

Twenty three days after requesting an appointment, on May 13 I was received by Ri Jong-ok [Ri Jong Ok], the vice-president of the Cabinet of Ministers of the DPRK. (emphasis in original)

On this occasion, I handed over the letter on behalf of Vice-President Gheorghe Radulescu, referring to economic cooperation proposals with the DPRK.

Ri Jong-ok did not make any sort of comment on the substance of the letter, limiting himself to thanking me for the document and telling me that he would get back to us after examining it more carefully.

Among other topics discussed in this meeting, my interlocutor underlined the fact that the DPRK was facing a series of difficulties caused by the presence of Americans and Japanese in South Korea, which forced the North Koreans to reanalyze their 7-year plan and direct it towards strengthening their defense capacity. This situation resulted in a decrease of production output growth (from the planned 18% to 14%) and, implicitly, to the extension of the initial terms of the 7-year plan up to 1970.

Ri Jong-ok showed that the technical level in North Korean factories was low, the qualification of the work force was lacking and the quality of constructions and especially of consumer goods was well below demand.

It is worth mentioning that among the issues raised by Ri Jong-ok is the condemnation of Japanese militarism.

In this respect, he stated that Japan was just as dangerous as the US, as it was just as responsible for the war in Vietnam as the US and it represented a threat for Asia and especially for the DPRK, and it was creeping back into South Korea and under the influence of the US and of the South Koreans it was committing all sorts of discriminatory acts against the DPRK (they are repressing the democratic education of Korean residents, they refuse economic exchanges, they reject the participation of North Koreans sports teams in competitions organized in Japan, etc.) Politically, Ri Jong- said, Japan was a school of perversion and therefore an enemy against which the Korean people should fight just as much as it was fighting against American imperialism.

Signed: N. Popa

13.V./6.