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The Cuban Missile Crisis and the
Origins of North Korea's Policy of
Self-Reliance in National Defense

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NKIDP



**THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS AND THE ORIGINS OF
NORTH KOREA’S POLICY OF SELF-RELIANCE IN NATIONAL DEFENSE
NKIDP E-DOSSIER**

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Introduction by James F. Person¹

The trajectory of North Korea's foreign relations and economic and military planning dramatically shifted in the early 1960s in response to two events. The first was a May 1961 coup d'état in South Korea that brought to power an anti-communist military junta led by General Park Chung Hee. The second event occurred much further from Korea's borders—thousands of miles away on an island nation in the Caribbean. Combined, the Park Chung Hee coup d'état and the Cuban Missile Crisis transformed North Korea's relations with Moscow and Beijing and nudged the country down a path of unsustainable military buildup that, in part, resulted in a nuclear weapons program and was responsible for the country's economic difficulties in later decades.

North Korean leaders greeted the 1960s with optimism. The country continued its phoenix-like rise from the ashes of the devastating Korean War (1950-1953) by successfully completing, ahead of schedule, a Three-Year Plan for national reconstruction and a Five-Year Plan for comprehensive industrialization. Premier Kim Il Sung had also survived the most serious political challenge of his long tenure in 1956.² The toll of the social change at breakneck speeds that accompanied North Korea's post-war economic and political developments had not gone entirely unnoticed, and the leadership of the country had designated 1960 as a "buffer year" during which the pace of development would be slowed down before launching into an ambitious Seven-Year Plan.³ Conditions on the divided peninsula also appeared more favorable to North Korea. In April 1960, South Korean president Syngman Rhee was forced from office following a series of massive student led demonstrations. The North Korean leadership identified in this an opportunity for unification, and proposed the establishment of a Korean Confederation that would allow for both regimes to temporarily maintain their social systems as they transitioned to a unified system of government.⁴

All of this changed on 16 May 1961 when Park Chung Hee led a coup against the democratically elected government of President Yun Po Sun and Prime Minister Chang Myong, who had been in power for less than a year after President Syngman Rhee was forced from office. Although there was some initial confusion about Park's political orientation, given a brief dalliance with communism, North Korea soon determined that the coup leader was in fact anti-communist. On 18 May, the Standing Committee of the ruling Korean Worker's Party called for measures to be taken to drastically militarize the state. According to Chinese reports of the meeting, the Standing Committee decided to "enhance our vigilance, concentrate forces on strengthening national defense, and delay the original Seven-Year Plan until 1963. Otherwise

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² See James F. Person, "New Evidence on North Korea in 1956," *CWIHP Bulletin* 16 (Spring 2008): 447-454.

³ See, for example, Balazs Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era: Soviet-DPRK Relations and the Roots of North Korean Despotism, 1953-1964* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 138.

⁴ See "New East German and Soviet Evidence on North Korean Support to South Korean Political Parties and Labor Unions," *NKIDP eDossier* no. 8 (June 2012).

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economic construction and the national defense industry would be held up.”⁵ North Korea began to take such measures without delay. A month after the coup, on 19 June, a North Korean diplomat in Budapest reported to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry that Pyongyang had issued an order for the army to enhance vigilance and reduce the number of workers in industry and reassign them to the national defense industry and defensive fortifications to prepare for an emergency situation.⁶

Within two months of the South Korean military coup, North Korea signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union. Within days, Pyongyang signed a similar agreement with Beijing. With the inclusion of mutual defense clauses that committed both parties to aid one another if attacked, both agreements provided North Korea with a greater sense of security.

Yet, the road to getting this agreement with the Soviet Union in particular was long and not without its challenges. The treaty with Moscow therefore did not instill in Kim Il Sung a sense of confidence in Moscow's security commitment to the DPRK. In fact, Kim had been trying to get such an agreement from the Soviets for over two years. A few months after the withdrawal in October 1958 of the Chinese People's Volunteer Army (which had entered North Korea in late 1950 to fight the Americans), Kim Il Sung traveled to Moscow in late January 1959 to attend the CPSU XXI Congress. During this trip, Kim proposed the signing of a mutual cooperation treaty with the Soviet Union, Pyongyang's chief supplier of advanced weaponry and machinery. Though Khrushchev acceded to his request, and agreed to visit Pyongyang later that year to sign the agreement, for over two years, the Kremlin leader found reasons to postpone his trip. Khrushchev finally signed the agreement in July 1961 when Kim traveled to Moscow.

The North Korean leadership believed that their suspicions of Moscow's unreliability were confirmed in October 1962 when Khrushchev “betrayed Cuba at the time of the Caribbean crisis.”⁷ What the North Koreans viewed as Soviet capitulation in the face of pressure from the Kennedy Administration demonstrated that Khrushchev was more concerned about peaceful coexistence, and being, in the words of Kim Il Sung, “buddy-buddy with Eisenhower and Kennedy” than he was in aiding smaller socialist countries that, in the eyes of the North Koreans, were vulnerable to being picked off, one by one, by the United States.⁸ During a tense exchange in January 1965, North Korean Vice Premier Kim Il explained to Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin that as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the North Korean leadership felt that it “could not count that the Soviet government would keep the obligations related to the defense of Korea it assumed in the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance.”⁹

This mistrust of Moscow was reinforced when the Soviets did not grant a request from Pyongyang for military aid in December 1962. In the immediate wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis, on 1 November Kim Il Sung expressed his concern to Soviet Ambassador Vasily Moskovsky that the North's air and coastal defenses were in poor shape. Major cities, such as

⁵ “Contents of the 18 [May] [North] Korean Party Central [Committee] Standing Committee Meeting,” 21 May 1961, Chinese Foreign Ministry Archive, File No. 106-00581-06.

⁶ Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Memorandum, 22 June 1961, “Visit of Comrade Paek Chong-won.” XIX-J-1-j Korea (Top Secret Documents), 1945-64, 3, doboz, 4/af, 003159/7/1961.

⁷ Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 8 January 1965, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1965, 73. doboz, IV-100, 001819/1965, Report

⁸ Record of a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK Comrade V.P. Moskovsky about the negotiations between the Soviet delegation, led by the USSR Council of Ministers Chairman Kosygin, and the governing body of the Korean Workers Party, 16 February 1965, Czech Foreign Ministry Archive.

⁹ Ibid.

Pyongyang, Wonsan, Chongjin, and Hamheung, were poorly protected from air raids. He therefore requested permission to send a delegation to Moscow to discuss military aid.¹⁰ Kim requested that the Soviet Union deliver—on credit—over 100 million rubles in military aid to North Korea. Specifically, to enhance coastal defenses, he asked for submarines. For air defenses, Kim requested an unspecified number of MIG-21s and twelve surface-to-air missile batteries.¹¹ In a 14 November conversation with Ambassador Moskovsky, Kim Il Sung played up the threat to North Korea, remarking “I know that [First Secretary Khrushchev and Second Secretary Frol Kozlov] are no less concerned than I about the defense of the Far Eastern forward post...it provides a convenient platform for the enemy’s landing.”¹² Yet, Deputy Premier Kim Gwanghyeop’s 29 November to 5 December visit to Moscow ended in failure. Moscow would sell the weapons to Pyongyang, but not give them on credit.¹³ Without delay, the North Korea regime escalated its efforts to achieve self-reliance in national defense. One week later, the Fifth Plenum of the Fourth KWP Central Committee formally adopted what it referred to as the equal emphasis policy, initially launched in the wake of the May 1961 military coup in South Korea, which called for simultaneous development of heavy industry and defense capabilities. The Plenum also declared Four Military Guidelines: to arm the entire population; to fortify the entire country; to train the entire army as a “cadre army”; and to modernize weaponry, doctrine, and tactics under the principle of self-reliance in national defense. Hungarian diplomats reported that by February 1963 “large-scale work [was] going on throughout the country; not only entrenchments but also air-raid shelters for the population [were] being built in the mountains.”¹⁴

This policy of keeping the country in a state of mobilization had drastic effects on the North Korean economy. As Vice Premier Kim Il would later describe, because of the lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis, North Korea was “compelled to keep an army of 700,000 and a police force of 200,000. These huge armed forces constituted enormous expenses for the national economy of the DPRK, and this is why neither industry nor agriculture had made headway.”¹⁵ Kim Il Sung elaborated on the tremendous economic cost to Kosygin:

We had to look for financing exclusively within our own country, and we could get it only at the expense of other sectors. I am sure I don’t have to tell you how large amounts of money it involved. That is why we are currently falling behind in completing the 7-year plan by one year, and we still need 3 to 5 years in order to fulfill the seven year plan at least in basic parameters. However, 4 years and 2 months have passed and we have fulfilled less than half of the 7-year plan’s goals.¹⁶

¹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation between Soviet Ambassador to North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and Kim Il Sung, 1 November 1962, AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opis 18, Papka 93, Delo 5, Listy 135-138.

¹¹ Memorandum of Conversation between Soviet Ambassador to North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and Kim Il Sung, 14 November 1962, AVPRF, Fond 0102, Opis 18, Papka 93, Delo 5, Listy 152-154.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See, for example, Szalontai, *Kim Il Sung in the Khrushchev Era*, 192.

¹⁴ Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 15 February 1963, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 6. Dobox, 5/d, 0011/RT/1963.

¹⁵ Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 8 January 1965, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1965, 73. dobox, IV-100, 001819/1965.

¹⁶ Czech Foreign Ministry Archive, Record of a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK Comrade V.P. Moskovsky about the negotiations between the Soviet delegation, led by the USSR Council of Ministers

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The Cuban Missile Crisis also led to a major shift in North Korea's foreign policy orientation. Despite long-standing disagreements between Moscow and Pyongyang over North Korea's autarkic development strategy, relations remained cordial through 1962. In the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis, however, North Korea publicly sided with the Chinese in the Sino-Soviet split, and expressed opposition to Khrushchev's purported revisionism, particularly his policy of peaceful coexistence with the United States. Both Pyongyang and Beijing advocated for a far more militant policy of anti-imperialist struggle.

The Soviet-North Korean rift lasted from the fall of 1962 through the end of 1964. During this period, North Korea drew closer to the People's Republic of China than at any point in the history of Sino-DPRK relations. The fear of losing their freedom of action due to long term exclusive orientation toward the PRC eventually forced North Korean leaders to change their approach to developing international contacts with the USSR and European socialist countries. This change coincided with Khrushchev's involuntary departure, in October 1964, from the leadership of the CPSU and USSR. In January 1965, North Korean Vice Premier Kim Il went to Moscow where he met with Kosygin. The two held very frank talks in which Kim Il revealed North Korea's thinking on the Cuban Missile Crisis and the actions Pyongyang was forced to take in light of the perceived betrayal to the smaller countries in the socialist camp. Kim accused the Soviets of having betrayed the Cubans, and two years later the (North) Vietnamese by not responding fittingly to the August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident.¹⁷

The next month, in February 1965, while returning from a trip to Hanoi and then Beijing, Kosygin visited the DPRK where he met twice with Kim Il Sung. The North Korean leader echoed many of comments which Kim Il had made in Moscow the previous month. Kosygin defended Moscow's response to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and, turning Pyongyang's own rhetoric on Kim, admonished the North Korean leader for not doing enough in the anti-imperialist struggle.¹⁸ The Soviet Union, Kosygin argued, was in fact fighting imperialism. During their second conversation, Kim elaborated on the tremendous economic difficulties the DPRK faced as a result of measures to strengthen national defense that were adopted in December 1962 because of the perceived unwillingness of Moscow to live up to its security commitments to Pyongyang. The February 1965 Kosygin visit became an important catalyst of the favorable change in Pyongyang's attitude toward the Moscow.

While the shift in North Korea's foreign relations after the Cuban Missile Crisis was short-term and relations with Moscow once again improved, Pyongyang never abandoned its belief in bellicose anti-imperialism. Later in the 1960s, for a period of about three years, North Korea began to launch cross-border raids and engaged in other provocative acts against South Korea at a rate of nearly one a day.¹⁹ Other impacts of the Cuban Missile Crisis on North Korea were not so temporary. A careful reading of the available documentary evidence from the archives of Pyongyang's former communist allies suggests that Kim Il Sung never fully trusted the Soviets again. Moreover, the country remained in an uninterrupted state of mobilization for decades and escalated efforts to achieve self-reliance in national defense, particularly through the

Chairman Kosygin, and the governing body of the Korean Workers Party, which took place at the USSR Embassy in the DPRK on 16 February 1965.

¹⁷ Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 8 January 1965, MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1965, 73. doboz, IV-100, 001819/1965.

¹⁸ Conversation with the Soviet Ambassador, 19 February 1965, Hungarian National Archives.

¹⁹ See Christian F. Ostermann and James F. Person, eds., *Crisis and Confrontation on the Korean Peninsula, 1968-1969: A Critical Oral History* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2011).

acquisition of a nuclear deterrent. This contributed in part to North Korea's eventual economic slowdown.

DOCUMENT No. 1

Memorandum of Conversation between Soviet Ambassador to North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and Kim Il Sung, 1 November 1962

[Source: AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 18, papka 93, delo 5, listy 135-138. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

1 November 1962

On 1 November at 12 in the afternoon [I] was received by comrade Kim Il Sung at my request. At the beginning of the conversation comrade Kim Il Sung asked what impression I had from my trip to Panmunjeom. [I] told comrade Kim Il Sung that during [my] trip to Panmunjeom I was particularly greatly impressed by the neutral zone, the American houses, the American soldiers, and then – for several kilometers to the South – abandoned land. The picture is not a happy one, when one knows that all of this could be used in the interests of the people if the motherland were reunified. Probably rice was grown and peaceful farmers lived on this land, where now American garrisons are located; therefore, I said, my impression from the trip is a heavy one. Comrade Kim Il Sung agreed with me.

I told comrade Kim Il Sung that the Korean general Chang Jonghwan held a dinner in honor of my visit, at which we had a pleasant and useful conversation, that the general himself made a good impression on me. Further, [I] told comrade Kim Il Sung that Moscow paid great attention to the concern that he [Kim Il Sung] voiced in a conversation with me [on 14 August 1962] regarding the necessity of strengthening the defense of the DPRK and, in particular, anti-aircraft defense.

Comrade Kim Il Sung thanked me for this message [and] took over the initiative in the conversation. He informed me that recently, when [U.S. President John F.] Kennedy made noise about Cuban affairs, they [the North Koreans] had a meeting of the main Military Council under the CC KWP. The meeting discussed the question of the state of defense along the sea and land borders of the DPRK.

We came to the conclusion, said comrade Kim Il Sung, that our border along the 38th parallel is firmly defended [na prochnom zamke]. Defensive lines in several layers, built into the mountains and hills, give us an opportunity to fully destroy the enemy if he attempts to break through to the North. The defense of the coastline and air defense are in much poorer shape. The coastline from Wonsan to Cheongjin and further out is one of our vulnerable places. Major cities, such as Cheongjin, Wonsan, Hamheung, Pyongyang, and others are poorly protected from air [raids]. The Military Council made an appropriate decision regarding further strengthening of the DPRK's defense and improving battle readiness of the forces, but, taking into consideration the presence of new American equipment in South Korea, probably our decisions will not be sufficient. I am pleased, noted comrade Kim Il Sung, that the Soviet government approached with understanding the question of defense of our Republic. If the Soviet government does not

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mind, we are ready to send a military delegation for talks on the question of providing aid to us.

I said for my part, that [I] will immediately bring this request to the attention of the Soviet government.

Comrade Kim Il Sung further explained his point of view with regard to the events around Cuba. He said that in no country does the revolution go smoothly; that many unexpected matters come up in the course of its development; that the revolution in Cuba was not made by the Russians, the Koreans, the Chinese [or] the Czechs; that it was carried out by the [Cuban] people themselves; and the essence of our task is to support it [the revolution] by all means, but to support it wisely, not to take the matter to extremes.

I know, comrade Kim Il Sung said further, that in some circles the initiative of N.S. Khrushchev is looked upon as a concession to the Americans, but I personally believe that in this complicated situation the Soviet government and N.S. Khrushchev made the sole correct decision, and this decision speaks not to the weakness of the Soviet Union, but to its strength and to the wisdom of its government. The socialist camp does not need a war right now. Comrade Kim Il Sung stressed several times that a war is not needed right now. If we manage to ensure that the USA removes all kinds of blockades of Cuba, then this will demonstrate not the weakness, but the strength of the Soviet Union and the wisdom of its government.

Comrade Kim Il Sung further inquired how the preparations for the 45th anniversary of the October Revolution are coming along in the Soviet Union.

I told [him] that this year the 45th anniversary of the Great October socialist revolution in our country has been greeted by great successes in industry and good results in agriculture. Therefore, from the point of view of our internal successes, the 45th anniversary of October will be commemorated with festivity. How the international situation will develop is difficult to tell now.

When I talked about the successes of our industry in light of information from the C[entral] S[tatistics] D[irectorate] of the USSR, comrade Kim Il Sung said the following:

A restructuring of industry was recently carried out in the DPRK. The main thing in this restructuring was a change in the system of supplying industry and strengthening party control over industry. We increased the party apparatus in the party com[mittees] of industrial enterprises, gave the party com[mittees] significant rights, and this eradicated [sveli na net] former one-manager's rule [edinonachalie]. Three months have passed and I can state with confidence that all our large enterprises have begun working better.

The thing is that it is becoming difficult for one director and one manager to direct a large enterprise. Therefore we decided to organize a complex management, that is – management by a party com[mittee], which includes the director himself and which controls him. One should say right away that red tape and subjectivism have been reduced considerably in the solution of this or that question, and the directors themselves say that it has become easier for them to manage the enterprise on the basis of a collective decision of a party com[mittee]. [...]

DOCUMENT No. 2

Memorandum of Conversation between Soviet Ambassador to North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and Kim Il Sung, 14 November 1962

[Source: AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 18, papka 93, delo 5, listy 152-154. Obtained and translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

14 November 1962

[I] Visited comrade Kim Il Sung.

[I] informed him that Moscow is prepared to receive a military delegation at a time suitable to the Korean friends. Comrade Kim Il Sung thanked [us] for the prompt resolution of the question of the delegation's visit, having said that we have not yet confirmed the final composition of the delegation, but there was an exchange of opinions on this question in the Politburo and we are thinking of sending a military delegation headed by Kim Gwang-hyeop, my deputy, because the new Minister of Defense is ill and remains at the hospital for treatment. [We] are thinking of including the head of the General Staff in the composition of the delegation, and then we will see whom else [to include].

The situation with regard to the defense of our country is a difficult one; as I told you before, the country's air defense is exceptionally weak, a significant part of the coastline is not defended. Of course, we are unable to compete with the USA in the sphere of arms and defense activities; the USSR is doing this successfully. But we are compelled to ask for significant help from the Soviet Union this time. For defense of the coastline we will require, additionally, submarines, and for air defense – MIG-21s. Whereas now we have only 2 “surface-to-air” missile divisions, we will need to raise their number to 14 divisions. According to preliminary cost estimates, this aid will cost approximately 100 million rubles. But, as I told you before, at the present time we do not have such funds. Therefore we will request the Soviet government to provide us with weapons aid free of charge. I hope, said comrade Kim Il Sung, that comrades [Nikita] Khrushchev and [Frol] Kozlov understand the reasons for this request and I know that they are no less concerned than I about the defense of the Far Eastern forward post. Addressing himself to me, comrade Kim Il Sung said that you have toured the whole Eastern coast and have seen that it provides a convenient platform for the enemy's landing. You have also been to the South and saw for yourself that the situation on the border is tense. Therefore, we are counting on your help in the talks [in Moscow].

Then comrade Kim Il Sung asked me to convey hearty greetings personally from him to comrades Khrushchev, Kozlov, and [Aleksei] Kosygin and to inform them that the situation in the country is good, and that the plan for grain harvesting and preparation will be implemented fully. In industry, with the exception of the coal [industry], things are coming along just as well. The plans and obligations will be fulfilled this year.

Inside our party the situation is also good. We have now achieved firm unity and cohesion, there are no anti-party groups. In our opinion, the KWP is now cohesive and battle-ready as never before. Pass on to comrades Khrushchev [and] Kozlov that we, as before, fully support the

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Communist Party of the Soviet Union; we have no doubts in the correctness of its domestic and foreign policies.

I heard, comrade Kim Il Sung said further, that you had a conversation today with the Minister of External Trade Li Il Gen[?]. I am aware that talks are being held in Moscow at the experts level and I would very much request that Moscow support us on the main positions: that is, 10 thousand tons of cotton and 70-60 thousand tons of wheat. I have agreed on these questions with comrade Khrushchev, and I think it is not necessary to review them. Regarding cotton, you know that we do not grow our own cotton, and the Chinese for several years have had a bad harvest of cotton. They used to give us up to 40 thousand tons, but now, because of the bad harvest, they cannot do this. Although our chemical industry is developing successfully, it also is not yet capable of providing us with the necessary quantity of artificial fibers and cloth. Therefore I would ask you to request that comrades Kozlov and Kosygin support us in this question. We will take all measures to fulfill our mutual obligations to the Soviet Union, our situation improves from year to year, and we will repay the debt.

[Kim Il Sung] asked me when I would be leaving for Moscow and how long I would stay there. [I] replied that I would be leaving tomorrow and will stay in Moscow for as many days as the Plenum work requires. It would be good, said comrade Kim Il Sung, if you participated in the meetings with the military delegation in Moscow. I replied that my government, and not I, decide this question.

Again, I would like to thank comrades Khrushchev, Kozlov, [and] Kosygin for deep understanding of our needs and ask [you] to convey to them greetings and best wishes personally from me, said comrade Kim Il Sung.

DOCUMENT No. 3

Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 8 January 1965

[Source: MOL, XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1965, 73. doboz, IV-100, 001819/1965. Translated for CWIHP by Balázs Szalontai.]

In mid-December [Soviet Ambassador] Comrade Moskovsky returned from Moscow, and [...] told me the following about the negotiations which had taken place between Comrade Kosygin, the chairman of the Soviet Union's Council of Ministers, and the Korean party and government delegation that went to Moscow on the occasion of the November celebrations:

In the presence of Comrade Kosygin, Kim Il, the head of the delegation, raised the issue of certain injuries (pretensions), which were the following:

1) The Korean leaders were distrustful of the CPSU and the Soviet government, they could not count on that the Soviet government would keep the obligations related to the defense of Korea it assumed in the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, Kim Il said, and therefore they were compelled to keep an army of 700,000 and a police force of 200,000. These huge armed forces constituted enormous expenses for the national economy of the DPRK,

and this is why neither industry nor agriculture had made headway in the last two years, they [the KWP leaders] could not invest substantial sums in these [sectors].

Comrade Kosygin asked him what caused this distrust. In the view of Kim Il, the Soviet Union had betrayed Cuba at the time of the Caribbean crisis, and later it also betrayed the Vietnamese. For instance, it happened as late as 8 days after the Tonkin [Gulf] provocation [in August 1964] that the Soviet government made a mild pro-DRV statement.

Thereupon the chairman of the Council of Ministers replied the following: It was incomprehensible to him how could the Korean leaders be so uninformed, they had not the slightest idea of how costly it had been for the Soviet Union to protect the freedom and independence of Cuba. At the time of the Caribbean crisis, Comrade Kosygin said, the whole Soviet merchant fleet and several warships had been busy with shipments to Cuba. They shipped Cuba everything it needed. Before the crisis, Cuba had faced American imperialism, which was armed to the teeth, almost unarmed. Apart from the known missiles, the Soviet Union provided Cuba with all the modern arms, including the most up-to-date aircraft, tactical missiles, and other military equipment, that now enabled it to resist the pressure of American imperialism efficiently. He set forth in detail what sort of and how many aircraft, tanks, etc. had been shipped to Cuba as aid. Comrade Kosygin then added that at the time of the Caribbean crisis, it was neither China nor Korea but the Soviet Union that had stood on the brink of war, face to face with the United States.

As for the Tonkin provocation, Comrade Kosygin went on, for one thing, the Soviet government had assumed the Chinese and Korean military forces to be strong enough to protect the Democratic Republic of Vietnam against the American imperialist attacks, for these [countries] were closer to Vietnam than the Soviet Union. Secondly, the Korean leaders once again revealed their lack of information, for instance, they did not know that right after the Tonkin provocation, at the request of the government of the DRV the leaders of the Soviet state had paid particular attention to the situation in Vietnam, and decided that efficient modern arms should be urgently given to the Vietnamese comrades as aid. As a consequence of this decision, various military equipment of an adequate quantity was launched for Vietnam. The Chinese government gave its consent to their transport via China by air and by rail. To his knowledge, Comrade Kosygin said, the airborne units had already arrived in Vietnam, while the trains transporting other military equipment were on their way. Then he enumerated everything that had been sent to Vietnam in recent weeks. After that, Comrade Kosygin said that he was sorry to see that the Korean comrades, due to their lack of information, raised the issue of distrust with regard to the Soviet Union for no reason.

In the view of Kim Il, the Soviet Union did not support the national liberation struggle of the Asian and African peoples. Thereupon Comrade Kosygin asked him whether the freedom fighters of Africa were not equipped with Soviet arms, whether it was not the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and other socialist countries that shipped these arms to the Africans.

[...].

DOCUMENT No. 4

Record of a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador in the DPRK Comrade V.P. Moskovsky about the negotiations between the Soviet delegation, led by the USSR Council of Ministers Chairman Kosygin, and the governing body of the Korean Workers Party, which took place at the USSR Embassy in Pyongyang on 16 February 1965.

[Source: Czech Foreign Ministry Archive. Translated for CWIHP by Adolf Kotlik].

Participants in the conversation: CSSR c. V. Moravec, PRH (Hungary) c J. Kovacs, PRP (Poland) c. V. Napieraj, GDR c. H. Brie, PRMo c. D. Sharav, Cuba c. L. Vigoa, and the PRB chargé d'affaires a.i. c. L. Pavlov.

C. Moskovsky said at the beginning that the Korean side initiated the delegation's visit. During the delegation's stay in the PRV [sic; People's Republic of Vietnam, i.e., North Vietnam, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam—ed.], the DPRK Minister of Foreign Affairs Deputy Kim Jen Nam originally invited him for a hunt on 8 February this year. On 6 February, this invitation was hastily changed to Sunday, 7 February. C. Moskovsky went with Kim Jen Nam to a remote district about 100 km from Pyongyang. Soon after their arrival, Kim Jen Nam relayed to him Kim Il Sung's request that he finds out whether the delegation led by c. Kosygin would accept an invitation to visit the DPRK.

C. Moskovsky immediately promised to pass the request on but asked why it was necessary to discuss this matter at a hunt. Kim Yong Nam replied that they wanted to use this "common diplomatic way".

C. Gromyko and the delegation were informed about Kim Il Sung's wish the same evening. The delegation agreed if it could be only a two or three day excursion. The Korean side was informed about it. Then, on 10 February, the Soviet Embassy received a written invitation where the name of the delegation was not specified (a dotted line was in the place for the name), and the USSR titulary was asked to also relay to c. Kosygin that the Korean side was leaving it up to him to determine the character of the delegation (c. Moskovsky's impression: the Korean side was apparently concerned that if they chose an inappropriate name, the invitation might not be accepted). The format of the public announcement about the delegation's arrival was also finalized with c. Moskovsky. The delegation then decided to keep the same name it had in the PRV.

The whole time until the delegation's arrival in Beijing, the Korean side was trying to find out how long c. Kosygin would stay in the PRC. It was a bit disappointed when it learned that the delegation would leave the PRC for the DPRK as early as on 11 February. To wit, it expected longer talks in Beijing.

Out of the delegation's stay in the DPRK, c. Moskovsky concentrated namely on the course of talks with the KWP leadership.

He said that the first meeting took place on 12 February. It was agreed at the opening of the talks that first c. Kosygin would make his presentation, and then c. Kim Il Sung would present the KWP position on the next day. During the initial conversation, a program for the delegation's stay in the DPRK was also approved in general. Among other things, c. Kosygin requested that the program include only usual mandatory protocol actions and no other, like excursions to factories and so on. He again pointed out that the delegation could stay in the DPRK 3 days at the most.

In his 4-hour presentation, c. Kosygin talked about following issues:

1. The delegation's mission—to renew good friendly relations with the KWP and the DPRK.
2. He informed the KWP leadership about the internal situation in the USSR.
3. Foreign policy of the USSR.
4. Actions of the CPSU CC after the October plenary session.

Right at the beginning he also pointed out that his presentation should not be taken as his subjective opinion; he was going to show in talks how the whole leadership of the CPSU views these issues and what is its position.

In the course of the conversation he then informed the KWP leadership about the situation and good results in USSR manufacturing and its successful planned development. When talking about agriculture, he pointed out a number of difficulties the CPSU faces and deals with. He said that as it appears, shortcomings of the USSR agriculture are not affecting only the USSR but are characteristic for all socialist countries. He said that practically all our countries must buy grain abroad these days. True, some countries, like Romania, sell grain after the harvest but have shortages of it soon after and must buy it back. "Even though we had a good harvest in the USSR this year, we had to buy again. Many of these difficulties were caused by Khrushchev's incorrect directive to substitute the shortage of bread in the population's diet with increased consumption of meat, that is, with increased slaughtering of livestock. As a result of that, we have today low numbers of livestock, and we will be able to achieve the level of 1962 only by middle of 1966."

While talking about foreign policy, c. Kosygin informed the KWP leadership about all the most complicated problems of current international relations, and also advised it about the CPSU CC position on these issues.

He first talked about the last session of the Warsaw Pact political consultative committee. He said that it was summoned at the request of the GDR [German Democratic Republic; East Germany] on concerns of growing danger from the FRG [Federal Republic Germany; West Germany]. Kim Il Sung immediately reacted to it with a question whether the PRA [People's Republic of Albania] was invited to this session as well. C. Kosygin said yes but at the same time pointed out that the Albanian leadership responded with an insulting letter. Therefore it was agreed not to discuss the letter. Nevertheless, Albania was still given a chance to return. In connection with the Kim Il Sung's question, c. Kosygin informed the Korean side about the recent initiative of the USSR to renew mutual diplomatic representation between the USSR and the PRA, which the Albanian side completely ignored. That all illustrates, as c. Kosygin then commented that the PRA is excluding itself from the socialist camp.

As for the Warsaw consultations, c. Kosygin again pointed out that it was summoned due to the German issue coming to a head, and that the meeting of the political consultative committee unanimously called for taking necessary measures along the line of the Warsaw Pact Treaty. Among other things, a proposal was discussed there about setting up a Warsaw Pact Command Center that would be in charge of a permanent build-up of defenses. He also mentioned a negative position of the Romanian delegation, which so far prevented carrying out this measure. He further mentioned the Romanian delegation's initiative for abolishing of all pacts, including the Warsaw Pact.

He further briefly touched upon meetings of [Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei] Gromyko with [US President Lyndon B.] Johnson and [Secretary of State Dean] Rusk, about which the USSR Ambassador already informed c. Kim Il Sung earlier. In connection with that, Kim Il Sung again pointed out that during these meetings, the DPRK and its request of American troops' withdrawal from South Korea was not mentioned. C. Kosygin assured him again that the USSR identifies fully with support of the DPRK foreign policy. When talking about the USSR foreign policy, c. Kosygin said that until the October [1964] plenary of the CPSU CC, this part of the CPSU policy was also affected by number of Khrushchev's subjective influences that the CPSU CC does not agree with. Then c. Kim Il Sung interrupted him with a remark: "Yes, yes, we even thought that he would go to [Chancellor Ludwig] Erhard in the FRG in order to sell the GDR."

C. Kosygin did not react to this remark and continued that after the October [plenum], different relations prevailed in the CPSU CC, the evidence of which are also the delegation's talks with the KWP leadership. "We have reintroduced principles of collective decision making and collective reason. That is the fundamental pre-requisite for mutual relations among fraternal parties. This collective reason can better judge what unites us, what divides us, and what we do not agree with. It is best suited to prevent us from revealing openly what we do not agree with, and giving thus a chance to imperialists to use our disagreements against us." He said that every country has many special features, especially of national character. Khrushchev allegedly did not show any interest in considering these differences. That, of course, was not right. "Vietnam has special features; by the way, we delivered there a lot of weapons and ammunition recently; Cuba has special features; our aid there also represents a considerable contribution to the struggle of the Cuban people; every country has special features, and we have to take it into account. However, these special features must not override our common line. You were accusing us of many things. True, your own objections were restrained and dealt mostly with economic problems but you were bringing up and stressing many Chinese accusations." To that, Kim Il Sung retorted that the KWP line has always been independent and not Chinese. He said: "We have always been for pure Marx-Leninism without any amendments." and he repeated: "We apply the purest Marx-Leninism and condemn both the fabricated additions of the Chinese, and the mistakes of the USSR."

Then he asked c. Kosygin three questions:

1. What is the USSR position on Indonesia leaving the UN?
2. How is the CPSU CC dealing with the problem of calling an international meeting of fraternal parties[?]; whether and how the USSR supports the liberation movement.

3. Whether the CPSU CC has any critical comments on the KWP.

C. Kosygin reacted to it immediately. About Indonesia leaving the UN, he said that they exchanged very nice letters with Mr. Sukarno. In his letter, Mr. Sukarno expressed a concern that this step by Indonesia might damage relations with the Soviet Union. The Soviet side assured him that the USSR policy towards Indonesia would not change and remain friendly. However, the Soviet government considered it necessary to mention to him that it would be more appropriate if Indonesia stayed with the UN. "True, we agree with his criticism of the UN but we believe it was not necessary to slam the door." Sukarno allegedly replied with a nice letter where he expressed how glad he was that relations with the USSR would not change.

About consultations of fraternal parties, c. Kosygin said that the date March 1 for the meeting [in Moscow] of the editorial commission would be kept. He stated that the meetings would only be of consultative character, and no joint document is expected to be issued. There is also not supposed to be any request for future consultations, as it was with the last consultations of FP [sic]. "The objective of meetings will be similar consultations to those you regularly hold with the Chinese and that you held with 22 delegations from Latin America." Kim Il Sung commented: "That's bad. It will cause a discord in the ICWM [International Communist World Movement]." C. Kosygin replied that the position of the CPSU CC and all 60 fraternal parties is solid and unchangeable. "All 60 fraternal parties demand clarification of the situation. Should we now reject this requirement, we would get into a conflict with those 60 fraternal parties. If the meeting is organized, only 3 parties will be against it. It is thus up to you whether you participate or not. The date of the meeting is firmly set on March 1, and we have a final commitment from 19 fraternal countries. As for the agenda of the talks, you probably expect that we will mainly discuss polemics within the ICWM. That would be incorrect, though. The main topic at the talks will be how to achieve unification of the ICWM."

As for the question of the CPSU attitude towards the KWP, c. Kosygin pointed out that he had talked about these issues briefly with c. Kim Il Sung during his stay in Moscow [in October 1964] for celebrations of the 47th anniversary of the GOSR [Great October Socialist Revolution]. "Our attitude towards you," he said, "is the same as towards other fraternal parties and countries. We were glad in the past that our mutual friendship was flourishing. These relations, though not by our fault, deteriorated considerably in the last years. I would like to tell you that we are aware of your specificities, and therefore we visited you in order to talk with you about what unites us. However, you have many objections to us. You are accusing us that we do not fight with imperialism and that we even side with it. Do you really think that namely we would be capable to align ourselves with imperialism against communist parties?"

Here again c. Kim Il Sung interjected with a remark that Khrushchev was buddy-buddy with Eisenhower and Kennedy. C. Kosygin only replied that it is not appropriate to make remarks like that at a meeting of such a high level. "I did not meet with you in order to badmouth Khrushchev. Let us rather discuss how to further fight with imperialists. Let us establish a program for this struggle and reach a consensus about what method is better, whether yours and the Vietnamese, that is Chinese, or ours and that of other fraternal countries. By the way, that is one of the main issues we want to discuss at meetings."

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“You ask how we are helping the national liberation movement. For instance, take Indonesia. We provided all their military equipment. Indonesian aircraft, weapons for ground forces and navy, all of which is from us. Our military advisors are training the Indonesian army, and I think it is no secret to you that when Indonesians were not yet able to fight with these weapons, our people were doing it for them. And now you tell me how do you fight with imperialism?” C. Kim Il Sung replied that their main means are meetings and press. C. Kosygin remarked: “You see, you call this help but you have to understand that the time for meetings is behind us. Only actions count today. For instance Cuba. Where would she be if she did not have a well-equipped and armed army? And who provided both clothing and all weapons and organization of this army? Or how about the PRV, who was again bombarded in the last days by American planes?”

I would like to tell you that I talked about it with Mao Zedong during our stopover in Beijing. I asked him what they were doing to support the PRV. I was told that they allegedly moved a large army to the Vietnamese border just in case there is a big war. But why wait for a big war, I asked, when Vietnam needs help now, immediately. We will give you immediately and free of charge as many planes and weapons as you need; only help the PRV. If they destroy 100 of your planes, we will immediately give you other [planes], even 200, but help.

Mao Zedong also talked about how 4 American cruisers operate in Vietnamese waters. I told him: Sink them! We will give you weapons even for that, our most modern submarines. Do you want ten of them? You will have them, and completely free of charge. Just sink those cruisers! Do you want to know how Mao Zedong took it? He turned away from me and changed the subject. He started to talk about the history of China. Despite of that, I was still calling on the Chinese comrades: Defend Vietnam! We will give you completely free of charge all the necessary weapons and planes and submarines. And if they destroy them, we are willing to give you new ones and twice as many. But help Vietnam. Are you not its close neighbors?” Kim Il Sung and all other members of the Korean delegation listened especially to this part of c. Kosygin's talk. Kim Il Sung himself in no time asked c. Kosygin how he views the current situation in South Vietnam, and with an obvious concern he then asked whether American provocations would not lead to a “great war.”

In the ensuing conversation, c. Kosygin made the KWP leadership familiar in detail with the USSR aid to the National Liberation Movement and with training of guerilla cadres in the Soviet Union, and he asked Kim Il Sung: “How can we write about it in the press? And you cry to the whole world that we do nothing.” C. Kim Il Sung replied: “Well, we are finally publishing in *The Truth* scathing articles against imperialism.” C. Kosygin: “But I told you already that writing in the press and calling names does not cut it anymore. Tell me though, which of these two ways of support of the National Liberation Movement is more effective?” C. Kim Il Sung did not answer that.

As c. Moskovsky, who was present at the talks, told us, it also became obvious during the conversation about Vietnam that the KWP leadership had no information at all either about the situation in South Vietnam or about the quantity, kinds, and strength of weapons that the USA deployed in South Korea.

C. Moskovsky told us about the second meeting on February 13 that it started at 10 o'clock and lasted till 2:30 pm. C. Kim Il Sung was talking and was occasionally interrupted by c. Kosygin's questions. According to c. Moskovsky's assessment, Kim Il Sung acted objectively and calmly. He first thanked C. Kosygin for accepting the invitation and for his presentation at the meeting in the Great Theatre. He said that this presentation was a remarkable contribution to Marx-Leninism, and it allegedly also contributed to the increased enthusiasm of the Korean people. He also thanked for the honest and open conversation at the first meeting that he regarded as a significant contribution to strengthening of unity of the two countries. He then especially thanked for clarification of the situation in Vietnam and the Soviet Union. He therefore also wants to openly and honestly inform the Soviet delegation about the situation in the DPRK and about the KWP CC position on the discussed issues.

When talking about the DPRK, he said: "We are now struggling to fulfill the 7-year plan put forth by the IV Plenary of the KWP. However, I also have to tell you that we are in a bad shape.

When we were putting together this long term plan, we lacked most of all necessary experience for working it out. We used what we learned from the previous three and five year plans. That, of course, was the cause of our difficulties today, our complex situation. To make things worse, we suffered greatly because of disagreements with you and other socialist countries, and because of disagreements within the ICWM. That is, the goals of the 7-year plan presumed aid from and further broadening of cooperation with you and other socialist countries. We were counting on this aid but, unfortunately, it did not materialize. That was the main reason why we did not fulfill the plan.

Due to the Caribbean [i.e., Cuban missile] crisis and the American aggression in Vietnam, we were forced to quickly build up our defenses and especially our defense industry. We had to look for financing exclusively within our own country, and we could get it only at the expense of other sectors. I am sure I don't have to tell you how large amounts of money it involved. That is why we are currently falling behind in completing the 7-year plan by one year, and we still need 3 to 5 years in order to fulfill the seven year plan at least in basic parameters. However, 4 years and 2 months have passed and we have fulfilled less than half of the 7-year plan's goals.

[...].

DOCUMENT No. 5

From the Embassy in Korea: "Transmittal of the Situation of the Soviet-Korean Talks" and the Discussion between Kim Il Sung and Kosygin, 2 March 1965

[Source: PRC MFA 109-02833-03. P.38-40. Translated for NKIDP by Charles Kraus.]

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Transmittal of the Situation of the Korean-Soviet Talks

The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Origins of North Korea's Policy of Self-Reliance in National Defense

[To the] Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

One [North] Korean student who heard Premier Kim [Il Sung's] transmitting report on the situation of the [North] Korean-Soviet talks on the 27th [of February] subsequently said to our [Chinese] student studying abroad [in Korea] that:

(1) The Premier had [lost his] temper this time, [which] has not happened when treating foreign guests over the past several years. Premier Kim and [Alexei] Kosygin quarreled over the question of supporting [North] Vietnam, [North] Korea, and Cuba. Premier Kim inquired to Kosygin, what kind of support have you [the Soviets] given to Vietnam! [He said that the Soviets] give only lip service to us [North Korea] and Cuba, no real action—what support have you given[?] You see with the Chinese [Communist] Party, thousands of people came out to the streets, the leaders came out, [but] what have you done[?]

(2) Kosygin inquired to Kim Il Sung, why do you always follow the Chinese Communist Party[?] Kim Il Sung said [that] we do not follow the Communist Party of the Soviet Union nor the Chinese Communist Party. [If you] want to say we follow something, we follow Marxism-Leninism. Our Party [the Korean Workers' Party] adheres to the principle of independence, not to [the principle of] following the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or the Chinese Communist Party.

(3) Premier Kim said [that] when we adhere to the anti-imperialist struggle in any scenario, you laugh at us, saying that our clothes are worn out, [our] standing of living is low, [but] we adhere to the anti-imperialist struggle. It does not matter if our clothes are worn out. The original Seven-Year Plan meant to improve the peoples' lives (now the Seven-Year Plan's goal of improving peoples' lives cannot be fully achieved because of the anti-imperialist struggle). Regardless, we wear worn out [clothes] and life is not as good, [but] we must persist in the anti-imperialist struggle and not abandon the banner of the anti-imperialist struggle.

(4) Premier Kim said [that] if you want to hold your conference on 1 March then hold [it], [but] we will not participate in your splittist meeting. [If] you want to hold [it] then that is up to you.

[Kim] also said that right now [though] Khrushchev has stepped down, it seems that the Soviet leadership has not changed [and] Khrushchev's way is still carried out. It seems that Soviet revisionism is not the work of one man, Khrushchev, but of the entire leadership clique. The future of the anti-revisionist task is still very important. For anti-revisionism, domestically [North] Korea needs to do two things: one is to hold high the anti-imperialist banner; the other is to carry out the revolutionizing of education for intellectuals. The wages for intellectuals are too high, [they are] affluent, and pay no attention to ideological reform; they have gone bad. So [we] need to carry out the revolutionizing of education for intellectuals.

[Chinese] Embassy in [North] Korea
2 March 1965

[...]

DOCUMENT No. 6

“Information on the Meeting of [Albanian] Comrade Piro Bita with the [North] Korean Ambassador to Tirana,” 7 August 1967

[Source: AQPPSH, MPP Korese, D 2, V. 1967. Translated for CWIHP by Enkel Daljani.]

INFORMATION
ON THE MEETING OF COMRADE PIRO BITA WITH THE KOREAN
AMBASSADOR TO TIRANA, ON 7 AUGUST 1967

On his request, I received the Korean ambassador. After I asked him about any news from Korea, he answered as follows:

[...]

“Comrade Kim Il Sung teaches us that we must not forget that the construction of socialism in our country is being done while imperialism, which is the enemy of socialism, continues to exist and that is why we need to achieve both the economic construction and the military construction. If we should overvalue one of them or undervalue the other, we would be going to the extreme, so we must combine the two. At the Party Conference of last year, comrade Kim Il Sung reiterated that neither of the two should have a one-sided character.

“Comrade Kim Il Sung teaches us that we must fight the belief that should the war start, the economy will be destroyed and that is why we must concentrate our forces into the military construction. At the same time we must fight the tendency to think that we are doing well and that is why we need to only pay attention to the economic construction and disregard the military one.

“Both these needs are undivided from each other, because while strengthening the economy, the life quality of the people and our defensive power are increased and we can show the world the supremacy of the socialist system. By getting stronger militarily, we will be able to withstand any aggression, and that is why our enemies will never dare to attack us. We must strengthen the defense of our country especially at the present when the American imperialism is waging in all the continents wars of an aggressive character, is threatening the socialist countries, and is following the strategy of leaving the large states alone while turning the blade of its weapons against the small or separated socialist countries to swallow them. In other words, the American imperialism is following the strategy of swallowing one by one the small socialist countries and leaving the larger ones for later. In [December] 1962, at the 5th Plenum of the party, comrade Kim Il Sung reiterated that we must take even further the course of the combination of the economic construction with the military one keeping in mind the events in the Caribbean and the incident at the Tonkin Bay. [sic]

“Today the situation is difficult due to the aggression against Vietnam, due to the aggression of Israel in the Middle East, and due to the provocations at the line of demarcation in Korea. Our party reiterates that in these moments we must strengthen the defensive power of the country. We have increased even more that before our defensive strength and the armament of

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the people. This is the policy that we have also followed in the past, but recently we intensified it even more, because of the severity of the situation.

“We must:

- 1) Transform our popular military into a military of cadres, which means a strong military in terms of quality and which will be able to rise up to its feet immediately after being called upon.
- 2) Modernize our military. In other words, we must have a military which possesses modern technology and strategic capability.
- 3) Arm the entire people. We must use the course of the masses in the military, so that it may be able to face the present conditions. Because in the present conditions, should a war start, there will be no front and rear lines, the entire country will become the front. The entire people must defend the country. The workers must defend the factories and the peasants, their cooperatives.
- 4) Fortify the entire country. We must make sure that [North] Korea is turned into a gigantic bunker that can withstand rockets, tanks, chemical weapons, aviation, etc.

“It is possible that the Albanian military delegation that visited our country saw these preparations and construction. We have done this not only at the front line and in the shores, but also at every corner of our country. We are fully prepared that should the enemy dare to attack us, we will deliver sudden, death-spelling blows to him.

[...]