

SOVIET EMBASSY IN THE DPRK

7 January 1969

N° 7

KOREAN-CHINESE RELATIONS IN THE SECOND HALF OF 1968

(memo)

The process of the expansion of DPRK cooperation with the Soviet Union, as with other European socialist countries, which intensified in 1968, led to a further worsening of Korean-Chinese relations. The Mao Zedong group is evidently increasingly convinced that it will not be able to return the DPRK to the orbit of its anti-Soviet policy. Some signs of a possible Korean-Chinese rapprochement displayed in the beginning of 1968 in connection with the Pueblo incident were not subsequently corroborated.^[1] The Chinese leaders now no longer display not only activity, but even flexibility in relations with the DPRK, but at times resort to actions which cause justified irritation on the part of the Korean comrades.

It seems that the Korean leaders are beginning to increasingly and acutely feel the costs of their geographic and political proximity to China and, actually, take them less into consideration in determining their foreign policy. The more independent orientation of the DPRK in the international arena is being exhibited not only in an improvement of relations with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries of Europe, but also in a striving to improve (or establish) relations with countries of the "Third World", which have become an object of attacks from China (India, Singapore, Malaysia, and others).

Nevertheless, the influence of the "big neighbor" on the position of the KWP in a number of questions relating to the international Communist movement and other fields continues to still be felt and it would be incorrect to think [handwritten in the left Who?"] that the Korean comrades will stop paying attention to the behavior of the Chinese in their policy, especially as the views of both of them on important problems of modern life sometimes coincide.

Political relations. The general atmosphere of Korean-Chinese relations and the statements of the Korean leaders themselves demonstrate that, as before, there were no political contacts between the DPRK and China in the second half of 1968, not to mention the Party ties cut off back in 1965.

The differences which previously existed between the KWP and Mao Zedong's group (regarding the "Cultural Revolution", the role of the Soviet Union and Chinese anti-Sovietism, the theory of an "Intermediate Zone", the role of the socialist camp, and the nature of the main contradiction of the modern era, etc.) continued to remain, but some of them have become more acute. A new serious difference has appeared, in the assessment of the Czechoslovak events and the measures taken to defend the achievements of socialism in the CSSR undertaken by the Soviet Union and the other fraternal countries.

The resolute actions of the fraternal countries against the intrigues of domestic reaction and world imperialism in Czechoslovakia and, at the same time, the treacherous position of Mao's group on this question even more brought the Korean comrades to the understanding of the fact that China is essentially only obstructing the joint struggle of the socialist countries against imperialism. The Korean leadership also could not fail to note Peking's recent steps directed at a restoration of Chinese-American contacts, and its proposals that the US construct relations on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence. This allowed Cde. Kim Il Sung to declare in a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador on 14 December 1968, "Right now the Chinese are not waging any fight against imperialism, they just babble".

[There is a stamp at the end of the above page stating that "the material is informative and the CPSU CC Department has been familiarized with [it]; 15D/6 30 May 1969. [[two illegible names and a reference to the archives dated 30 May 1969 follow]]. Pozdnyak".

A certain shift in the Korean leadership's approach to the problem of the reunification of the country (a reliance on revolutionizing, but not on an accelerated liberation of South Korea) is also obviously connected with the DPRK's withdrawal from Chinese influence. For example, the Korean leaders also include the different approach to the question of the tactical line in revolution among the differences between the KWP and the CPC. "We are against conducting a revolution if the conditions are not ripe. This would be adventurism" (from a conversation between Cde. Pak Seong-cheol and the Soviet Ambassador on 22 April 1968).

This evolution in views was evidently caused not only by a more realistic assessment of the situation than previously but also by the loss, to a certain degree, of hope in the Chinese aid which would be needed in an attempt to liberate South Korea. The behavior of the Chinese in the Vietnam conflict should also have undermined the confidence of the Korean leadership in obtaining the aid it needs at the necessary moment.^[2]

A clear sign of the aggravation in Korean-Chinese relations was the Chinese refusal to send its delegation to Pyongyang for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the republic. As became known in the diplomatic corps, the Chinese explained their refusal by the disagreement with the request of the Korean comrades to refrain from anti-Soviet statements on this holiday, and also the Chinese approach toward the events in Czechoslovakia [being] "too different" [from that of] the DPRK. "The Chinese deeply insulted us with this step", declared Cde. Kim Il Sung to Cde. D. S. Polyansky in September 1968. On the other hand, the sending of their delegations for the Korean holiday by the remaining socialist countries (with a certain exception) was characterized in Cde. Kim Il Sung's 7 September report as "a manifestation of the respect for the sovereignty of the DPRK and the virtue of our nation as a bright expression of international solidarity".

A definite increase of the ideological discussion between China and the DPRK was observed in the second half of 1968 (although, as before, the sides did not name one another). In a report for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the republic Cde. Kim Il Sung unambiguously criticized a number of aspects of the policy of the Chinese leaders. In particular, he spoke of the "mistakes of leftist excesses" which appear in the event that "reliance is placed on class struggle alone and overestimating its role, forgetting that the solidarity and cooperation of the working class, the peasantry, and the working intelligentsia [*trudovaya intelligentsiya*] comprise the basis of social relations in a socialist society". Undoubtedly meaning the Chinese "Cultural Revolution" the speaker said that after the establishment of a socialist system the class struggle should be directed not at the liquidation of people, but at a reform of their ideology. He noted, "An ideological revolution ought to be accomplished not by forcible methods, as in a struggle against hostile elements, but by convincing and educating; it should become a matter of strengthening the unity and solidarity of the workers".

In the report Cde. Kim Il Sung expressed disagreement with the attacks of the Chinese leaders on so-called "economism" [*ekonomizm*], declaring that "it would be incorrect to consider the building of a socialist economy secondary, putting reliance solely on class struggle" and that "concern about raising the well-being of the population is the highest principle of the activity of a Party and a government of the working class".

The report also contained other factors which ought to be considered criticism of Chinese views. For example, the persistent calls to intensify the struggle against Japanese and West German militarism as a contrast to the Chinese position about an “intermediate zone”. Finally, the speaker’s statement about the role and importance of the socialist camp was an obvious contrast to the Chinese theory of the struggle of the “poor village against the rich city”.

However, for the sake of objectivity it ought to be noted that the report also contained criticism of “rightist excesses”, to all appearances addressed to the European socialist countries and presented with the “orthodox” positions of the KWP.

The process of improvement of DPRK relations with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, but also the continuing praise of the personality of Kim Il Sung causes no longer concealed irritation among the Chinese leaders. Chinese diplomats in Peking and Pyongyang have stopped considering the “special” position of the Korean comrades with respect to the open polemics and differences. At a reception at the Korean Embassy in Peking on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the DPRK Chen Yi, on the occasion of the 19th anniversary of the PRC the PRC chargé at the Chinese reception in Pyongyang, and the Chinese representative in Panmunjom made rabidly anti-Soviet speeches.^[3] The substance of these speeches of the Chinese, and also the content of radio broadcasts of Peking in Korean and individual Chinese press reports touching on the foreign policy of the Soviet Union demonstrate that Chinese propaganda is trying to play on some differences in the approaches of the DPRK and Soviet Union toward a number of international problems with the goal of introducing discord in Korean-Soviet relations, for example, the problem of relations with Japan, a relaxation of tensions in Europe, and a settlement of the Near East conflict.

The anti-Soviet speech of the Chinese chargé in Pyongyang did not provoke an official protest or open objections from the senior Korean guest, Deputy Chairman of the DPRK Cabinet of Ministers Ri Ju-yeon, although quite slanderous fabrications were contained in this speech, including, one must think, from the point of view of the Korean leadership. In the response speech Ri Ju-yeon spoke only with quite cautious, indirect criticism of individual aspects of the domestic policy of the Chinese leaders, stressing in particular the need for a socialist state to correct combine dictatorship with democracy, and class struggle with an increase of the unity of society and socialist development. The official reaction of the Korean comrades to this Chinese attack was only the publication of a brief report as possible about this reception on the last page of one of the national newspapers. The Korean comrades told us that they consider it useless to protest this gaffe [*vykhodka*] of the Chinese chargé inasmuch as such a protest “would only amplify such a practice on the part of the Chinese” (from a conversation between Cde. Pak Seong-cheol and Cde. O. V. Okonishnikov on 7 November 1968).

Korean-Chinese differences also touched on the area of the history of the 1930s fight against the Japanese. The Korean press writes that “the best sons and daughters of Korea fought for the liberation of the Chinese people”, and “helped the cause of the Chinese Revolution” in the period of the fight against the Japanese and the Civil War in China (*Minju Joseon* [*Minju Choson*], 2 July 1968), *Rodong Sinmun*, 25 October 1968). In the Museum of the Revolution in Kaesong the tour leaders say that in the latter half of the 1930s the Chinese Communists showed themselves as “left” opportunists in an argument with the Koreans regarding the methods of fighting the Japanese colonizers. A young Kim Il Sung is shown in a picture displayed in the Museum convincing the Chinese of the correctness of his position. Such an interpretation of history, as a Romanian diplomat who maintains contact with the PRC Embassy reported, causes strong displeasure among the Chinese, who assert that it was they who helped the Koreans during those years, and not the other way around.

In the latter half of 1968 incidents continued to occur on account of a sort of “cult of incompatibility”. On 6 November the Chinese authorities in Dandong detained a Korean locomotive pulling a train across the border and painted over the slogans on the locomotive written in white paint, calling them anti-Chinese (it is known that among them were slogans about Kim Il Sung). The incident was accompanied by a brawl. In the interpretation of Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Seong-cheol, the Chinese themselves wrote the anti-Chinese slogans on the locomotive for provocative purposes.

According to the testimony of eyewitnesses, a sort of propaganda duel is being waged on the Korean-Chinese border passing along the Yalu River: enormous portraits of the leaders, billboards with political content, and loudspeakers directed at the opposite bank have been set up on both sides of the river. Chinese diplomats demonstratively do not applaud at events being held in Pyongyang (exhibits, film showings) in those places of the performances where it talks about Kim Il Sung.

Events held by the PRC Embassy or the Korean comrades devoted to Chinese anniversary dates have a dry, ceremonial nature. The Chinese often lower the level of representation at their own initiative which, naturally, provokes a retaliatory response from the Korean side. The DPRK press covers these events very sparingly. It is remarkable that at a film showing in connection with the 19th anniversary of the formation of the PRC, unlike the standard practice a Korean (and not a Chinese) film, *Techet reka* [The River Is Flowing], was shown which was devoted, as was noted in a newspaper report about the film showing, “to the glorious anti-Japanese armed struggle under the leadership of the great leader Kim Il Sung”.

In the latter half of 1968 the Korean national press noted two anniversary dates in Chinese-Korean relations with its own publications (newspaper editorials): the 7th anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Aid (11 July) and the 18th anniversary of the entry of the Chinese people’s volunteers in the Korean War (25 October). These articles, addressed with their main content at the history of Chinese-Korean relations, were restrained in a friendly tone and on the whole not different from those for 1967. They stressed the traditions of the joint anti-Japanese struggle, noted the commonality of the tasks of both peoples in the struggle against imperialism, the role of the Treaty in the defense of peace in Asia, and the services of the Chinese people’s volunteers. The absence in the articles (as in other publications touching on China) of any mention of socialist development or the domestic situation in China was characteristic. There were no editorials devoted to the national holiday of the PRC (1 October), as there were last year. Recent telegrams which have been exchanged between the heads of the DPRK and Chinese governments on the occasion of national holidays were exceptionally short and dry.^[4] The practice of exchanging congratulatory telegrams between Korean and Chinese public organizations has been halted.

In general nothing is being published in the Korean press about the domestic life and foreign policy actions of the PRC. As regards the Chinese press, judging from *Renmin Ribao* [People’s Daily] in the latter half of 1968 only reports about ceremonial events and the telegrams of Chinese and Korean leaders on the occasion of particular notable dates were published. No other materials about the DPRK have been published in the Chinese press.

The Chinese authorities are also extending some discriminatory measures to the DPRK which were previously undertaken with respect to the Soviet Union. In particular, the September 1968 halt of the delivery of Chinese provincial newspapers to the DPRK Embassy in Peking demonstrates this. This fact, although not so significant, confirms that the Chinese are irritated and single out the DPRK from the countries refusing to follow Peking less and less. As Cde. Pak Seong-cheol declared to the Soviet Ambassador, now the Chinese are also placing obstacles in the delivery of Korean military aid to Vietnam (from a 31 July 1968 conversation).

In our view, the fears expressed by the Korean comrades regarding the influence of “Mao’s ideas” on the Korean population are somewhat exaggerated with the purpose of justifying the measures being taken to exalt the personality of Kim Il Sung. Individual statements by Koreans which [we] have managed to elicit from discussion^[5] demonstrate that the Koreans are anti-Chinese. They genuinely reject Mao as “the leader of all peoples”, and do not accept his “ideas” and what these “ideas” are turned into in practice. It is sufficient to cite the statement of Cde. Kim Il Sung at the level of the unanimity which has been achieved in the DPRK, “Lawlessness and chaos reign in China. Everything that the Chinese are doing is scandalous. This is also a great misfortune for Vietnam, both for you and us, and for the Chinese people themselves” (from a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador on 21 June 1968). Besides the Koreans’ disagreement with the “ideas” of Mao Zedong one also ought to bear in mind their historic and national hostility. And indeed the channels of Chinese propaganda in the DPRK (as ours) are extremely limited.

Evidently, the Korean leadership is not so much concerned about ideological penetration in its proper meaning as much as the possibility of direct subversive actions and provocations by the Chinese. Cde. Kim Il Sung’s statement also tells about this, “Mao Zedong hates us, the Chinese are malicious, and one can expect anything from them” (in a conversation with Cde. D. S. Polyansky on 12 September 1968). The aforementioned incident in Dandong (6 November) was

characterized by Cde. Pak Seong-cheol as a Chinese “provocation, which makes us quite suspicious” (from a conversation with Cde. O. V. Okonishnikov on 7 November 1968).

Trade relations. The tension in Korean-Chinese political relations and the economic stagnation in China are exerting a definite influence on DPRK trade with China.

The actual volume of trade turnover between the two countries declined to 125 million rubles in 1968^[6] against 135 million in 1967 and 150 million in 1966, which has led to a reduction of the Chinese share in the overall trade turnover to 25% against 30% in 1967 (on the other hand, the Soviet Union's share rose to 45% against 43.5% respectively). The reduction of the turnover of Korean-Chinese trade in 1968 occurred due to both sides' non-fulfillment of their obligations, the volume of which according to protocol corresponded to the actual level of 1967 (135 million rubles).

In 1968 China continued to deliver to the DPRK the same (of the most important) goods that [it had] in previous years. It was (according to the obligations) to deliver in 1968 1.9 million tons of coking coal, 200,000 tons of petroleum products, 10,000 tons of cotton,^[7] 1,000 tons of yam, 20,000 tons of sugar, 200,000 tons of salt, and also rolled steel, ferroalloys, trucks, tires, and soybeans.

In conversations with the Soviet Ambassador and other Soviet representatives Korean leaders have repeatedly said that, having reduced the supply of coal, China “is grabbing Korea by the throat”. Obviously, a certain reduction of the supply of coal has occurred, but evidently not to such a considerable degree as the Korean comrades have been talking about this.

When visiting some metallurgical plants in the latter half of the year officials of the Soviet Trade Representative have observed that coke-oven batteries are operating with sufficient workloads.

For its part the DPRK delivered anthracite (1 million tons), iron ore (300,000 tons with iron content of more than 45%), rolled steel, pig iron, non-ferrous metals, cement (100,000 tons), magnesite clinker, chemicals, machine tools, fabrics, and ginseng (the quantities indicated in the obligations) to China in 1968.

In the middle of December 1968 a DPRK trade delegation went to Peking to sign the trade agreement for 1969 (the Korean experts left back in November).

In 1968 China continued to provide assistance in the construction of some industrial facilities in the DPRK, including a vacuum tube plant, a textile equipment plant, and a textile mill.

It is hard to say whether the DPRK is cooperating with China in the military field. The Korean comrades keep everything strictly secret that touches on DPRK cooperation with the socialist countries, especially with China.

Only rumors and individual chance observations by members of the diplomatic corps tell of the existence of Korean-Chinese contacts in the military field. According to unverified data of the CSSR Embassy received from the Czechoslovak military the DPRK supposedly supplies uranium ore to China in exchange for several kinds of weapons and spare parts for them. Diplomats from various embassies have noted Chinese at the Dandong and Sinuiju border stations who, from dealings with them by border and customs authorities and other signs, might be taken as specialists with a classified specialty. Reports have appeared in the foreign press about some joint Chinese-Korean atomic research. However, it is impossible to vouch for the authenticity of all this and other data.

In any event, it would be incorrect to deny the possibility of Korean-Chinese military cooperation, referring to the current tension of political relations between them, inasmuch as the interest of China itself in such cooperation cannot be denied (in the sense of the possible acquisition of strategic raw material and electric power from the DPRK for atomic research). It is known that a Chinese military delegation visited the DPRK in 1967.

In the latter half of 1968, as before, there was no exchange between the DPRK and China in the area of culture, science, or sports or any contacts between public organizations.

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An objective commonality of views between the DPRK leadership and the group of Mao Zedong on a number of important problems of modern times, such as a relaxation of international tension and peaceful coexistence, a political settlement of international conflicts (the Near East, Vietnam), disarmament, including the attitude toward treaties prohibiting the testing and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is being preserved with the presence of certain differences in questions of socialist development and international policy. The Korean leadership essentially shares the Chinese concept of people's war, expressed in an underestimation of the nuclear threat; it holds to the same view as the Chinese on the development of the revolutionary movement in Latin American and other regions of the world.

The Korean comrades are striving to preserve the military alliance and trade relations with China. Moreover, they obviously have grounds to fear subversive activities and provocations from China. Therefore the KWP exhibits exceptional cautiousness and patience, and strives not to give the Chinese grounds for attacks on the DPRK and all their steps in the international arena, most of all concerning the international Communist movement and support of the foreign policy actions of the Soviet Union are made with a view to China. The KWP leadership understands that participation in the upcoming Conference of Communist and Worker's Parties would be a new, yet more serious reason for a worsening of Korean-Chinese relations (earlier the KWP's refusal to openly speak against the Moscow meeting of representatives of Communist and Worker's Parties in March 1965 together with the CPC was a cause).

Thus, the geographic and, to a considerable degree, ideological proximity of China was and remains one of the most important factors influencing the position of the KWP and the DPRK government in the international arena.

The consistent line of the CPSU CC and Soviet government for a comprehensive strengthening of the friendship with the Korean people effectively promotes the DPRK's retreat from the ideological influence of China.

Against the background of an almost complete cessation of Korean-Chinese ties each new contact of ours with the Korean comrades, especially in the area of Party, political, and cultural relations, demonstrates to the DPRK population the correctness of the Soviet Union and the majority of the other socialist countries in the ideological dispute with the group of Mao Zedong. It is clear that efforts ought to be continued which are directed at a further development of Soviet-Korean ties, especially in the ideological area, with full use of a measure of readiness for this by the Korean comrades.

At the present time the establishment and expansion of contacts through Party channels in the field of culture and between public organizations takes on special urgency and importance, inasmuch as the Korean leadership itself “has come to a conclusion about the need” for such contacts, which is clear from the speech of Cde. Kim Il Sung at a 13 September 1968 reception in the Soviet Embassy and confirmed by recent practical steps of the Korean side.

The peculiarities of the positions of the Korean leadership in questions of domestic and foreign policy are taken into account in our propaganda to the DPRK sufficiently completely. Taking into account the presence of a number of new aspects in Korean-Chinese relations which have been mentioned in this memo it seems advisable to intensify some aspects of our propaganda to the DPRK. Thus, in printed and verbal propaganda, and also in confidential information being passed to Korean comrades it is desirable to especially stress the efforts and initiative of the CPSU directed at the solidarity of the international Communist movement and ensuring the unity and integrity of the socialist camp, to more clearly emphasize the practical nature of the Soviet Union's fight against the intrigues of

world imperialism and its firmness and determination in the defense of the socialist achievements of each fraternal country from any encroachments; expose the false, declarative nature of the Chinese statements against American imperialism, West German revanchism, and the reactionary forces of Japan, the treacherous position of the Chinese leaders with respect to the events in Czechoslovakia, their subversive, provocative activities against individual countries and groups of the Communist movement; and continue to persistently explain the goals of our policy with respect to Japan.

FIRST SECRETARY OF THE
SOVIET EMBASSY IN THE DPRK

[signature]

(Yu. Fadeyev)

Four copies printed/gp, lg

1 – to the CPSU CC Department, to Cde. O. A. Chukanov

2 – to the USSR MFA DVO [Far East Department], to Cde. V. I. Likhachev

3 – UPVM [Directorate of Planning Foreign Policy Measures]

4 – to file

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^[11] The rumor planted at one time by Romanian diplomats that during the Pueblo crisis Zhou Enlai promised Kim Il Sung help “with all available means at China’s disposition” is now being denied by the Romanians themselves, who have begun to assert that there was no exchange of documents or any other contact except trade between China and the DPRK in 1968.

[handwritten notations next to this paragraph: [“Ruda[[nin]] 7 January 1969. /see page 2/”]

^[12] Cde. Pak Seong-cheol declared in reply to the comment of the interlocutor that the obstacles created by the Chinese in the delivery of Soviet weapons to Vietnam are a stab in the back of the Vietnamese people, “Such actions of the Chinese are not even a stab in the back, but a stab right in the chest” (from a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador on 31 July 1968).

^[13] As a sign of protest the representatives of the Embassies of the USSR, PNR, GDR, NRB, CSSR, and MNR left the reception at the Chinese Embassy in Pyongyang. The Korean guests and diplomats of the DRV, Cuba, Romania, and Albania (of the socialist countries) remained.

^[14] The Chinese stopped using the word “comrade” in these telegrams, which was instantly noticed by the Korean side.

^[15] As a rule, with the exception of the highest leaders Korean interlocutors avoid discussion of the topic of China, apparently having strict instructions on this account.

^[16] From here on are estimated data of the Soviet Trade Representative in the DPRK (with the lack of other references).

^[17] According to data of the Romanian Embassy received in the PRC Embassy - 300,000 tons of petroleum products and 20,000 tons of cotton.