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15 DECEMBER 1969 Korea]

KOREAN-CHINESE RELATIONS IN 1969

(memo)

A notable shift occurred in the direction of normalization of political relations between the DPRK and China in 1969. The patience and restraint with respect to Peking displayed by the Korean leadership has brought definite results which are being perceived quite optimistically in Pyongyang. Recent events confirm the assumption that at the 2 October Peking meeting the sides came to a common opinion about the need to improve relations.

There were no signs of an improvement of Korean-Chinese relations in the first half of the year. According to some information at the end of last year and the beginning of the current year the Korean side had unofficial contacts at the level of Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Seong-cheol and his deputy Kim Cheh-bong [sic; proper Korean spelling unknown] with the purpose of exchanging opinions on the questions of the upcoming Moscow Conference of Communist Parties and a border settlement. However, these contacts did not lead to any improvement of relations and, as is evident, did not influence the KWP position regarding the Moscow Conference. [Translator's note: "N. Shubnikov" was written in the left margin].

Border incidents provoked by the Chinese side have periodically erupted on the Korean-Chinese border on the Yalu and Tumen Rivers. The most critical of the incidents we know of occurred on 15 March (on the day of the second Chinese provocation on Damansky Island), when about 50 Chinese servicemen dressed in civilian clothing raided a Korean village. The Korean authorities displayed exceptional patience in this case, refraining from using force against the provocateurs. In the words of residents of the border city of Hyesan the Chinese have been waging a "water war", having built a strong dam in that region and cutting off 2/3 of the river so that the water pressure washed out that part of the Korean bank on which there hangs an enormous monument in honor of the 1937 victory of the Korean partisans at Pochonbo. A propaganda duel with the aid of loudspeakers and billboards has continued along the entire border.

[Translator's note: there is a stamp at the end of the first page stating that "the material is informative and the CPSU CC Department has been familiarized with [it]. Katerinich; 15D/6 10 February 1970. Sector chief, (Katerinich)]. [[To the]] archives", and one additional illegible signature].

The Korean comrades have been silent about the border incidents in view of its special position with respect to China, explained by a fear of an increase of subversive provocative activity on its part, not to mention taking retaliatory measures. In response to our information about Chinese provocations on the Soviet border Kim Il Sung responded with a certain measure of sincerity responded that they themselves "would have to find a mediator to settle questions of border incidents with the Chinese" (from a 14 April 1969 conversation with the Soviet Ambassador). Additional confirmation of the rift in DPRK relations with China was that the Korean comrades did not react at all to the 9th CPC Congress. Not a single report about China appeared in the Korean press during the period from February through June.

During that period the behavior of Chinese diplomats in Pyongyang was defiant. "The Chinese are refusing to accept the notes of our MFA like the notes of our Embassy in Peking", Cde. Pak Seong-cheol complained["."] They accept invitations to the DPRK MFA as [they] wish. About 30 times we have suggested they remove the photo showcase from the wall of the Embassy; finally, for two years already we have been proposing to conduct a joint repair of the Sup'ung [Shuifeng] Hydroelectric Station, but everything was fruitless. All their behavior is pure tactlessness." (from a 1 April 1969 conversation with the Soviet Ambassador).

Some signs of normalization started to be displayed only in the middle of 1969. According to unofficial information available in the staff of the Soviet military attaché in June and July talks of authorized representatives of both sides on the question of a border settlement were held on Chinese territory. The sides came to a mutual agreement regarding the passage of the border for almost its entire length. One of the main contentious questions, the ownership of Paektu Mountain, was finally settled by the border passing through the center of the lake located at the summit of the mountain, dividing Paektu into two equal parts. One has to suppose that the agreement achieved put an end to the long Korean-Chinese dispute with respect to Paektu Mountain, although obviously it did not satisfy the Koreans, who wanted to own this mountain entirely, it being a symbol of revolutionary traditions for them. Moreover, because of the overly rigid position of the Chinese side several other sectors of the border remain unfinalized, which was obviously intentionally left unresolved by the Chinese in order to have the ability to pressure the Korean side in the future. Nevertheless the situation on the border has been normalized to a considerable degree; no information has come about any new incidents.

Both sides have noted the latest anniversary of the treaty of friendship, cooperation, and mutual aid (July 11th) on a higher level than last year. For the first time in several years the DPRK Committee for Cultural Relations With Foreign Countries [*s granitsey*] and the Korean-Chinese Friendship Society sent letters of greeting to the respective Chinese organizations on this occasion. Anniversary events held in connection with this date in the DPRK and China found a comparatively broad reflection in the Korean press.

The 42nd anniversary of the creation of the PLA (1 August) was also noted at a higher level in the DPRK. Prominent Korean leaders, Pak Seong-cheol, O Jin U, Jeong Jun-taek, and others, attended a cocktail party and film showing held on this occasion by the Chinese military attaché. (A Deputy Minister of Defense of the PRC was the senior guest at the 8 February Korean reception in Peking on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the KNA, and at the reception in the Soviet Embassy on the occasion of the 51st anniversary of the Soviet Army [the senior guest was] the Deputy Commanding General of Artillery of the KNA).

Thus, it was already evident from protocol measures that some shifts in Korean-Chinese relations are beginning to take shape and that the Korean side is exhibiting greater initiative in this matter.

"We have offered a proposal about the normalization of relations", declared Cde. Pak Seong-cheol to the Soviet Ambassador on 11 August 1969, "but the Chinese are not yet entering into discussions and have not yet even given an answer". Exactly a month later during the Korean delegation's return from Ho Chi Minh's funeral, a meeting was held in Peking between Choe Yong-geon and Zhou Enlai. According to some information agreement in principle was reached at the meeting about inviting a DPRK delegation to take part in the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the PRC and holding discussions.

However, some circumstances of the following period give reason to think that the Korean comrades were evidently not completely confident that they would receive the invitation and that the discussions would be held, let alone yield any success. On 1 October the DPRK press did not publish any of its own

anniversary materials about China. Cde. Kim Il Sung's 30 September telegram of greetings to the Chinese premier on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the PRC was exceptionally brief and dry.^[1] The invitation to the Chinese holiday was obviously received so late that the Korean guests did not make it to the government reception held in Peking on the evening of 30 September.

The DPRK Party-government delegation to the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the PRC as quite representative from both the Party and government sides: it included Choe Yong-geon, a member of the Politburo Presidium, KWP CC Secretary, and Chairman of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly (head of the delegation); Pak Seong-cheol, KWP CC Politburo member (now a member of the Politburo Presidium), and Deputy Chairman of the DPRK Cabinet of Ministers; and also Kim Yeong-nam [Kim Yong-nam], Deputy Chief of the KWP CC International Department and Kim Cheh-suk [sic; proper Korean spelling unknown], Korean chargé in China.

The delegation was splendidly greeted in Peking and at a high level. The Premier of the PRC State Council held a reception in its honor, which passed in a "friendly atmosphere". On 2 October talks were held between the head of the Korean delegation and Zhou Enlai in which Ye Jianying, Deputy Chairman of the CPC CC Military Council; Xie Fuzhi, Deputy Premier of the State Council; Qiu Huizao, Deputy Chief of the PLA General Staff (members of the CPC CC Politburo); and Han Nianlong, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, took part. The talks, like the government reception, passed in a "friendly atmosphere".

The Korean comrades officially informed the Soviet Embassy about the results of the trip of the delegation to Peking; however, the information was extremely skimpy. In particular, Kim Cheh-bong [sic; proper Korean spelling unknown], Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, informed the Soviet chargé that "now conditions can be created which allow an improvement of relations in the future", inasmuch as the sides "reached agreement to restore contacts, communications, and consultations".

As far as the Embassy knows, Korean diplomats abroad (for example, in China, the CSSR) who say approximately the following give a more optimistic evaluation to these discussions in unofficial conversations: now no unresolved questions remained between the DPRK and China; China completely supported the DPRK policy with respect to South Korea and even promised to give aid in the even of a conflict on the Korean peninsula as it was in the period of the Korean War. It seems that the unofficial statements of the Korean diplomats abroad can be believed no less than the official information of a DPRK MFA representative on such a complex and delicate question as how are their relations with "the big neighbor" are for the Korean comrades.

After the Korean-Chinese discussions in Peking the strained nature of relations between the sides actually diminished perceptibly. The Korean press began to publish materials about China, although not many, [began] to publish excerpts from articles of *Renmin Ribao* and Xinhua reports directed against the US, Japan, and South Korea. Reciprocal visits of groups and delegations have increased (it is true, without press reports). The word "comrade" has again started to be used in official telegrams of greetings. The official activity of the "Society of Chinese Emigrants in Korea" has been resumed and the schools for the children of Chinese in the DPRK have reopened.

The Korean side noted the 19th anniversary of the entry of the People's Volunteers in the Korean War (25 October) with emphatic warmth. According to unofficial information, this time large groups of Chinese who come from neighboring regions of China took part in the celebration of this anniversary in the border cities of Sinuiju and Hyesan. Some wording of previous years were changed in the anniversary materials of the Korean press: in particular, the entry of the People's Volunteers into the war is now tied not to "the appearance of a direct threat to China" but to the threat to the security of the socialist countries and international peace; unlike past years "constant and active support to the Chinese people in its just struggle for the liberation of Taiwan" is being expressed (*Rodong Sinmun*, 25 October 1969).

The number of Chinese specialists giving the DPRK technical assistance has recently increased (according to some information, they number up to 400 people right now, that is, considerably more than the Soviet specialists, although the volume of current commitments for China to give technical assistance in civil construction is comparatively small – 70-80 million rubles). A vacuum tube plant, a textile mill, a cellulose and paper mill, a refrigerator plant, a sugar mill, and several small power stations are being built in the DPRK with Chinese aid.

According to information coming from the Chinese Embassy in Pyongyang, the trade turnover between the DPRK and China might grow this year if the Korean side performs its obligations for the amount of deliveries, the range, and the quality of goods. However, in the words of the Chinese diplomats, this year the DPRK is poorly supplying their goods, which are at a low quality at that (the Chinese are especially dissatisfied with Korean machine tools); in response, the Chinese side is reducing its deliveries. As a result, the total volume of trade turnover in 1969 is approximately 115,000,000 rubles against the level of 125 million rubles actually reached in 1968. The list of Korean and Chinese goods remains as before.

China continues to supply the DPRK with military equipment: tanks, aircraft, and spare parts of them, artillery, small-arms, and ammunition. Trains coming from China to the DPRK with this equipment have been noticed by members of the diplomatic corps during trips to Peking.

There are also signs that DPRK and Chinese scientists are conducting cooperation in the area of atomic research and possibly in the construction of a second atomic reactor (the first was built with Soviet aid). The arrival in the DPRK of Chinese specialists in nuclear physics has been noted. The supposition that the acute shortage of electrical power in the DPRK is explained not only by the small amount of precipitation, but also by a diversion of a considerable part of it to the needs of atomic research or certain practical work in this field is not unfounded.

The open and sometimes even demonstrative support which the Korean comrades again now express for Chinese nuclear explosions, after a certain normalization of relations, is symptomatic. This is demonstrated by the "warm congratulations in the name of the entire Korean people" sent to Peking leaders Mao Zedong, Lin Biao (!), and Zhou Enlai on 8 October by Cdes. Kim Il Sung and Choe Yong-geon and also the congratulatory telegrams of the DPRK Academy of Sciences and the Korean-Chinese Friendship Society about the nuclear weapons tests in China held in September of this year. The fact that on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the PRC Cde. Kim Il Sung emphatically wished China "new successes in the struggle to strengthen defense capacity" also called attention to itself.

In 1969 there was no exchange of representatives or delegations between the DPRK and China in the fields of culture, science, sports, or between public organizations. Evidently, due to well-known reasons cultural cooperation will remain and in the future be the most complex area of Korean-Chinese relations.

The opportunities for Chinese, as well as any other, propaganda to the DPRK are quite limited by virtue of strict restrictive measures on the Korean side.

Peking conducts radio daily broadcasts on four one-hour schedules in Korean (from 2000 to 2400 Pyongyang time); the broadcasts are received in Pyongyang audibly, almost without interference. The two main themes of these radio broadcasts are praise of Mao Zedong and anti-Sovietism; almost no special materials about Korea are ever broadcast.

The influence of Peking radio propaganda on the DPRK population is insignificant on the whole: the bulk of the Korean population does not have radio receivers, and receivers available for personal or public use are tuned to one Pyongyang wavelength. For DPRK citizens listening to Peking, Moscow, or other foreign radio is fraught with the risk of being accused of disloyalty. Especially reliable cadre of a more or less high level naturally constitute an exception.

The PRC Embassy tries as much as possible to spread propaganda literature among other embassies in Pyongyang, including that of an anti-Soviet content. At the request of Cde. Pak Seong-cheol, it does not sent such literature to Korean institutions.

A frequently-refreshed photo display window is maintained on the wall of the Chinese Embassy in Pyongyang in spite of numerous demands of the Korean

MFA to remove it. However, the population is actually prohibited from passing along the wall on which the display is located.

By virtue of the tense nature of Korean-Chinese relations until recently diplomats of the Chinese Embassy did not have such contacts with the local population and Korean institutions as, for example, Soviet diplomats have. The Chinese use events held at their Embassy which, it is true, are infrequent, for anti-Soviet propaganda, and also their contacts with representatives of Afro-Asian countries in Pyongyang. At the 1 October reception in the PRC Embassy last year the Chinese chargé made a crude anti-Soviet speech. The Korean comrades reacted to the attacks of the Chinese with a report about this reception which was as short as possible, and placed on the last page of only a single Korean newspaper. There were no such attacks by the Chinese at official events held at the PRC Embassy in 1969.

In a word, when possible the Korean comrades obstruct the dissemination of Chinese propaganda in the DPRK inasmuch as they are connected with praise of Mao in one way or another and differ from their own propaganda in several aspects. They also do not approve of the anti-Soviet statements of the Chinese. When inviting a Chinese delegation to the 20th anniversary of the DPRK the Korean comrades placed a condition to refrain from criticism of the Soviet Union. They have exerted efforts for representatives of China (and Albania) not to take part in the international conference of journalists held in Pyongyang in September 1969.

The Korean comrades have sufficient reasons to be exasperated at the many Chinese acts with respect to the DPRK which bear a great power chauvinist nature, both in the past and in the present. They do not accept the goals and methods of the Chinese "Cultural Revolution" and, in any event, they do not forget those massive outrages against the Korean minority which occurred in China in recent years. The Korean comrades sincerely say that they cannot understand the logic of many actions of the Chinese. "One can expect anything from the Peking leaders, including military provocations", this is one of the recent such statements of Cde. Kim Il Sung on this subject (from a 27 July 1969 conversation with the Soviet Ambassador).

There is a stratum of people in the Korean leadership who were connected with China by their past, family relations, or simply those sympathizing with the Chinese. The Korean comrades tell us about this themselves. However, the influence of the pro-Chinese elements on the formulation of policy is evidently not great and yields place to the nationalist tendencies of the majority of the Korean leaders.

In the bulk of the Korean population the Chinese are called contemptuous names: "teh-nom" – (snob, swellhead, or even chauvinist) [or] "orankhe" – (savage, barbarian). The Chinese character is perceived by Koreans as furtive, vindictive, and inclined to nasty tricks. There is a saying in Korea: "A Chinese has 14 pockets, and you don't know in which pocket he will get into right now". Their historical enmity leaves traces on the current attitude of the Korean population toward China (in ancient times Korea was repeatedly subjected to invasions by Chinese tribes and was a vassal of China for several centuries).

First Secretary of the Soviet

Embassy in the DPRK

[signature]

(Yu. Fadeyev)

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1 – to Cde. O. B. Rakhmanin

2 – to Cde. V. I. Likhachev

3 – to Cde. M. G. Gribanov

4 – to file

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^[1] This could be assessed to some degree as a retaliatory gesture to the equally brief Chinese telegram on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the DPRK. However, considerations of reciprocity hardly played the main role here, as the Korean comrades told us about this; otherwise the Korean side, quite offended by the Chinese non-participation in the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the DPRK, would not have sent so representative a delegation to Peking for the 20th anniversary of the formation of the PRC.