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MEMORANDUM

of a Conversation with the Ambassadors of the CSSR [Czechoslovak Socialist Republic],

Comrade Holub, and of the People's Republic of Poland, Comrade Naperei, on 28 January 1968, from 2.30 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.

[Source: MfAA, G-A 360; translated by Karen Riechert]

Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK

Pyongyang, 29 January 1968

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The meeting took place at the suggestion of the ambassador of the CSSR.

Comrade Ambassador Holub informed us that the chairman of the Korean component of the Military Commission had invited the acting head of the Czechoslovak and the Polish component of the Neutral [Nations] Supervisory Commission for a conversation in Kaesong on 27 January 1968. General Pak Chong-guk asked both comrades to pass on the following to the head of the Swiss component of the Neutral [Nations] Commission:

The incursion of the American ship constitutes a violation of the armistice treaty. How we will deal with the ship and the crew is exclusively a matter for the sovereignty of the DPRK. The American imperialists openly invaded the territorial waters of the DPRK and tried to solve the problem by force. But they should apologize, since otherwise we would also use force. If, however, U.S. imperialism attempts to threaten us and to intimidate us with nuclear weapons, then we say that the Korean people are prepared to destroy them in any given moment. If U.S. imperialism uses force, it must realize that it has to accept the consequences that will come from a further aggravation of the situation. It is an empty illusion if the American imperialists believe they can get back the ship and the crew by force. They will miscalculate if they believe they can solve the problem with the government of the DPRK by the use of force. If they use force, we cannot help but

answer with armed forces. In this case the American imperialists will get nothing but the dead bodies of their men, who are anyway nothing other than criminals. However, if the U.S. imperialists really want to solve the matter, it is impossible to do so by means of threats and intimidation. It would be better if they would concede that these criminals are prisoners of war, and if they would ask us to treat them as prisoners of war. The captain and crew admitted they had committed criminal activities. But the government of the DPRK nevertheless treats them in a humane way. The injured got medical attention and the corpse of the person killed while being arrested is still there. All other members of the crew are in good health and encounter no problems whatsoever.

Following this message, which Pak Chong-guk again asked us to pass on to the Swiss representative, he remarked further that if the Americans wish to get details on the crew, they should approach the Korean contingent of the Military Commission directly and not attempt to get this mediated through the Neutral Commission.

The Czechoslovak and Polish acting chairmen (the new chairman of the Polish contingent of the Commission will arrive here on 30 January. The chairman of the Czechoslovak contingent of the Neutral Commission, General Toman, was in Pyongyang at this time.) passed on this message from General Pak Chong-guk – which he later also transmitted in writing - to the chairman of the Swiss component of the Neutral Commission, Mr. Barbei, on 27 January 1968 around 11 p.m. Barbei immediately transmitted this message to the chairman of the American component of the Military Commission, Rear-Admiral Smith. During the subsequent discussion [handwritten addition: between Ambassador Holub, Naperei and myself] the following view was unanimously drafted: Altogether this answer by Pak Chong-guk to the American request to get more details about the injured and the dead, as well as the message by the Chief of Staff of the 8th Army, General Friedman, has to be considered as a positive moment, because it shows a way to establish direct contact between the American and the Korean side. Also the fact that the DPRK declared its willingness to consider the members of the crew of the American ship *Pueblo* as prisoners of war is to be appraised positively, since this excludes [the possibility that]

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they will have to stand trial as spies. Such a view, on the other hand, implies of course that the USA would have to admit that they violated the armistice treaty.

The Polish ambassador emphasized that he considers this a spark of hope, although he is still viewing the situation as severe. I myself pointed to the fact that the decision of the government of the DPRK to send a delegation to the Security Council conference has to be considered as a similar spark of hope, since it shows the readiness of the DPRK to alleviate or even to solve the complicated situation by means of talks or negotiations. This also applies in case participation at the Security Council conference will not be possible. Ambassador Holub believes the situation currently has to be assessed, all in all, as follows: As long as there are talks or chances for talks, one cannot speak of an imminent outbreak of armed conflict.

Afterwards Ambassador Holub informed us about information available to him, according to which the American Ambassador in Warsaw has been conducting talks with a Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PR of Poland on the issue of the incident with the American ship *Pueblo*. The same Deputy Foreign Minister met after this conversation with the acting ambassador of the DPRK in the PR of Poland. Comrade Naperei remarked that this information would be correct, but he did not yet have any further details about this conversation at this time.

Afterwards Comrade Naperei informed us that early next week a member of the Politburo of the Romanian Communist Party, Apostol, will be coming to Pyongyang to meet for talks with the KWP leadership. Comrade Holub said he had also heard about this and planned to talk with the local Romanian ambassador, Comrade Popa, about it.

Wrapping it up, it was agreed that Comrade Naperei would inform the Soviet ambassador, and Comrade Jarck the Hungarian ambassador, about the content of the conversation between the Polish and Czechoslovakian comrades in Kaesong and General Pak Chongguk.

Signed: Jarck