

To: the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to comrade Constantin Oancea

From: the Romanian Embassy in Pyongyang

Subject: the Korean Question

Date: February 2, 1977

Classification: Secret

1. According to our contact with Chinese envoys and members of the diplomatic corps, there has been an increase in the level of interest and concern towards the Korean problem. The dominant note of the remarks and observations emphasize the possibility of new developments in terms of the Korean issue, determined by Sino-American relations, Sino-Soviet-American relations and by the DPRK's recent diplomatic initiatives.

2. The US and China's insistence on reaffirming the validity of the 1972 agreements is interpreted as being indicative of both countries' interest in settling the complex issues in the region, chief among which [ranks] the Korean problem.

Chinese officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have informed us that China sincerely wishes for the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea and Korean reunification.

It is generally acknowledged that the Sino-American solution to the problem is currently benefiting from much more favorable conditions, both in Asia and internationally, due to:

a) The Carter administration's decision to withdraw troops from South Korea. Japan analyzed the decision. However a recent discussion with Vice President Mondale reveals that, despite assurance of a gradual troop withdrawal in close cooperation with the Japanese and South Korean governments, Japan is not as of yet fully prepared to assume increased responsibilities regarding the security of the region. Japan's concerns about the implications of the US withdrawal for regional stability and Japan's security are also underlined by the possibility of Prime Minister Fukuda to discuss such aspects in the following meetings with President Carter.

b) Changes in the DPRK's position regarding Korean reunification:

- withdrawing the proposal to discuss the Korean question at the UN General Assembly;

- certain North Korean officials' visit to countries in Asia, Africa and Europe (Premier Pak Song-chol, Vice Premier Heo Dam, Minister of Armed Forces O Chin-u and others);

- clear statement of the DPRK's wish for political contact with the US expressed during official visits (Japanese delegation received by Kim Il Sung);

- proposals addressed to South Korean parties and political forces in a letter on January 25.

Such changes are based on the understanding that [being in favor of] a forced military solution has undermined North Korea internationally. This approach not only produced tensions with the US, but also reservations from Chinese officials and a lack of response from the Non-Aligned Movement.

Significant for this new approach are the proposals in the January 25th letter, the fundamental aspect of which is the idea of an inter-Korean dialogue – an idea endorsed by China and the US, generating wide international support. China's prompt public support of these proposals – considered just and reasonable – and the manner in which Chinese propaganda advertised North Korea's initiative have been notable. China's speedy reaction confirms that it continues to play an important political and economic role in moderating North Korea's position.

c) the DPRK's economic hardships and the impossibility of overcoming them in the near future, as well as the North Korean Premier's recent failed attempts to receive economic assistance from the USSR, are likely to compel the DPRK to turn to the PRC and other partner countries, as well as to increase its openness towards Japan and other Western countries.

3. In our opinion, it is possible to initiate negotiations regarding the Korean question, both in terms of American military withdrawal from the South and working towards a political settlement.

We believe the US and the PRC's actions to achieve their strategic objective of removing the Korean Peninsula from Soviet influence to be determinative. Concurrently, we believe Japan to be influential as it requires time to adopt the appropriate military and economic measures in concordance with its close ties to South Korea.

Therefore, this appears to be a lengthy process (according to Western estimations, only the troop withdrawal itself will go beyond 1979), with various deviations reflecting the complexity of the issue, the large discrepancies between North and South, and the assortment of conflicting interests in the region.

Compiled by P. Lefter and Al. Niculescu

Signed: Nicolae Gavrilescu