing, where I had a long conversation with Cde. Mao Zedong. During this conversation Cde. Mao Zedong expressed valuable wishes to the senior officials of the Central Committee.

I think that as a candidate member of the Central Committee, I was obligated to report this fact to the Central Committee since this issue is of great importance. This was a time when our People's Army had pushed the enemy to the Nakdong River. It seems that there were only several days until victory. In these conditions, in our conversation Cde. Mao Zedong expressed valuable strategic and tactical ideas about the issue of military operations. When I informed him about the overall situation on our fronts he said the following: first, he stressed that there was a strong enemy in front of the Korean people, American imperialism, which heads the camp of world imperialism. This ought not to be forgotten. He stated three possible alternatives concerning the prospects for military operations in Korea. In the course of the conversation he asked me whether the leaders of the Central Committee allowed for the possibility of a strategic retreat of the KPA [Korean Peoples' Army].

First, there was the possibility of throwing the invaders from the Busan bridgehead into the sea and completely liberating all of Korea. But it was extraordinary limited.

Second, Cde. Mao Zedong expressed the thought that after concentrating his forces, the enemy would undertake a large counteroffensive in the area of Busan.

Third, he said, there existed a direct threat of a landing operation in the rear of the Peoples' Army. Then a further offensive on the Busan bridgehead is precluded and the enemy will try to cut the lines of communications of the Peoples' Army in order to perform an encirclement of the units of the Peoples' Army. At the same time he pointed out that plans for military operations need to be drawn up on the [basis of the] most likely possibility. Therefore, corresponding organizational work needs to be conducted in the entire party.

He expressed a specific wish for the restructuring [*perestroika*] of our work in a direction according to which all the senior officials of the party and the officers and soldiers of the army be imbued with the realization of a possible strategic retreat.

To do this, as he said, it is necessary for the party to correctly and comprehensively explain to the popular masses the possible danger.

Only in this way can the people's morale be prepared for any eventualities.

In the conditions that developed, where units of the Peoples' Army could not advance a step in the area of Nakdong, it was necessary to make a strategic retreat so that the enemy dispersed his forces when advancing. Where it's harder for a clenched fist to break through than for an unclenched one is when strikes can be launched on each finger. When the enemy is concentrated at one point and is waging defensive battles, that is the same as a clenched fist, and then it's necessary to launch strikes on it. But when the enemy unclenches his fist, that is, disperses his forces, then it's easier to launch strikes on each group of the enemy. It seems to me, Cde. Mao Zedong continued, that this proven tactic needs to be used in the Korean War.

After some time, the words of Cde. Mao Zedong came true. Actually, the course of military operations in Korea completely confirmed his hypothesis, the Incheon operation in particular. Our former ambassador in China, Cde. Yi Jooyong knows this well.

I reported the substance of the conversation with Cde. Mao Zedong to Cde. Kim Il Sung in detail, but the latter replied to me that we are not thinking of making a strategic withdrawal and therefore there is no need to listen to this advice. But then

Cde. Kim Il Sung warned me not to tell anyone of this. Now we picture the value of this advice more distinctly.

I am in some doubt that the members of the former Central Committee Politburo know about this fact, not to mention the members of the Central Committee of our Party.

We made serious mistakes during the war, especially during the retreat of our troops. As a result of ignoring the advice of Cde. Mao Zedong, we were not prepared for a strategic retreat. The American invaders who landed in the rear of our troops immediately cut the lines of communication of the Peoples' Army. Our troops ended up surrounded, lost combat effectiveness, and began to crumble. The enemy had struck a serious blow to our troops. There were no party organizations in the KPA troops at that time, with the exception of the Korean divisions arriving from China.

But this event played a fatal role in the matter of the collapse of the troops of the Peoples' Army that ended up surrounded. Completely untrained divisions without clothing and sometimes without weapons were sent to the front in order to hold back the enemy. All these divisions crumbled from the first blow of the enemy and a considerable number of wounded and sick [troops] became enemy prisoners. The number of Peoples' Army soldiers who became prisoners was over 100,000 men. This number exceeds the number of prisoners we took by several times.

One of the main reasons that brought such great losses to our army was that Cde. Kim Il Sung rejected the comments and wishes of Cde. Mao Zedong without taking the real conditions at the front into account. Judging from how easily and irresponsibly Cde. Kim Il Sung rejected the valuable comradely comments and wishes of authoritative fraternal parties and their outstanding leaders, one can understand why the repressed comrades criticized Kim Il Sung so courageously and openly.

All these issues take on special importance when we examine them from the principled positions of a defender of Leninist organizational principles and a supporter of expanding intra-party democracy.

It is for this reason that I think that all these issues take on political importance not only for the Korean Workers' Party but also for the international worker's movement. Can we allow a situation in our own party where party members pursue their own activity contrary to the truth and refuse to eliminate the serious shortcomings that exist in party work?

Those who violate Leninist principles of party work should be condemned both inside our party as well as in the international worker's movement. By consistently upholding Leninist norms of party life, expanding intra-party democracy, stead-

fastly ensuring collective leadership in the party, and eliminating bureaucratism in the country, we [will be] in a position to correct all our mistakes and eliminate the shortcomings. Based on this, I think that the repressed comrades need to be supported.

I vigorously oppose the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung in order to support the main principles of party life, the collective nature of the leadership, and intra-party democracy.

I am confident that party members who oppose the cult of personality and bureaucratism will enjoy support and sympathy inside our party and the international worker's movement. I submit my following suggestions for the consideration of the Central Committee:

Inasmuch as these questions of principle did not receive a proper resolution at the Central Committee Plenum that was held, I request that the Central Committee convey my written statement to the members and candidate members of the Central Committee.

In offering this suggestion, I am guided by the 3rd point of the 2nd section (subparagraphs b, c, and e) of our party statutes.

As regards myself, I am ready with all party responsibility to accept all critical comments addressed to me if there are any.



DOCUMENT No. 22

CPSU CC Report on 8 October Conversation between Ambassador Ivanov and Kim Il Sung, 15 October 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, List 296. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by James F. Person.]

TO THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The Ambassador of the USSR in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cde. Ivanov, reported that on 8 October of this year he had a discussion with Cde. Kim Il Sung in connection with the matter of publishing the decree of the KWP CC September Plenum.

From the report of Cde. Ivanov, it is clear that Kim Il Sung essentially rejected the advice concerning the publication of the entire text of the decree of the KWP CC Plenum. Kim Il Sung requested that Ivanov convey to Cde. Mikoyan that there is no need to publish the entire decree of the September Plenum, which would be circulated to party organizations for discussion. Furthermore, the leadership of the KWP considers

it pointless to give wide publicity to the decree of the plenum. Kim Il Sung alleged that there was not, apparently, a special agreement with comrades Mikoyan and [Chinese Minister of Defense] Peng Dehuai about publishing the complete text of the decree.

Ambassador Comrade Ivanov suggested familiarizing the Chinese ambassador in the DPRK with the contents of the discussion with Kim Il Sung on 8 October.

We consider it expedient to agree with the opinion of Comrade Ivanov.

A draft of the telegram to the ambassador in Korea is attached.

Deputy Director of the Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU for Relations with Foreign Communist Parties.

(I. Vinogradov)

"15" October 1956
No. 25-C-2236
Zab



DOCUMENT No. 23

CPSU CC Directive to Soviet Ambassador Ivanov, (no date specified)

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, List 297. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by James F. Person.]

Pyeongyang

Ambassador

678-685. You may briefly familiarize the Chinese ambassador in the DPRK with the contents of your discussion with Kim Il Sung on 8 October, without referring in this case to the instructions of Moscow.



DOCUMENT No. 24

CPSU CC Memo on the Situation in the KWP, 17 October 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, List 298.
Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for
CWIHP by Yuliya Zeynalova.]

To the Central Committee of the CPSU

In a meeting with Soviet Ambassador Cde. Ivanov, Cde. Kim Il Sung revealed that the decisions of the August and September plenums of the KWP CC on questions of intra-party conditions had been sent to all party organizations, and at the present moment are under review in the plenary sessions of provincial party committees, where these decisions are being widely discussed.

For the time being, Cde. Ivanov has not reported on the course of the discussion in the KWP on the abovementioned decisions and of the conditions within the party after the August and September plenary sessions of the KWP CC.

I consider it imperative to inquire with the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang regarding this question.

Deputy Director of CPSU CC Department of Relations with International Communist Parties.

(I. Vinogradov)

“17” October 1956

No. 25-C-2261



DOCUMENT No. 25

CPSU CC Directive to Soviet Ambassador Ivanov (no date specified)

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 410, List 299.
Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for
CWIHP by Yuliya Zeynalova.]

PYEONGYANG

SOVIET AMBASSADOR

According to your report, Comrade Kim Il Sung has declared that the full text of the decision of the September plenary session of the KWP CC will be sent to party organs for thorough discussion. You further reported that the provincial

party committees are currently conducting plenary sessions, in which the results of the August and September plenary sessions of the KWP CC are being discussed. Until this time no [new] information regarding this question has been received from you.

Report urgently; has the full text of the decisions of the September plenary session of the KWP CC been sent to the party organs, how are the discussions of these decisions proceeding. Henceforth, please send regular reports on this question.



DOCUMENT No. 26

Letter, Li Sangjo to the KWP CC, 12 October 1956

[Source: Library of Congress, DK949.32 K6 Korea Cage.
Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for
CWIHP by Choe Lyong.]

Dear Comrades who attend the Central Committee Plenum:

This year our government delegation visited the Soviet Union and other fraternal countries and received large amounts of international aid.

These huge amounts of aid are important since they will improve the material well-being of our people. In particular, the support of the Soviet Union demonstrates once again how much the Communist Party, government and people of the Soviet Union have a great interest in lives of the people of North Korea.

As a member of the government delegation, an ambassador delegated from the party, nation and people, and a candidate member of the Central Committee elected during the party congress, I feel the need to introduce to our comrades the aid from the Soviet Union.

I am presenting these issues in writing because it is possible that some delegates of our government will pay no attention to several important issues, nor even mention several fundamental issues in presentations to the party's Central Committee..

This year, in addition to financial support, the Communist Party and government of the Soviet Union gave us valuable advice about camaraderie and political and ideological problems.

Government delegates were supposed to forthrightly present the friendly advice from the Communist Party of the USSR to our party's Central Committee and publicly correct the problems. When we refer to these problems, we need to cite the work of our Soviet comrades after the 20th Party Congress.

The records of the meetings of comrade [CPSU First Secretary Nikita Sergeyevich] Khrushchev and [Prime Minister Nikolai Aleksandrovich Bulganin] with British political leaders during Khrushchev and Bulganin's visit to the United Kingdom have been conveyed and even publicly read by party cells.

In general, notifying [the people] what our leaders, elected by the members of the Korean Workers' Party, say to someone, and how others respond to our leaders is important since party members need to be aware of the leaders' daily activities, supervise them, subject them to friendly criticism, and evaluate them. This is one of the principles of party organization handed down from Leninist ideology. Why, then, can't our government delegation disclose the advice from the Soviet Union's Central Committee to the members of our communist party and publicly correct the defects in our party's work?

I will now tell you what kind of friendly criticism we received from the Soviet party.

First of all, we do not pay enough attention to improving the lives of our people. We collect too much from farmers while providing them with few resources, and workers live under extremely harsh conditions.

Considering that our nation is divided, improving the lives of the North Korean people in particular is in our interests as well as those of the Korean people. I will not talk about this issue at length here because it was discussed after the return of our delegation.

The second and most important ideological problem for all communists, which has caught the attention of all fraternal parties and is presently being discussed around the world in the wake of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU CC, is the problem of the personality cult. According to the report from the [Korean Workers' Party] Third Party Congress and discussions among [the party] leadership, there is no cult of personality other than that of Bak Heonyeong in the [former] South Korean Workers' Party. During a meeting on this issue, attended by all of the members of the Soviet Presidium and comrades Kim Il Sung, Bak Jeongae, and Nam Il, the Soviet comrades declared that there is no cult of personality of Bak Heonyeong among members of [the former] South Korean Workers' Party, but there is the cult of personality of comrade Kim Il Sung. I endorse this reasonable claim.

In terms of both theory and practice, it is difficult to explain how we do not have a cult of personality at the same time this is being discussed among fraternal parties.

Can we say that we have unique conditions that make us evade errors that prevail in the international communist movement?

We, as Marxist-Leninists, have to openly and frankly clarify this problem. In this regard, I must admit that unique conditions do not exist [in the DPRK] that help us avoid these errors.

Rather, we cannot help but admit that the cult of per-

sonality of comrade Kim Il Sung has gradually developed because of internal factors.

Anyone who read the historic decision of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's (CPSU) Central Committee (30 June 1956) can see how the conditions that made the cult of personality of [CPSU General Secretary Josef Vissarionovich] Stalin possible first developed. In our case, the factors include the timing of the beginning and process of our revolution and the hardships of invasion from foreign countries, all of which forced us to delegate all national powers to one individual and limit the democratic right of our people. These factors have led to the gradual promotion and development of Kim Il Sung's personality cult.

At this time in particular, it is our party's policy that although everyone works, all honor is given to the leader.

At the present, all fraternal parties are discussing the cult of personality and its consequences in order to eradicate problems, which were unrelated to Leninism. We cannot further develop the creativity and revolutionary zeal of the masses without first practically and theoretically eradicating the cult of personality.

Under the present conditions, both theoretically and practically, a significant cult of personality exists in the work of our party, and as Bolsheviks, we should admit and correct the effects of this problem, which only serves to weaken our practical work, collective leadership, and creative zeal.

Can we deny the fact that we have a cult of personality after looking through all of our magazines, newspapers, and propaganda materials?

If we deny this fact, then we are simply ignoring all members of the party and deceiving ourselves.

How can we say that our party did not commit any errors when, with the exception of a few fraternal parties where democracy and collective leadership are guaranteed, other ruling fraternal [communist] parties are correcting their mistakes with the cult of personality after mechanically importing Stalin's method of operating.

We can figure out this fact from simple several examples. What do the titles of the great leader, gifted general, etc, mean? And how we can explain the fact that we considered our war for independence the victory and one individual's accomplishment when it cost the lives of countless young men and women and was the result of the whole people's endeavor?

Surely, this is not a denial of the role and achievements of comrade Kim Il Sung in our party.

Recalling the damage caused by the cult of personality, I present this problem in order to correct mistakes that have not yet been overcome. Can we guarantee that no comrade has been imprisoned because of his opinion of our leaders or criticism of our leaders' policies?

How can one be considered a dissenter against the Workers' Party simply because one's opinion is not the same as that of the leader? This is just as unreasonable as the claim that someone is anti-Soviet only because he or

she said that some Soviet goods are not very high quality.

Under these conditions, can we say that collective leadership is guaranteed in the party? Even if we hold meetings more than one million times, the number of meetings does not guarantee the quality of the collective leadership itself. As long as there is a significant cult of personality, guaranteeing collective leadership is almost a miracle in the twentieth century. Under the conditions that expressing an opinion that differs from that of the leader makes that individual a factionalist, how can people propose creative opinions?

One comrade who attended a lowest level party meeting was punished for stating that any party member can criticize anyone, including the prime minister. Yet he only mentioned a right guaranteed by the party statutes.

Considering just this one case, we can estimate to what degree Lenin's criteria for party-life has been guaranteed. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in our past meetings, one person spoke while others simply praised and admired him.

It is an enormous mistake if some leaders consider the members of the party's central committee and representatives elected by our people as mere democratic decorations who simply pass drafts of the leaders' decisions.

Members elected to the Central Committee can participate in all work, have their own opinions, and have different views from those of the leader on concrete issues!

Issues on which people have different views must be resolved through debates involving many members of the central committee. We should prevent the top leaders from arbitrarily deciding to ignore the proposals of others during meetings.

Can we say that there was no such phenomenon in our party in the past? Are you aware of the fact that numerous appointments of members to the central committee (including members of Standing Committee) had been passed only by the proposal of comrade Kim Il Sung, in violation of articles strictly regulated in the party statutes? Can we say that Lenin's criteria for party-life have been well observed?

To be sure, the stigma of the personality cult has been stamped on our faces and can not be removed. Disclosing and correcting the defects are absolutely necessary. If I am considered a factionalist or anti-party just for suggesting this, then the law is absurd.

Why do we simply regard the attempts of all communists to return to Leninist roots as other's business and not make any efforts to eliminate the defects of our party by admitting that the bloody experience of USSR is relevant to our party's work?

If we achieve the reunification of Korea without first eliminating the bureaucratic remains and consequences of the personality cult and improving the lives of the people, then it will be very risky.

Many people may not follow us if we subjectively and bureaucratically conduct all businesses with simple administrative orders when each party develops business on the

basis of equality.

Therefore, I desire that this plenum will be a critical meeting at which we do away with bureaucratism by ridding ourselves of the personality cult.

How can we say that the fact that the power of the party, government and military is ruled by one individual, and how can we say that this is normal, and that this is not related to the cult of personality?

I, on behalf of the Soviet party, think that we should pay attention to our Soviet comrades' advice.

However, opposite to our assertion, in the Pyeongyang city party committee, comrade Bak Geumcheol, the vice chairman of party central committee responsible for workers' committees and in the central party school, comrade Li Ilgyeong emphasized yet again that we do not have a cult of personality.

I was so angry when I heard their words because many conscientious communists cannot agree with them.

It is unpardonable behavior to ignore the party and the party central committee of the Soviet Union.

There was no Marxist who expected that the communist party deifies one figure while punishing those who question the deified one.

Regarding a get-together of four or five leaders for dinner as scheming and spying can not be part of the party's business.

Traditional Marxists certify the integral freedom of speech in the party and expect democracy managed by communists, based on the human rights of all people, except rebels.

For this reason, in socialist society, democracy respects the proletariat, and numerous people sacrificed themselves for that democracy. When we revolutionaries participated in the struggle for revolution, our fundamental aims were to realize human freedom which guarantees human rights and puts a stop to the exploitation of humans by other humans. We need to remember that we have fought and are fighting for these aims in order to improve the people's living standards. Based on this principle, is it reasonable that we deify one individual and submit to one's power?

I emphasize that in our party's plenum we should make the right conclusion on this important and fundamental problem.

The second problem is the problem of party history. According to the Soviet comrades, the party history, described in *Moggun Joseon*, is just the history of comrade Kim Il Sung, not the history of the party.

I entirely agree to this opinion. In our Joseon past, there were glorious anti-Japan struggles, numerous labor movements which supported the interests of the proletariat, peasant movements, student movements, and feminist movements. Can we ignore all of these revolutionary movements and only regard Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese partisan campaign and the association of independent nation as our tradition? When it comes to armed campaigns, besides Kim Il

Sung's anti-Japan partisan campaign, there were numerous anti-Japanese movements performed by Choe Yonggeon, Gim Chaek, and Yi Honggwang whose Korean militias fought against Japan in China, as well as other militias in Korea. In spite of this fact, how can we ignore all of them and only consider Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese partisan militia as the basis and tradition of our party and communists forces? Describing this history (just describing the history of Kim Il Sung and his campaign) does not coincide with the truth. How many surviving comrades [are there] in our party who participated in the campaign of Kim Il Sung and the association of an independent nation? There are very few!

Before the independence of Korea, there were so many communist fighters who did not have any relations with comrade Kim Il Sung who had worked in Korea or other countries, China, the USSR, and Japan. Why are their struggles ignored?

Ignoring their struggles is ignoring and fabricating our history!

Therefore, we, communists, cannot consent to this.

We need to clarify the incorrect aspects of our history made up by Bak Geumcheol, Han Sangdu, Yi Ilkyeong, Yi Cheongwon. This unjust behavior can destruct the unity of the party and lead to discontent among party members.

To be sure, the campaign of the Northeastern anti-Japanese partisan movement was glorious and deserves to be respected. However, that campaign must be fairly evaluated and must not be described as the accomplishment of one individual.

We should equally evaluate the role of Choe Yongjin, Gim Chaek and other comrades with that of comrade Kim Il Sung. In contrast, we need to indicate the defects of anti-Japanese partisan campaign.

We can point out that even though the campaign was glorious, it also had some defects in terms of the principles of a communist revolutionary campaign. Technically, in actual fact, the Northeastern anti-Japan partisan campaign was finished in 1940. Clearly, we cannot deny the internal and external conditions that resulted in the end of the campaign in actual fact. Related to that, the Japanese imperialists invaded China and prepared to attack the Soviet Union, Japan increased the military pressure on the Northeastern anti-Japan partisan campaign, and this was a serious threat to the existence of the campaign.

Then, did the anti-Japanese partisan group completely disappear? I do not think so. We need to look for the reasons that the group stopped its campaign in 1940. That is, it was because that the campaign was not able to run parallel with people's movements, so the group did not get enough support from people. Namely, the group was not able to organize a broad-based people's movement.

Then, after 1940, do you think that there were no underground campaigns against Japan in the Northeastern part of China? There were! I was also a member of them who

experienced how much people required the leadership of revolutionary groups.

Who can deny that at that time, even in Korea, there were so many underground movements, and people who evaded being drafted by Japanese troops formed mountain troops even though they were relatively small and unsystematic groups?

The surviving revolutionaries and comrades who attend this convention can confirm my claim.

I urge some of our comrades to stop the stupid behavior of fabricating history. And I also propose that they should change the contents in the museum of the revolution, or just change the name of museum to the museum of Kim Il Sung's revolution.

According to the rumor that I heard, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee has the documents about Northeastern anti-Japanese partisans. We need to review the documents and correct the distorted history. I assert that we should dismiss the comrades working in Central Committee with the wrong point of view and appoint comrades, real Marxists, who write the real history of our party. Do you think that this is not the result of the personality cult? If not, how can you explain this distorted history?

Third, the Soviet comrades talked about the faction of flatterers. Where there is the cult of personality, there is also the faction of flatters, just a shadow of the personality cult. It is no coincidence that if power is concentrated in the hands of one individual, there will be some people who flatter the individual in order to succeed in life. As comrade Khrushchev said, the words of flatterers are sweet, but not helpful to the work of communists. Who can disagree that these people succeed in their lives by harming good comrades with calculated malice? Is it wrong of me to say that there is a faction of flatterers in officialdom where the cult of personality exists?

I advise the party central committee to investigate these flatters and appoint comrades who can represent the interests of party and most of party members.

Fourth, the Soviet comrades talked about the propaganda of our party. Is it necessary to cover wrong things up and beautify the poor lives of our people? On this issue, we have numerous defects and theoretical problems.

I will not refer this issue so much but will hypothesize that this is closely related to the cult of personality and that there are serious problems caused by the cult of personality. It is unnecessary that our party achieved so many accomplishments thanks to the endeavors of party members and people. In order for today's meeting to be more fruitful, we need to point out our mistakes and try not to make those mistakes [again], rather than to emphasize our accomplishments in the past.

Even the mistakes that we made in the construction of the economy and culture over the past two or three years are serious. The procurement of grain is an example of

those mistakes. Do you know how serious of a problem we are confronted with as a result of procuring grains without any scientific method?

Since our party was founded, there had been no cases where our party was estranged from our people. As you know, about 300 people committed suicide because of coercion to get too much grain from people. In this case, can we say that the policy was right but carried out incorrectly? If the policy was reasonable, then why did it make 300 people commit suicide, and why should the government release more grain from the national storage than it procured? Except those not free from the cult of personality, do you think that people regard this as a policy for people?

If we insist that this is the reasonable policy, then this behavior must be the expression of an officialdom that ignores all people.

If we consider what the leader decided was the true and obvious behavior before the Twentieth Party Congress, today we should criticize this problem by ourselves in front of the party's members. The all-party workers on the battlefield know that if there have been no reinforcements on the battlefield, numerous peasants would have died of starvation.

Who does not know that someone led our society to confusion by using the unreasonable tax policy in order to eliminate private companies? We do not intend to evaluate this policy in order to determine if it is a left-wing or right-wing opportunistic policy. As our fraternal parties did, we should review our work by publicly introducing the facts that some people deify one person by ignoring the laws of socialism, [introduce] what the few schemers raised by the cult of personality did, and [introduce] what flatterers plotted to do to harm good comrades. We have to identify how many people have been imprisoned and executed illegally in our work. Comrade Brezhnev said to comrade Kim Il Sung that if there are leaders in prison, you need to reconsider their crimes. Yet, we did not yet start this task.

Who believes that there is no one imprisoned secretly in our internal organizations exactly replicating Stalin's gulag system and that we have observed the socialist law?

In Germany, 20,000 imprisoned people were set free, and other fraternal parties [illegible]. And then why are we not able to reform our internal organizations?

Can we accept that so many people are imprisoned illegally in order to maintain one individual's dignity, that people had been executed under the pretext that their behavior was anti-party and anti-nation, and that their families have been punished because of them? Why can't these problems be discussed in the Central Committee plenum every term? We need to disagree to this abnormal idea and eagerly discuss it.

I propose that we delegate one person to begin working on this, giving this individual the authority which allows him to work without any interference.

I assert that we should do away with the old method that

allows only a few leaders to know of our work under the pretext that they are internal party secrets.

Right after the start of the Korean War, I visited Beijing under the instructions of comrade Kim Il Sung. I cannot forget the friendly advice of Mao Zedong for our party at that time. I consider it my duty to report his advice to you. Comrade Mao Zedong gave us valuable strategic and tactical advice when we carried the fighting to the Nakdong river.

The following is the advice from Mao who heard about the progress of war at that time: Above all, he mentioned that the enemy who Korean people confront is the powerful American imperialists and explained three possible situations regarding the progress of war. He asked, "Is there any possibility that Korean leaders retreat?" and said, [illegible]

The second possibility is that we cannot push the enemy down to Busan, and with reinforcements, the enemy can orchestrate a counterattack against our forces. Third, Mao also said that it is also possible that we cannot advance any more, and the enemies can try to make a raid behind our lines and cut our supply routes. About this possibility, he indicated that we should organize our works premised on the worst-case scenario.

His concrete opinion was that we should recognize that most of the leaders and combatants of our party could retreat strategically, that we should prepare the ideological work based on the whole party's efforts, that we should loosen our siege around the Nakdong river in order to let our enemy disperse and then crush them since the defense of a clustered enemy is as firm as a firmly clenched fist, while to attack a dispersed enemy is as easy as attacking each finger. His advice was confirmed by the development of the war, especially by the enemy's landing in Incheon. I believe that you know this already since the Korean ambassador to China, comrade Li, already told you.

When I reported this valuable advice to Kim Il Sung, he said to me that we do not have any plan to retreat, that we do not need to do so, and that I should not let other people know about this advice.

How valuable was the advice? I doubt that it was informed to the government committee, not to mention the Central Committee.

I publicly announced this fact because there are so many classes in our party, that we conceal so many of our defects, and we ignore the valuable advice from our fraternal allies.

I, as the individual who conveyed the friendly advice of the Soviet Union, propose to the committee that we should specify the individual faults of those who intend to conceal the facts, and press them because this way is neither the way of the party nor the way of Bolsheviks.

During plenums, I suggest we correct all of our defects, especially the non-Marxist way of the personality cult by engaging in self-criticism. We can correct our errors and defects only through sharp criticism and self-criticism.

In order to get the best results from self-criticism, high-level leaders should criticize the defects in their own work. I think that the problem in which the leaders decide the construction and destruction of factories based on their own subjective views and not based on professional advice should be discussed in terms of national interests. Instead of calculating the potential, we planned the construction of an automobile plant and meat-processing complex based on the wrong idea of leaders. Even people who do not know much about politics can recognize that the construction of a meat-processing complex is meaningless when the livestock industry is undeveloped. When the Soviet Union decided to give us one billion rubles, the government delegation made so many decisions to build such plants and provide training in the Soviet Union.

I am really curious as to how the meat-processing plants they decided to build are doing now.

Comrades! We should review the criticism of the Soviet party that pointed out our problems based on the international level of ideology and resolve them based on an elevated level of politics. We, as communists, must strengthen our union with other fraternal parties since the strong solidarity with them is regarded as one of the conditions for victory in the war for a unified Korea. The enemies disagree with the ideas of socialism and peace and try to split the international labor movement and confuse the communist party and workers party by using the criticism of the personality cult. However, we should punish our enemies by strengthening solidarity with other socialists.

In order to overcome the cult of personality, we should adopt the proposal that supports collective leadership, one of the fundamental truths of party life, in our party.

This, in particular, is closely related to the Presidium of the Central Committee. As you well know, only in Korea does one person hold the three posts of prime minister, chairman of the Central Committee and commander.

According to the old Korean proverb, the wisdom of ten people is better than that of Zhuge Liang.

We should consider ways to support collective leadership in the party and national activities. Some comrades justify the cult of personality since Korea has developed artificially. I think that this assertion, not based on Marxism, is not even worth criticizing and is even harmful. To us, communists, the most important issue is strengthening relations with people. In order to get the overall support of the people and earn their confidence, we should report all of our problems to the members of the party.

We should struggle against the endeavor to deify one person, earn the wholehearted support of the people and connect with them, and strive to demonstrate to the people that we, members of the Korean Workers' Party, always support workers and believe in the perpetuity of Marxism.

We can realize the ideological and systematic union of our party and strengthen the relations with our brothers in the world only based on this principle.

We, who overcame the dogs of war for three years against invaders, have the power to conscientiously and frankly recognize our mistakes and faults. Moreover, this is the direction of the Great Lenin who built the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in the world.

Dear respectful comrades!!

I would like for you to review all that I have proposed in this meeting. Because of my thoughts discussed by the central committee, some people will try to accuse me of being a reactionary. However, a truth cannot be concealed. I guess that my written discussion causes different responses among the members of the committee. Yet, even people who praise or praised the cult of personality cannot help accept my words. I think that there are three cases in which some comrades try to correct their faults.

First, they can engage in harsh self-criticism for their faults in order to free themselves.

Second, they can protect the status quo by formally recognizing their own faults in the national activities.

Third, they can illegally detain comrades struggling in the interests of the party or damage other groups of such comrades.

In terms of their political careers, this kind of behavior is surely suicidal to them.

Comrades!! I implore you, full and candidate members of the Central Committee, to actively participate in discussions and resolve this important matter in our activities.

Finally, I, a member of the party, do not mind any criticism from you comrades.

1956. 10. 12



DOCUMENT No. 27

Memorandum of Conversation with the Charge d' Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in the DPRK, Chao Kaelyan, 26 October 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, Listy 344-346. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by James F. Person.]

Embassy of the USSR
In the DPRK
No. 318
"31" October 1956

Top Secret
Copy No. 3

DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR In the DPRK, Comrade Ivanov V.I.
for the period from 11 to 29 October 1956

Pyeongyang

26 October

I received the charge d'affaires of the PRC in the DPRK, Comrade Chao Kaelyan with the aim of informing him about a meeting with Comrade Kim Il Sung on matters related to the unofficial visit of A.I. Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai to the DPRK. I told Chao Kaelyan that in spite of promises of the Korean leadership given to Comrades Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai to publish the decrees of the KWP CC August and September Plenums, the Korean comrades published a pithy summary of the KWP CC September Plenum only after five days following the September Plenum, on 28 September. Two important items were discussed in this summary. The first item concerns self-criticism of the KWP where it was pointed out that the decree on organizational issues of the KWP CC August Plenum was decided successfully, but the course of reaching this decision was absent. The second item contained a call to the party to observe Leninist norms and principles in party life.

Kim Il Sung explained that the first item was omitted consciously since the decree of the August Plenum was not published and in his opinion there is no need to report in the press that these decrees were rash. The KWP CC has never published its decrees on organizational issues and for this reason it is necessary to start publication with a good decree and not with a bad one. Regarding the second question related to the instructions of Leninist norms in party life, Comrade Kim Il Sung declared that the report about the CC September Plenum was published without his involvement while he was away on vacation and that he regrets that the second issue was omitted.

In response to my observation that all that was omitted can be resolved by publishing the decrees of the August and September Plenums, Kim Il Sung answered that the decrees of these plenums and his speech at the September Plenum will be published in a separate brochure and distributed for discussion in party organizations, adding that the section in which he quotes from Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai will be omitted from his speech, that on the council of the latter the decrees of the August Plenum will be reviewed. By this, according to Kim Il Sung, the aim of not revealing the very fact of the visit of Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai to Korea is achieved, not giving the party masses reason to believe that the decree of the September Plenum was passed under pressure from fraternal parties and that fraternal parties were interfering in our internal affairs.

I informed Chao Kaelyan of the claim of Kim Il Sung that he supposedly did not promise Comrades Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai to publish the decrees of the August and September Plenums of the KWP CC, but only promised to consider the matter, moreover Kim Il Sung said that while discussing the overall results of the September Central Committee Plenum among provincial party activists many party functionaries expressed doubts in the advisability of commuting the sentences of Choe Changik, Bak Changok and others.

Chao Kaelyan was interested in where Bak Changok and Choe Changik are now. I answered that Bak Changok works as the deputy director of a saw-mill in the town of Hyesanjin, while Choe Changik, it seems, at the present moment is ill.

Chao Kaelyan in turn said that he had not held any special meetings with the Korean leadership on these issues; however, the Chinese embassy learned several facts related to these matters, the authenticity of which he is not convinced. Like, for example, in a meeting of the Pyeongyang city party activists dedicated to the discussion of the results of the September Plenum, the party Pyeongyang City Committee department of agitation and propaganda deputy director gave a speech, criticizing the breach of democratic centralism in defense of those comrades restored to the party and Central Committee, after which he was excluded from the party. Party Pyeongyang City Committee Chairman Yi Songwook incorrectly spoke out, declaring that comrades Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai came to Pyeongyang to find mistakes and shortcomings in the Workers' Party, but were convinced of the opposite. Chao said also that rumors reached the Chinese embassy that Gim Changman beligerently declared to the opposition that no matter how hard they tried, we have a MIA [Ministry of International Affairs] and an army.

I asked Chao what the Korean comrades undertook with regards to the request of comrade Peng Dehuai to release from confinement and send to China for studies Bak Ilu who was locked up in prison. Chao responded that so far, it seems nothing is known. Comrade Peng Dehuai, being with Kim Il Sung, communicated to him that if the Korean comrades do not require, but on the contrary, are troubled by the arrival of Bak Ilu and Ban Hosan in Korea, then the Chinese government agrees to their return to China. To the question where Ban Hosan is, Chao answered that [Commandant of the War College] Ban Hosan also, like Bak Ilu is a Chinese Korean. He has major accomplishments in revolutionary activities in North-eastern China, later he served in the Korean Peoples' Army and commanded one of the armies. Presently, he works as a simple laborer in a mine.

Chao informed me also that presently, those who fled to China, Yun Gongheum, Seo Hwi, Gim Changil and Li Pilgyu do not receive rations. The wife of Gim Changil turned to the Ministry of Culture and Propaganda but the minister did not receive her and directed her to the chief of the economic section, who performed her wedding, but he too refused to give rations.

I thanked Chao for the discussion.

In the evening I attended a reception organized by Kim Il Sung in honor of the Mongolian government delegation headed by Tsendenbal.

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR IN THE DPRK
/V. IVANOV/

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DOCUMENT No. 28

Memorandum of Conversation with the PRC Ambassador to the DPRK, Qiao Xiaoguang, 5 November 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, Listy 367-369. Obtained and translated for CWHIP by James F. Person.]

Embassy of the USSR
In the DPRK
No. 318
“31” October 1956

Top Secret
Copy No. 3

DIARY

Ambassador of the USSR In the DPRK, Comrade Ivanov V.I.
for the period from 11 to 29 October 1956

Pyeongyang

5 November

I received the ambassador of the PRC, Qiao Xiaoguang at his request. After a brief procedural conversation, Qiao asked if I knew anything new about measures of the Korean friends to carry out the decision of the September Plenum. The leadership of the Chinese Communist Party shows great interest in this question according to Qiao.

I said that for the period that has passed after my conversation with the charge d' affaires of the embassy of the PRC in the DPRK, Chao Kaelyan, I don't know anything substantial about measures of the friends on the stated question. According to the existing communications of the unofficial order it is known that the Korean leadership intends to make Choe Changik director of the state committee on preserving monuments of material culture and Bak Changok the director of construction at a cement factory in Madong. From the same communication it is also known that not long ago a meeting of the KWP CC Presidium was held where it was decided to release Bak Ilu from imprisonment.

To Qiao's request that I say something to the effect of how the Korean friends view the visit of Comrades Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai to the DPRK, I responded that to judge by the course of the September Plenum, the reaction of the friends should be considered positive, however to confirm this categorically would be premature.

In my turn I was interested in the opinion of Qiao Xiaoguang in this regard. He answered that he so far has not yet reached a specific conclusion regarding the reaction of the friends to the visit of comrades Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai.

I asked Qiao if Yun Gongheum, Li Pilgyu, Seo Hwi, and Gim Changil, located in China, know about their rehabilitation to the KWP and if they intend to return to the DPRK.

Qiao said that they are aware of that decision. Not wishing to return to the DPRK, they want to ask the government of the DPRK to allow their families to depart to China since they know also that the Korean government is not pressing for their return to the DPRK. Qiao said further that in receiving Yun Gongheum, Seo Hwi, Gim Changil and Li Pilgyu in an address to the CCP CC and CPSU CC they blamed the Korean leadership for destroying a number of notable party actors in the period after liberation and during the war; for leading the country and party with anti-democratic methods; for incorrectly appointing and cultivating leading cadres. In connection with this they consider [Chairman of the CC for the Election of the Second Supreme People's Assembly] Bak Jeongae, Bak Geumcheol, Gim Changman, and Han Sangdu individuals unqualified to occupy leading posts in the party; finally, they charge that the leadership does not carry out a struggle with the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung.

Qiao added that without having any materials confirming these statements, the CCP CC displays understandable caution with respect to the indicated letter.

I informed Qiao Xiaoguang that the Korean leadership released Li Sangjo from his duties as ambassador of the DPRK in Moscow and requested from the Soviet government an agreement on Yi Sungpal, working nowadays as the director of the educational department of the KWP CC. According to the Korean friends, Li Sangjo refuses to return to the DPRK and in all likelihood will remain in the PRC.

To my question if the Chinese embassy has a decree of the August Plenum of the KWP CC on organizational matters, Qiao answered that they do not have it, but the delegation of the KWP to the CCP Eighth Congress delivered the abovementioned decree to Mao Zedong.

Present at the meeting was the first secretary of the embassy, Samsanov G.E.

The meeting was translated by the translator of the Chinese embassy, Wang Baomin.

AMBASSADOR OF THE USSR IN THE DPRK
/V. IVANOV/

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DOCUMENT No. 29

Memorandum of Conversation with Bak Uiwan, 22 November 1956

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 412, List 295.
Obtained and translated for CWIHP by James F. Person.]

22 November

After a meeting at the home of [Vice Premier and Minister of Light Industry] Bak Uiwan where we examined the suggestion of Soviet specialists, we had a discussion at his request.

He said that the situation in the KWP is still not completely defused, the atmosphere continues to be tense and under certain circumstances, there may emerge a situation similar to that prior to the KWP CC August Plenum.

He explained that after the visit of comrades Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai the Korean friends did not do what would have been the correct thing and in their work they poorly carry out the Leninist norms in party life. During one of the meetings of the Central Committee Standing Committee held after the departure of Comrades Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai, Kim Il Sung claimed that he agreed with their suggestions only because he did not desire to make the conditions of their visit difficult, and in essence, he could not agree that the decision of the Central Committee August Plenum was rash and erroneous. Bak Uiwan stressed that only after he and Nam Il emphatically demonstrated the need to carry out the decision of the September Plenum of the KWP CC did Kim Il Sung agree to do it.



DOCUMENT No. 30

CPSU Central Committee Report on the Situation in the KWP and the DPRK, 9 January 1957

[Source: RGANI, Fond 5, Opis 28, Delo 486, Listi 1-17.
Obtained for CWIHP by James F. Person and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg.]

Stamp:
[CPSU CC
00215
29 Jan 1957
[[handwritten: DPRK]]
Subject to return to
[[2-3 words typed over]] CPSU CC]

Distributed at the instruction SECRET
of Cde. D. T. SHEPILOV 28 December 1956
Nº 1578/d?v?

THE SITUATION IN THE KWP AND THE DPRK

[Handwritten at the top left of the first page: "To Cde. Ponomarev. Suslov"; handwritten at the bottom of the first page: "To the archives. An informative document used in the work [1-2 words illegible]. Shcherbakov. 15.II.57"]

1956 was a year of substantial change in the life of the Korean Workers' Party. In April 1956 the KWP Third Congress was held after an eight-year interval. Its decisions determined the future direction of the economic and political development of the country and also the DPRK's goals in the area of foreign policy. In view of this, the KWP Third Congress was an event of great political and practical importance for the party and the country.

At the same time there were serious shortcomings in preparing for and holding the Congress. The greatest of these shortcomings were that the most important enactments of the CPSU Twentieth Congress and the conclusions resulting from them from the specific situation in the DPRK - the Marxist-Leninist principles of party policy; overcoming the consequences of the personality cult in the KWP; the observance of the principles of collective leadership; and the strengthening of democratic legality—did not receive the necessary reflection in the work and the decisions of the KWP Third Congress. The previous tendencies of the KWP leadership to develop all sectors of heavy industry, especially machine building, without considering the real possibilities were exhibited at the Congress. At the same time, the Congress did not place in the focus of attention the question of raising the population's standard of living, which remains extremely low.

Both at the Congress and in the post-Congress period these

questions keenly troubled a certain portion of senior KWP officials. Gim Dubong, Choe Changik, Bak Changok, Bak Uiwan, Seo Hwi, Yun Gongheum, Gim Seunghwa, and other important officials thought that it was impossible to tolerate the great shortcomings in the leadership of the party and the country any longer. The dissatisfaction with the situation which has developed in the party also included a certain portion of the senior officials of the army and trade unions. Discontent with the KWP leadership especially increased during the visit of a DPRK delegation to the countries of the people's democracies and in connection with the well-known events in Poznan.

At the KWP CC August Plenum this group of officials proposed to sharply criticize the main shortcomings of the activity of the leadership and Kim Il Sung personally, pointing out that the spread of the personality cult and the assignment of party personnel according to the principle of personal devotion fettered initiative and diminished the responsibility of government and party bodies; as before an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion predominates; collegiality at work is essentially lacking; and a serious material situation for the working masses has been created in the country.

The emergence of dissatisfaction with the situation which has developed among a certain part of senior KWP officials testifies to the growth in the party of national cadres who have made increased demands of the party leadership. The above officials were trying to expose the serious shortcomings which exist through sharp and bold criticism.

As is well known, at the August plenum Kim Il Sung did not lead the criticism of the shortcomings in the work of the party, as the CPSU CC had advised him and which many senior officials inside the KWP had expected. The KWP leadership did not go the route of self-criticism and took every step to isolate those who intended to criticize the shortcomings and mistakes. For the forthright and courageous opinions about the situation in the party expressed by a number of officials who had exhibited dissatisfaction with the KWP leadership they were regarded as a "hostile anti-party group which had set as their goal the seizure of power in the party and the country" and subjected to party repression. Some of these officials, fearing further persecution, left for China (nine people) and Li Sangjo, the former Korean ambassador to Moscow, refused to return to the DPRK.

Thus, a difficult situation arose in the KWP when the serious shortcomings and mistakes of the party leadership were not exposed and the correct measures were not taken to eliminate them.

As a result of an exchange of opinions about the situation in the KWP which took place between the CPSU CC and the KWP CC it was decided to send Cdes. Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai to Pyongyang to discuss situation which had devel-

oped with the KWP leadership.

The KWP CC Plenum held in September during their visit to the DPRK reexamined the decisions of the August plenum with respect to Choe Changik, Bak Changok, and others, admitting that "when considering the question concerning these comrades at the August Plenum the proper seriousness was insufficiently exhibited and the approach to the decision was oversimplified." The plenum restored Choe Changik and Bak Changok to CC membership and those who left for China to party membership.

At the same time, the need was recognized in the decisions of the plenum to create an atmosphere in the party which facilitates the holding of more lively organizational discussions which arise in party life and to ascertain the truth through a broad expansion of criticism without resorting to organizational administrative measures. The plenum pointed out that party organizations should gradually organize a campaign for the further expansion and development of intra-party democracy and intensify criticism and self-criticism inside the party, especially criticism from below.

The preparation and adoption of the decisions by the KWP CC September Plenum was the result of the influence of fraternal parties on the KWP CC leadership. Kim Il Sung and a majority of the members of the KWP CC Presidium reluctantly agreed to reexamine the decisions of the August Central Committee Plenum. A desire to show the guilt of Choe Changik, Bak Changok, and the others and [to show] the justification for the measures and organizational conclusions taken toward them at the August Plenum was exhibited in the process of preparing for the September Plenum.

At the present time, as before, the opinion continues to exist in the KWP that the hostile anti-party group of Choe Changik and Bak Changok who had set as their goal the seizure of power had been exposed at the August Plenum and that, in spite of this, the party had displayed magnanimity toward them and had restored Choe Changik and Bak Changok to Central Committee membership and the rest to party membership.

The reluctance to reexamine the decisions of the August Central Committee Plenum about the organizational conclusions with respect to Choe Changik, Bak Changok, and the others was also reflected in the fact that, in spite of an agreement between Cdes. Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai on the one hand and Kim Il Sung on the other about publishing the complete text of the decision of the September plenum about the above question in the press, this text was nevertheless not published. The KWP CC limited itself to publication in the press of a brief informational report in which it omitted the two important sections of the decision regarding the assessment of the measures which had been taken at the August plenum with respect to Choe Changik and the others and also the questions of the need

to develop intra-party democracy, criticism, and self-criticism.

During the visit to the DPRK by Cdes. Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai it was arranged with the KWP leadership that there would be a reexamination of the decisions of party committees with respect to other party members who were called to account in connection with the Choe Changik and Bak Changok matter. However the Korean leadership is beginning these steps very slowly. After the September Plenum senior officials of the KWP Pyeongyang City Committee and also the Secretaries of the State University Party Committee, the construction department, and the Central Committee of the united trade unions, and the Ministry of Trade were removed from the posts they had occupied and sent to the provinces from where they, too, left for China.

With respect to former Political Council member Bak Ilu, who is under arrest, an agreement about his release was reached between Cdes. Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai and Kim Il Sung. It was decided in October at the KWP CC Presidium to release him from confinement under house arrest and suggest that he go to China to study if he wishes. However, this decision has not yet been carried out, which is explained by the general aggravation of the political situation.

In the opinion of Ban Hakse, Minister of Internal Affairs, considering the current international situation, it is impossible to exclude the possibility of undesirable statements by some senior officials in the capital and in the provinces who favor more democratic methods of leading the Party and country although the August Central Committee Plenum also condemned such statements as factional and anti-party and took severe measures with regard to these kinds of officials. In the first place such statements might come from Choe Changik, a Central Committee member who counts on the support of General-Lieutenant Gim Un (Deputy Minister of National Defense), Ban Hosan (formerly a General-Lieutenant and front commanding general and now working as deputy director of a mine), and Go Bongi, Central Committee member, (Chairman of the KWP South Hwanghae Provincial Committee). In Ban's opinion, at a critical moment one can expect a comparable statement from Gim Dubong.

The above is evidence that Kim Il Sung, having repeatedly resorted in the past to the removal of his political opponents in order to strengthen his position and having sometimes overindulged in repressive measures, is at the present time still slowly changing [his] methods of leadership, reluctantly correcting past mistakes, and switching halfheartedly to measures to convince and educate.

It ought to be noted along with this that the events of this year in both the international and domestic life of the DPRK, especially the above manifestations of acute dissatisfaction by a certain number of officials with the KWP leadership and

also Kim Il Sung's summer trip to the countries of the people's democracy; his visit to the Soviet Union and the conversations held in Moscow with CPSU and Soviet government leaders about questions of party policy; the advice received in Moscow about improving the economic management of the country and increasing attention toward questions of the material support of the workers; and work done in Pyeongyang by Cdes. Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai, could not have failed to reflect a certain positive influence on the KWP leadership.

As is well known, the KWP Third Congress pointed out that the main task of the upcoming five-year plan should be the creation of a firm foundation of a socialist economy, the industrialization of the country, and the completion of the organization of agriculture into cooperatives. At the present time party political, economic, and organizational work are being done in this direction.

In the area of industry the three-year plan of postwar recovery and development of the DPRK economy (1954-1956) was fulfilled four and a half months ahead of schedule, and in the area of agriculture the plan will basically be fulfilled. In spite of a bad harvest in some northern provinces the gross grain harvest throughout the country is about 2.7 million tons, or about the 1949 level.

Some significant changes were made at the August plenum to the drafts of the first five-year plan after the trip of the DPRK government delegation to the Soviet Union and the countries of the people's democracy. The plenum pointed to the need to consider the experience of fraternal countries in developing an economy in the process of building the foundations of socialism and to be guided by resulting principle of cooperation and division of effort between the socialist countries.

In this connection the Workers' Party Central Committee recognized that it is advisable to temporarily defer the construction of the large industrial facilities planned by the KWP Third Congress which require large capital investment and lengthy periods of construction and concentrate attention on the construction of the enterprises of those industrial sectors where it might be most beneficial to use the country's natural and economic resources.

Decisions were also made to abandon the construction of a large electrical equipment plant in Pyeongyang, the further restoration of the Gim Chang metallurgical plant in Chongjin, the construction of a perfume factory in Pyeongyang, and several other facilities.

The Party Central Committee and the DPRK leadership recently devoted greater attention to increasing the production of fertilizer for agricultural recovery and primarily to solve the grain problem. A task was set to reduce the period for the construction of new workshops to produce ammonium nitrate at

the Hungnam chemical fertilizer plant.

The party and government are doing a great deal of work to organize agriculture into cooperatives. At the end of October of this year 79% of all peasant farms had been formed into cooperatives. It can be assumed that the organization of agriculture into cooperatives will be mainly finished by spring of next year.

The implementation of a number of economic measures in industry and agriculture is evidence that after the government delegation's visit to the USSR and the countries of the people's democracies the Central Committee leadership has begun to more realistically approach the question of the rates of growth and economic possibilities of industrialization and to display great concern about increasing the standard of living of the country's population.

The Party Central Committee has recently planned and implemented a number of measures in this area. Beginning on 1 November 1956 the wages of manual laborers and office workers were increased by 35%. New wage scales have been developed and introduced, according to which the minimum monthly wage was set at 1000 won whereas previously it had been 600 won.

In August and September of this year another [*ocherednoe*] reduction of state commercial prices for several important kinds of industrial goods was made, by an average 10 percent. As a result of the wage increase and the reduction of retail prices the population is getting a benefit of approximately 12 billion won a year. For this sum the population could get 120,000 tons of rice at current market prices.

In implementing these measures the Korean leadership, besides its own resources, is also counting on aid from the USSR and the countries of the people's democracies in consumer goods which are to begin to arrive in 1957. Without an increase in the quantity of goods for sale the wage increase and price reduction will not produce the proper result.

In order to ease the tax liability to the state of peasants in the cooperatives and individual peasant farmers a decree has been adopted to reduce the payments in kind and release the peasants from returning grain loans in 1956 and arrears for past years. According to this decree agricultural cooperatives and individual peasant farmers who had abatements for taxation in kind which did not exceed 10-12% of the harvest for them; peasants who received a poor harvest because of drought; poor people in a serious material situation; peasants living in the demilitarized zone; and also peasants in regions which suffered from natural disasters are released from payment of taxes in kind for the current year. Underdeveloped cooperatives and the families of servicemen, resettlers, and refugees are completely or partially released from returning seed and food loans

in 1956 and arrears for previous years.

However, the granting of these abatements to the peasants for 1956 should not exceed the stock of 26,000 tons of grain designated for these purposes.

A decree was also adopted about reducing the tax in kind for the use of an irrigation system by an average of four percent.

In October the government adopted a decree to reduce by 50% the income and local tax for small merchants and entrepreneurs, craftsmen, and people in the free professions whose average monthly income does not exceed 10,000 won.

By another government decree local bodies of people's power and department managers are obligated to supply entrepreneurs with the necessary raw material to produce consumer goods. Private merchants are permitted to sell goods to state industries where there is no state or cooperative trade, granting them the necessary funds to do this. Private entrepreneurs are permitted to develop gold deposits in order to increase the population's income and accumulate foreign currency.

The above party and government measures carried out after the KWP Third Congress improved the population's standard of living somewhat and promoted the strengthening of the people's democratic system of government. However the material situation of the workers, peasants, and intelligentsia has not reached the prewar level.

About 40% in the Republic are on rationed provisions. Manual laborers and white collar workers are given from 700 to 900 grams of grain a day and students and dependents [are given] from 400 to 500 grams of grain. All categories receive 50% of the rice ration and 50% of the ration for other cereals. At the same time only 4% of all those working (of category 1) receive 900 grams, 22% receive 800 grams, and the rest of the workers, 74%, receive 700 grams of grain a day.

Depending on the supply category manual laborers and office workers receive from 15 to 28 meters of cotton per year, from 3 to 12 pairs of socks, from 2 to 12 bars of soap, from 2 to 6 pairs of *komusin* [Korean rubber shoes], 3 kilograms of vegetable oil, 7 liters of liquid soybeans, 7 kilograms of hard soy, and 12 kilograms of salt. One percent are supplied at the 1st, highest, category; 6% at the second category; 17% at the 3rd category, and 73% of those working are in the 4th, 5th, and 6th, the lowest supply categories.

The goods issued through ration cards are far from being sufficient to meet the needs of the families of manual laborers and office workers in food and clothing.

The overwhelming majority of the urban population gets almost no meat, fats, and sugar through ration cards. Fish

products are also issued irregularly.

Market prices for foodstuffs are extraordinarily high. For example, one kilogram of meat costs 250-300 won, fish - 100-200, rice 100, potatoes - 30-40, a liter of bean oil - 600 won, 10 eggs - 130-150 won, etc. It is also the same situation with prices for manufactured goods. Market and commercial prices for textiles, clothing, and shoes are very high and almost unaffordable for the majority of the country's population.

In the three postwar years the state built more than 3,500,000 [square] meters of housing. Nevertheless, about one-third of the urban population continues to live in half-dugouts and flimsy [*legkogo tipa*] houses made of stalks of kaoliang and clay. In the winter the urban population experiences an acute need for fuel and school buildings and some institutions are almost unheated.

The material situation of the peasants improved somewhat this year; however, after settling accounts with the state for taxes in kind for land, water, and MPS [machine rental] work, for two or three months a considerable number of the peasants of the northern regions nevertheless do not have enough food until the next harvest.

Thus the conclusion should be drawn that, in spite of some improvement in the material condition in the country, the standard of living of the population is extremely low. Many families of manual laborers, office workers, and peasants are chronically underfed, do not have an opportunity to obtain warm clothing, and are in difficult living conditions.

The difficult situation of the workers takes on especial seriousness in conditions where the country is divided. It should be kept in mind in this context that in South Korea, a mainly agricultural country, the food situation of the population is better than in North Korea. The supply of the population with essential goods is also higher in the South as a consequence of the fact that the economy suffered less damage during the war and also as a result of the flooding of the South Korean market with American-made goods.

The difficulties being experienced at the present time by the DPRK population are being more correctly assessed by the KWP leadership. The fact that the consequences of the serious destruction caused by the war have still not been overcome and also the previous mistakes made by friends when restoring sectors of the economy, especially the underestimation of the need for a very rapid recovery of agriculture and the development of light industry, are the reasons for these difficulties.

In spite of the serious difficulties in the country the policy of the Korean Workers' Party is supported by the working masses of the city and the countryside, who in the past had been under foreign oppression and experienced more [difficulties] in com-

parison to the present deprivation and poverty.

However, in connection with the British and French aggression against Egypt and the events in Hungary, the KWP CC and the DPRK government took some precautionary measures in the event of possible provocations from the South Korean authorities and the hostile espionage network inside the country. KWP CC Presidium members and members of the government went to the grass roots to strengthen mass political work among the population. More attention began to be paid to the deeper study of the political morale condition of the personnel of the KPA and the mood of the population.

The Americans and the South Korean authorities stepped up subversive activity against the DPRK in connection with the events in Poland and Hungary. During this period there were occurrences of the insertion of enemy espionage networks and the dropping of leaflets, and the aggressive tone of radio propaganda was intensified. In November meetings and demonstrations were organized in Seoul and several other cities of South Korea calling for the population of North Korea to rise up against the people's democratic system of government and the KWP leadership. At the end of November several hundred students from Seoul were brought to the line of demarcation in automobiles for a provocation and who called upon the population of the North "to follow the example of Hungary."

It ought to be noted that the increased provocations from the South did not meet with any significant response among the DPRK population. No statements against people's power took place in the KWP.

The meetings of manual laborers and office workers which were held at this time at enterprises and institutions, the large demonstration of the population of Pyeongyang in support of the struggle of the Egyptian people against aggression, and the protest against the provocation of the counterrevolution in Hungary were evidence that the population of the DPRK supports the people's democratic system of government of its country.

The KWP leadership has been recently devoting more attention to political work in the Party and among the population. This is especially necessary because the Party is to a certain degree flabby: the party numbers 1,160,000 members and candidate members in its ranks, and this means that every eighth person in the country is a member or candidate member of the party. Also considering that in the party 60% of its members are peasants and 28% are manual laborers, 86% [SIC] of the members and candidate members of the Party are semi-literate and have a primary education and only 0.8% have a higher education. The KWP CC is paying special attention to improving the quality of the party and the Marxist-Leninist education of its members.

Admission into the party was actually halted beginning in 1954, the same year that a campaign was conducted to verify party membership; an exchange of party documents is being carried out in the current year.

After the Third Party Congress, the Central Committee carried out a number of measures to restructure ideological work. Secondary school and higher educational study programs are being reexamined, especially the socioeconomic disciplines, and work has begun to republish textbook and training aids in order to remove statements in them explaining the events of public life from the position of the personality cult.

Having condemned dogmatism in ideological work and the practice of mechanically borrowing everything Soviet to Korean practice, the KWP CC is devoting more attention to the study and incorporation of the revolutionary and progressive past of the Korean people, restructuring ideological work on the basis of Marxist-Leninist teachings.

At the same time when restructuring ideological work various materials have begun to be published more often in the press to correct the mistakes which have been made; the plays of Russian and Soviet authors have again begun to be included in the repertoire of Korean theaters; and the experience of the Soviet Union in party, government, economic, and cultural policy is being more fully popularized.

In October of this year a congress of Korean writers was held and in November a congress of the Union of Democratic Youth [was held, both of] which displayed the unity of the intelligentsia and youth around the KWP. The congresses expressed support for the political and economic policy of the party in developing the DPRK along the path of socialism.

The leadership core of the party changed considerably after the Third Congress. The newly-elected Central Committee Presidium was double the size of the previous Political Council. Its membership was augmented with people from among those who had actively participated in the national liberation struggle and have experience in party and government policy. Only five of the previous leaders remained, including Cdes. Kim Il Sung, Gim Dubong, Bak Cheongae, Kim Il, and Bak Geumcheol. The roles of Gim Dubong and Bak Cheongae were reduced. At the same time the role and influence of re-elected Presidium members Cdes. Choe Yonggeon, Gim Changman (Deputy Chairman of the KWP CC), Cheong Ilyeong (Deputy Prime Minister), and Gim Gwanheop (Chief of Staff of the KPA) were increased.

The Central Committee Presidium and especially Cdes. Choe Yonggeon, Bak Geumcheol, and Gim Changman are taking a not altogether correct position in the area of personnel assignments. For example, exaggerating the mistakes of a number of officials who came from China and the USSR,

they have sought to get them removed from senior positions in the Party and the government. They acted this way with former Political Council members Hegai and Bak Ilu and then with Bak Changok, Bak Yeongbin, and Choe Changik, adopting severe measures against them (the arrest of Bak Ilu, the replacement of Choe Changik). Until very recently critical statements against the leadership were viewed as a manifestation of factionalism and an anti-party attitude.

It ought to be said that the situation eased somewhat after the September Plenum. Choe Changik returned to Pyeongyang and the question of his work was again examined; Bak Changok was appointed chief of the construction of a cement plant; and a number of KWP members were readmitted to the party and the attitude of the KWP leadership toward former Soviet-Koreans changed for the better. Some of them began to be restored to previous positions and even promoted to diplomatic work in foreign institutions.

In accordance with decisions of the August and September KWP CC Plenums explanatory work is being carried out and materials of the September Plenum - the report, the closing remarks of Kim Il Sung, and the complete text of the Decree about Reexamining the Decision of the August Plenum Concerning an Organizational Question - were distributed to the provincial, city, district, and primary party organizations for discussion and to carry out appropriate explanatory work among Party members.

In a number of places the discussion of the materials of the September Plenum occurred in plenary meetings along with a discussion of the August Plenum. Meetings in party organizations, especially in ministries and other large enterprises and institutions, proceeded tumultuously for two, three, or even four days. According to the reports of friends they had to perform much organizational and explanatory work in party organizations in order to show party members the need to decide to rehabilitate Choe Changik, Yun Gongheum, and others and convince them that the methods of patient education and a comradely attitude toward mistaken party members ought to prevail in the party, and not the methods of punishment and management by decree; they had to show the mistakenness of some statements which contained demands to severely condemn Choe Changik and the others.

At plenary meetings, meetings of party activists, and meetings about the results of the August and September Central Committee Plenum at which party and government leaders were present more critical comments were made against local party leaders and local government leaders who exhibit insufficient concern about meeting the material needs of the workers. In particular, demands were expressed to accelerate housing construction, improve the supply of food and manufactured goods, etc. It was also suggested that the workers' opinions be taken into account when promoting people to the positions

of skilled worker and foreman at enterprises. The awarding of bonuses to leading production workers also ought to be at the recommendation of worker's collectives.

All the demands and critical comments of party members which came to light during the discussion of the decision of the September Plenum are being summarized in the KWP CC and will be taken into consideration in practical work.

Criticism in the party from below is become somewhat bolder. However, it is still weak against higher party bodies. The principle of collective leadership is started to be exhibited more often in the practical work of party committees and management by decree and command has become less frequent. The ties between the masses and party and government bodies are being strengthened.

A number of materials have been published in the national party press about the results of the October Central Committee Plenum in which special attention was paid to the need for the method of persuasion as the main method of educating party members.

In some party organizations the cases of expulsions from the party in connection with the decision of the August Plenum were reexamined after the September CC Plenum. In particular, two deputy chairmen and the chief of the organization department of the Pyeongyang City Party Committee were readmitted to the party. However [Hong Seonghwan], a former Deputy Chairman of the Pyeongyang City Party Committee, was recently again expelled from the party as not wanting "to be corrected."

We think that a shift is being noted in the party after the September KWP CC Plenum in the direction of observing Leninist principles of collective leadership and the norms of party life. However, only the first steps have been made in this question.

After the KWP Third Congress and the September CC Plenum the friends began to implement some measures to democratize the political life of the country.

Elections were held to local government bodies on 20 and 27 November 1956. An absolute majority of the population which took part in the voting gave its votes to candidates nominated by the KWP and other parties and public organizations which are allied with it. Ninety-nine and 73/100% of those who participated in the elections voted for the candidates to village people's assemblies; 99.89% to district and city [people's assemblies], and 99.98% to provincial [people's assemblies]. At the present time preparations have begun for the elections to the Supreme People's Assembly which are scheduled for April and May of 1957.

Measures to democratize the political life of the country and to restore Leninist norms of party life are understood by the Korean friends as a lengthy process during the implementation of which it is necessary to carry out appropriate steps to avoid causing negative consequences in the party and the country.

The elimination of Kim Il Sung's personality cult is being carried out slowly and the friends are observing a policy of gradualism in this question. Until recently it was indicated in the decisions and documents of the KWP that there is no cult of personality in the KWP. At the present time the existence of the KWP cult of personality is admitted by the friends but at the same time there exists the opinion that the cult of personality in the DPRK has no negative consequences. The friends have also done some work in this area. They have stopped glorifying Kim Il Sung in propaganda, and literature and art are embarking on this path. The most important party and government questions have begun to be decided collectively and patience has begun to be exhibited more often with regard to people who have criticized the leadership.

The 30 October 1956 Declaration of the Soviet government was discussed in the KWP CC Presidium and at the XII session of the Supreme People's Assembly and received the approval and support of the friends. The KWP CC Presidium declared that the DPRK government has no questions for discussion with the Soviet government in connection with the publication of the Declaration. The XII session of the Supreme People's Assembly pointed out that the peace-loving foreign policy of the Soviet Union based on Leninist principles of full equal rights, non-interference in internal affairs, and friendship and cooperation is being consistently and unswervingly followed in Korean-Soviet relations.

In spite of the fact that the Korean friends have declared that they have no complaints against the Soviet Union in connection with the declaration there are unofficial statements by some DPRK ministers about the presence of elements of inequality in individual treaties and agreements between the DPRK and the USSR which infringe on the rights of the Korean side.

Abnormal situations with respect to Soviet-Koreans and also mistakes when propagandizing the national past of the Korean people occurred at the end of 1955 and the beginning of 1956, when under the pretext of the struggle against everything foreign, in a number of cases propaganda about the Soviet Union ceased. These [cases] are being eliminated at the present time.

Speaking of the advisability of the visit of Cdes. Mikoyan and Peng Dehuai as representatives of fraternal parties, Kim Il Sung declared that such visits are possible and necessary in the relations between parties.

At the same time it ought to be said that relations between the DPRK and PRC leadership cannot be considered completely normal. Particularly negative events in these relations have recently appeared.

It ought to be borne in mind that the abnormality in Korean-Chinese relations has existed from the time of combat operations against the American-Syngman Rhee troops when the Chinese friends had differences with the Korean leadership about a number of important questions connected with the start and the conduct of the war.

The Korean leaders and Kim Il Sung personally have an incorrect attitude toward the Chinese friends and this attitude is not in keeping with the enormous aid which the Chinese people have given the DPRK both during the war and in the postwar period

The Korean friends are clearly insufficiently studying and propagandizing the experience of building socialism which has been accumulated in China and the dissemination of which could bring substantial benefit to DPRK party and state policy.

Up to now relations between the DPRK and PRC leadership have been of a strictly official nature. Personal contacts between party and government leaders are rarely maintained. Kim Il Sung declined to travel to the CCP Eighth Congress. Kim Il Sung does not attend festive meetings and receptions at the PRC Embassy in Pyeongyang during national holidays at the same time as he visits comparable events associated with the national holidays of the Soviet Union. The Korean friends are rarely encountered with officials of the Chinese Embassy and do not consult with them enough about questions of government and party policy.

The event of greatest importance which negatively affects Chinese-Korean relations is the departure of a number of senior DPRK personnel for China. The Korean friends were counting on the Chinese side handing over those who had fled to the DPRK leadership. However, as is well known, this did not happen. In the opinion of the Chinese friends those who fled continue to "blacken" the Korean leadership in the eyes of the Chinese friends.

Recently the refusal of the Chinese friends to grant new economic aid to the DPRK contributed to some deepening of the abnormalities in Chinese-Korean relations. No response to a request of the Chinese leadership by Kim Il Sung to grant additional free aid or credits in 1957 in the amount of 50 million yuan was given for three months and then a refusal followed. In light of this the Korean friends cancelled an already agreed visit of a trade delegation to the PRC to conclude a trade treaty for 1957 headed by Deputy Prime Minister Gim Il.

In giving a favorable assessment to the fact of the arrival in the DPRK of representatives of the CPSU and CCP in September 1956 the Korean friends expressed dissatisfaction at the same time that Peng Dehuai, who allegedly is not respected in Korea, was sent to Pyeongyang as the CCP representative.

The above is evidence that, in spite of some work which has been done by the KWP leadership to improve the situation in the party and to democratize the life of the country, the situation in the KWP and the Republic continues to remain complex, requiring the KWP CC to take gradual steps to introduce Leninist norms of party life and also for fraternal communist parties to [pay] close attention to the situation in the KWP.

Considering that the material situation of the population of the DPRK is still extremely serious, it is necessary for the KWP leadership and the DPRK to take all possible steps to constantly raise the standard of living of the workers, which is an indispensable condition for the further consolidation of the domestic political situation in the republic and the peaceful unification of the country on democratic principles.

Bearing in mind the abnormalities in relations between the Korean leadership and the Chinese friends noted above it would be advisable to direct Kim Il Sung's attention to this fact.

USSR Ambassador to the DPRK V. Ivanov

Authenticated: [illegible signature]

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