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Information

The 38th parallel, determined by the world powers as a temporary dividing line of the military activities of the Soviet and American troops, with the goal of accepting the surrender of the 200,000 Japanese army in Korea, after World War II, and especially after the three-year Korean War (1950-1953), turned, in fact, into a border between two countries with different societal and political structures, created on the territory of the country in 1948, [countries] which did not recognize each other, and both laying claim to represent the entire Korean population—the DPRK and the Korean Republic, whose governments had placed, and continued to place the issue of reuniting the country as a main task of their internal and foreign political activities.

The position of the South Korean government, declared repeatedly and not changed in the course of almost 20 years, boils down to “reuniting through holding common elections throughout the whole country under the observation of the United Nations.”

The proposals of the DPRK government are diametrically opposed to this position. Their essence is the focus on the solving of the Korean issue “without foreign intervention, independently, on peaceful democratic ground” and “the formation of a united central democratic government through holding of free common elections in the southern and northern parts of the country,” after the withdrawal of all foreign armies from South Korean territory.

Standing on fundamentally different poles, after the three-year Korean war between the DPRK and South Korea, all contacts and connection were cut off, and their official positions on the issue of reuniting the country had more of a propagandistic goal, as opposed to tangible value and were mostly aimed at the countries, aiding one or the other side in the examining of the Korean issue in the UN.

During the 60s, the governments of the North and South brought forward an unofficial plan, unachievable in practical terms, towards preparations for the reuniting of the country through military force. The term “in a peaceful way and through democratic means” was deprived of all substance and was used solely as a propagandistic slogan.

The South Korean administration called for a “march toward the North” and “a reuniting through victory over communism,” and in the DPRK one could not “think about a peaceful reuniting with the presence of the aggressive troops of the American imperialism in South Korea and today’s puppets.”/Kim Il Sung—report of the CC of the KWP at the 5th Congress of the KWP. /

The main efforts in both parts were aimed at the modernization of the military and the building of solid defense systems, eating up the greater part of the annual budgets of both governments, raising the combative and moral spirit of the soldiers and officers, and the training and arming of “the whole population.”

These mutually irreconcilable policies were accompanied by constant incidents along the line of demarcation, the sending of individuals and groups with the goal of spying, and the constant sustaining of tension on the Korean peninsula.

The past year, 1971, was characterized by certain changes and the appearance of new moments in their positions on the issue of reuniting the country and their mutual relations. Without ceasing their hostile policies, in different statements of officials from the North and the South, a readiness was expressed for establishing direct contacts, organizing meetings and carrying conversations. Of course, these statements in the preliminary stages contained many prerequisites, which at the beginning of the present year formed into two main [ones]:

- The South Korean government to renounce “its orientation towards foreign powers” for the reunification, and
- The DPRK government – “from its plans of achieving reunification through military force.”

The international setting which has changed and the general tendency for reducing tensions in the whole world, the disapproval on the side of the USSR and other socialist countries, including China, finding itself in the process of improving relations with the USA, of the policies for reunification of Korea through military force, and also the presence of American troops in South Korea, compelled the DPRK government to abandon, albeit for the moment, its policy of military adventurism and to raise again as a primary plan the peaceful and democratic way for the reunification of the country, which was embedded in the foundation of the policies of the “peaceful advance,” conducted by the DPRK’s government during the present year.

While in the proclamation of the Supreme People’s Council of the DPRK to the people of South Korea on April 13, 1971, expressing in 8 points the official position of the government of the DPRK on the issue of the reunification of the country, it is underlined that “we are ready to resolve peacefully the issue of reunifying the country through negotiations between the North and the South, in the event that after the removal of Park Chung Hee’s puppet faction in South Korea, a real people’s rule is established, or a patriotic democratic figure comes to power,” already in Kim Il Sung’s speech on August 6th there is talk of readiness for negotiations, including with Park Chung Hee’s ruling Democratic Republican Party.

These changes were confirmed by him during the interview with the chief editor of the Japanese newspaper “Asahi Simbun,” in which it was expressed the DPRK’s readiness also to conduct a political meeting of the parties for a peaceful resolution of the Korean issue and for the simultaneous annulment of the agreements of the DPRK with the USSR and the PRC and of South Korea with the USA and Japan, in regard of removing them as a hindrance on the path to reunification.

In answer to the questions of the correspondents from the newspaper “Yomiuri Simbun” on January 10 this year, Kim Il Sung proposed the transformation of “the truce agreement in Korea into a peace treaty between the North and the South,” which in fact established the beginning of the policies of “the peaceful advancement” for the reuniting of Korea. Later during the talks that Kim Il Sung had with correspondents from the newspaper “the New York Times” on May 26, it was pointed out that “the differences between the North and the South should not be an obstacle in the realization of national union and the reuniting of the native land.”

Of course, the return to the peaceful way of reuniting the country can be qualified as a tactic move of the DPRK’s government, with which it also aims to convince the USA and the South Korean government of the unsoundness of the fears about “aggression of the North towards the South” so that it might contribute to the hastening of the withdrawal of American troops while waiting for a more suitable time, when the process of carrying out the reunification would not cause international complications.

The changes in the South Korean government position can also be considered tactical.

Facing the “impregnable fortress” and the “armed people” of the DPRK on one side and the “danger” from the withdrawal of the American troops and the cutting off of the American military aid—on the other, the South Korean government was basically forced to find ways of reducing the tension between the two parts, which would give it time and opportunities to finish the process of modernizing the South Korean army, which had fallen behind in comparison with the DPRK—and which was necessary for the maintaining of the military balance on the Korean peninsula after the withdrawal of the American troops from South Korea. It was forced to make some contacts with the North and to accept, even though just for appearances for now, the “principle of independence” for the reuniting of the country.

At the same time, though, with the goal of straightening the internal regime, at the end of the last year, 1971, a state of national emergency was announced in South Korea, and “a law for emergency measures for the defense of the country” was passed, which gave unlimited powers and opportunities to Park Chung Hee to deal with his inside adversaries and to hold centralized, under his direct watch and leadership, talks with the government and the representatives of the DPRK.

The first contacts between the North and the South were established through the Red Cross organizations during the second half of 1971.

As the South Korean telegraph agencies report, at a press-conference on August 12, 1971, the president of the Red Cross organization of South Korea, Choe Du-seon, proposed a meeting of representatives from the organizations of the Red Cross in the North and South so that “the Korean families which have been separated for the last 20 years” can be helped.

The government of South Korea immediately expressed its full support of the proposal, and “two days later—so did the DPRK.”

After 5 meetings of messengers for mutual exchange of letters, on September 20, 1971 in Panmunjeom, the first round of preliminary negotiations was started.

Right at the very beginning of the conversations between the five-member delegations of the two organizations, the place for the main negotiations was agreed on—alternating between Pyongyang and Seoul. The installation of two direct telephone lines between the two points in Panmunjeom was also agreed upon.

After 19 preliminary meetings the principle agreement of the two parties concerning the agenda of the main negotiations was reached, and was presented to a group of experts for finalizing.

With the conclusion of the experts’ work, which took place behind closed doors, on the 20th round of preliminary talks, the daily agenda of the main negotiations was decided on, which included the following issues:

1. Tracing the addresses and clarifying the fate of the separated members of the families and relatives, and letting them know of this.
2. Establishing a free mutual visit and a free meeting of the families and relatives.
3. Establishment of a free correspondence between the separated members of the families and the relatives.
4. Bringing together the separated families by their own free will and desire.
5. Other issues subject to a humanitarian solution.

At the 23rd round of the negotiations the date of the opening of the main negotiations was agreed on—August 5th this year, and the make up of the two delegations and the accompanying experts were also agreed on. It was decided that the two delegations would be made up of 7 members, headed by the leaders of the organizations of the Red Cross of the two countries or by one of their deputies and [there would be] 70 experts.

At the moment when the conclusion of the preliminary talks was expected, during the 24th round, the DPRK delegation came out with an additional proposal for the invitation and participation during the first two meetings—in Pyongyang and in Seoul, of representatives of the political parties and the public organizations of the North and South, which was met with reserve by the South Korean delegation. [The proposal] made impossible the opening of the negotiations on the already agreed on date—August 5th, and it was used to pressure the South Korean delegation for the specifications of the place of the first meeting.

The two unsettled issues, along with others, subject to specification, were put forward again for review by a group of experts, who after a couple of meetings were able to achieve a certain amount of agreement, stated in the 25th round of the preliminary negotiations on August 11th this year. It was announced that the first meeting of the main negotiations would take place on August 30th this year in Pyongyang, and the second—in Seoul on September 13th.

In the DPRK as well as in South Korea, the negotiations between representatives of the Red Cross organizations are considered as a first step on the road to reuniting the country.

The second step towards this goal was unexpected to the world public, as well as to the Korean people.

On July 4th this year at 10 o’clock in the morning at press conferences in Pyongyang and Seoul, as well as in the press and on the radio stations in North and South Korea, a “North-South Joint Communiqué” was announced, the result of visits to the DPRK (2-5 May 1972) of the head of the South Korean CIA, Lee Hu-rak and his conversations with Kim Yeong-ju [Kim Yong Ju] and Kim Il Sung and the visit of Pak Seong-cheol [Pak Song Chol] to Seoul (29 May-1 June 1972) and his conversations with Lee Hu-rak and Park Chung Hee.

The first point of the agreement determines the three main principles based on which the reunification of the country will be realized, namely:

1. “independently, without the support of foreign powers, without interference from the outside;”
2. “in a peaceful way without the use of armed forces” and
3. “regardless of differences in the ideology, the ideals, and the system.”

In the DPRK the authorship of the above “three principles” is ascribed to Kim Il Sung, who, according to the bulletin of the CC of the Red Cross organization in the DPRK on July 20th this year, “feels a pain in his soul more than anyone, because of the tragic circumstances of the divided country.”

In South Korea, the propaganda qualifies the Joint Proclamation as a result of Park Chung Hee’s “efforts” and policies for a “peaceful and independent reunification” of Korea.

Without a doubt though, is the fact that the elaboration and agreement of the above “principles” are a result of the policies implemented by the governments of the two parts, identical in form, particularly with a heavily nationalistic character, and the concessions and acceptance of the mutual conditions: “the independent principle”—by the South and the “peaceful path”—by the North.

The shared nationalistic features were also underlined by Kim Il Sung in his talk with correspondents from the American newspaper “The New York Times” Harrison Salisbury and John Lee on May 26th this year. He stated that “lately the South Korean leaders, although only in word, talk about “self-initiative,” “independence” and “self-defense” and about the desire for the independent reuniting of the country. If this is looked at positively, it can be said that it has something in common with our ideas about independence, self-dependence, and self-defense.”

In reality, in both the DPRK and South Korea an active ideological brainwashing of the population is carried out in the spirit of “*Juche*”/self-dependence,

independence and self-defense/, against submission to foreign influence. These nationalistic traits, in practice, have a very controversial character. They are placated when the “ingenuity and greatness” of Kim Il Sung and Park Chung Hee is being proved, accordingly in North and South Korea, and are completely forgotten when receiving political, military, economic, and other aid from third countries is an issue.

This is confirmed, as well, by the third principle—the achievement of the great national consolidation, “independently from the differences in the ideology, the ideals, and the system,” or as it is underlined in South Korea, on the basis of “the national Juche ideology,” which in fact replaces the class principle with the “national” and foresees joint existence in the ideology.

In the following six separate points of the agreement are included the issues agreed on between the two countries:

- “not to offend or attack one another;”
- “to restrain themselves from armed provocations;”
- “to undertake active measures for the prevention of sudden violent outbreaks;”
- “organizing of a multilateral exchange in different areas;”
- “to collaborate for the Joint Proclamation and the realization of the independent peaceful reuniting;”
- “to support and contribute to the faster, successful conclusion of the negotiations of the Red Cross;”
- “to establish a direct telephone line between Pyongyang and Seoul;”
- “to form a ‘Committee for regulation’ on the question between the North and the South,” and others.

Both countries began the fulfillment of the promises taken up through the joint agreement—mainly technical, on the day after it was published.

In the press and on the radio the two countries stopped hurling abuses at Park Chung Hee and Kim Il Sung. Announcements have not appeared concerning armed incidences and breakings of the dividing line.

According to a South Korean radio in Seoul, while still negotiating, an agreement was signed for the establishment of a direct telephone line between the work cabinets of Kim Yeong-ju and Lee Hu-rak, which can be used only by them or by three people designated by them, everyday, except on Saturdays and Sundays and holidays.

But there have not yet been seen any real changes in the internal political activities of the two governments in the spirit of the “principles” of the Joint Proclamation, which puts under suspicion their actual value.

The announcement of the mutual visits and the fact of the signing of the agreement were a surprise for the South Korean people as much as for the diplomatic circles in Pyongyang. Already the next day after its announcement though, the newspapers, the radio, and the television shows were full of messages about “the huge interest of the people from the North and South” for its complete approval. The optimism of the Korean people regarding the issue of reuniting the country was also expressed repeatedly by the representatives of the Korean public at their meetings with representatives from different countries.

According to the South Korean agencies, the agreement between the North and the South was met by the South Korean people with great “excitement” as “a sensational piece of news,” with great interest.

The reaction of the oppositionist New Democratic Party was and still is somewhat different, seeing in the Joint Proclamation “a certain amount of danger” for “the isolation of South Korea” and insisting with the South Korean government for “inside reforms” and “the change of all laws on the basis of the principles of reunification,” “revoking the state of national emergency, and reducing the tension on the Korean peninsula with the help of the USA, Japan the Soviet Union, and China, which would provide the opportunity for “consolidating the power of the country and achieving the reunification independently, through a peaceful way and on democratic principles on the basis of the South Korean social system.”

The changes which have taken place in the relations between the North and the South found a reaction among the world public as well.

The press of the fraternal socialist countries reflected the Agreement and the press conferences of Pak Seong-cheol and Lee Hu-rak held in Pyongyang and Seoul in broad announcements, without taking a specific stance on the agreement.

The Romanian leaders sent a telegram to Kim Il Sung and Choe Yong-geon [Choe Yong Gon], in which they expressed full support of the agreement. George Marshe also sent a telegram to Kim Il Sung.

The reaction of China was the strongest where the press, together with detailed information, published a lot of its own material—articles and commentaries supporting the agreement.

The Joint Proclamation is met with a certain amount of reserve and restraint by the representatives of the GDR and the DRV embassies. The German and Vietnamese comrades see in it elements that are contradictory to the principles of the policies carried out by them concerning relations with the GDR and South Vietnam.

The reaction of the capitalist countries is also different.

The governments of the USA, England and other western countries welcome the agreement and again express their support for the South Korean government.

The Japanese government acted in a more reserved manner.

In spite of the signed Joint Proclamation, the DPRK and South Korean governments continue to express their two different approaches towards review of the Korean issue in the United Nations.

The DPRK insists on the review of the Korean issue at the 27th session of the UN, stemming from the desire for a discussion of the questions concerning the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the South Korean territory and the dismissing of the UN Commission on Korea statement of obligation by the rest of the countries for non-interference in the internal affairs of the Korean people in the process of reuniting Korea and accepting according resolutions.

This position of the DPRK’s government is dictated most of all by its desire for complete change of the interpretation of the Korean issue, from one connected directly to international security, to an issue of purely internal national character whose resolution has to be fulfilled by the Korean people themselves without any

foreign intervention.

The South Korean government, on its part, “conducts policies directed towards not allowing the Korean issue to be included in the daily agenda of the 27th session of the UN, considering that “discussing the Korean issue will... escalate the argument around Korea and cause negative impact on the development of the negotiations between the South and North.”

The South Korean government builds its position based on its fear of the possible acceptance of a resolution at the UN session that requires the dismissal of the UN Commission for the Reunification and the Restoration of Korea, and the withdrawal of the American troops from South Korea. In confirmation of such a conclusion are the efforts of the South Korean administration to ensure the continued long term presence of American troops in South Korea which is also proof of its formal attitude toward the “principle” for reuniting Korea “independently, without foreign intervention” imbedded in the Joint Communiqué.

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The changes in the positions of the governments of the DPRK and South Korea on the issue of reuniting the country and in their mutual relationship for the moment are undoubtedly positive move in reduction of the tension on the Korean peninsula and for the peaceful resolution of the Korean Issue, which is met with approval by both the Korean people and by the all of the progressive mankind.

At the same time though, the existing contradictions between the propagandistic nature of the three “principles” for the reunification of Korea which are the base of the Joint Proclamation between the North and the South on one side, and the internal and international actions of the two governments aimed at mutual elimination and absorption—on the other hand, throw some doubt on achieving quick and significant progress in the development of the issue of reuniting Korea and in regarding relations between the two parts.

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/Z. Yanakiev/

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