

To: the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (to comrade Deputy Foreign Minister Constantin Oancea; to comrade director Vasile Sandru)

From: the Romanian Embassy in Pyongyang

Subject: Korean-Soviet relations

Date: December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1978

Classification: Secret

1. The desire of the DPRK to have good relations with its two neighbors, the USSR and the PRC, corresponds in general with a balance of Soviet-Korean and Sino-Korean relations, respectively.

This equilibrium, however, could only be achieved overall, [since] the DPRK's relations with the USSR and with the PRC, respectively, having ups and downs, according to temporary or long-term factors.

Therefore, over the past two-three years, it could be noticed in the Korean press and in the discussion of Korean officials with foreign diplomats, an upward development of Korean-Chinese relations and a relative cooling of Soviet-Korean relations, especially on political matters.

With respect to this cooling down process, we believe it is necessary to take into account that the system of reference is represented by the DPRK's relations with the PRC, as well as [to take note] of the fact that Soviet-Korean relations over the years have been generally circumscribed within normal limits.

The cooling down of Korean-Soviet relations materialized, to our mind, in the lower level of representation in Soviet delegations which visited the DPRK on various occasions and in Korean delegations which visited the USSR, in the lower level of attention granted by the host country to the guests from the other country, in the rigid position which the USSR has adopted in its commercial negotiations with the DPRK. [The cooling down is also reflected] in the unfolding of the discussions between the Soviet delegation led by D.S. Kunaev, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU, and the Korean [delegation] led by Pak Seong-cheol, the DPRK Vice-President, in Pyongyang in January 1978; in the modest mutual reflection in the mass media in the two countries.

As more direct and conclusive evidence for the cooling down of Korean-Soviet relations we would like to mention the publication in the May 13<sup>th</sup> issue of *Nodong Sinmun* of the protest note written by the PRC about the Sino-Soviet border incidents, the publication in the aforementioned newspaper's August 1<sup>st</sup> issue of the article signed by the Chinese Defense Minister, [an article] which criticizes the USSR; in the low level of representation of the Soviet delegation which attended the Pyongyang celebrations of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the DPRK; the silence over the Korean question in A. Gromyko's speech at the 33<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly.

Starting with the end of October and especially with the commemoration of November 7<sup>th</sup> in the DPRK, [one] could notice a palpable change in the attitude of the DPRK towards the USSR.

In this respect, the Korean mass media considerably increased the number of news and briefs about the USSR. Articles and commentaries are making many references to the Soviet-Korean friendship. Television channels and movie cinemas are showing Soviet movies more frequently. We noticed that it was the first time in years since a Korean poster advertised a Soviet movie, or, as a matter of fact, a foreign movie.

[Gathering] from the discussions of Romanian diplomats with Soviet diplomats, [we found] that on the occasion of the November 7<sup>th</sup> celebrations, the Koreans displayed a great deal of responsiveness and attentiveness towards the wishes and requests of the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang: the Korean speech was no longer limited to a given duration; the Koreans suggested that the tour in the DPRK of the Siberian academic choir; [they offered] to receive two more Soviet arts groups in November 1978, on top of the ones already planned for.

[Gathering] from the public information we can access, we think that this year the November 7<sup>th</sup> celebrations were similar, and in some cases, superior to the celebrations of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Socialist Revolution, in terms of actions [organized] and level of representation.

We believe that the improvement of Korean-Soviet relations is part [and parcel] of a more or less normal, usual process, without anything out of the ordinary. Among other things, by improving [these relations], the DPRK is trying to achieve a balance with respect to its relations with the PRC.

The already known issues in Korean-Soviet relations are the same; they have not changed.

II. In a recent conversation with Victor Nanu, A. N. Belyi, First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, said that at the moment, both in Pyongyang and in Moscow, preparations are taking place for the forthcoming visit to the USSR, scheduled for January or February 1979, of a high-level DPRK delegation (probably, the delegation will be led by Prime Minister Ri Jong-ok).

On the occasion of this visit, the Soviet diplomat said, [the two sides] may discuss ways for developing the Soviet-Korean political relations. Both the DPRK and the USSR believe that bilateral economic[and] cultural relations are evolving normally.

On this occasion, the Soviets expect a concrete proposal from the Korean delegation regarding President Kim Il Sung's visit to the USSR.

Signed

Paul Marinescu