

**July 12, 1965**

**Changes in the Leadership of the Korean Workers  
Party and the Government of North Korea**

**Citation:**

"Changes in the Leadership of the Korean Workers Party and the Government of North Korea", July 12, 1965, Wilson Center Digital Archive, SAPMO-BA, Berlin, DY 30.

Translated for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/111822>

**Summary:**

Report about the improvement of North Korean relations with East Germany and the Soviet Union. A slight pejoration of North Korean-Chinese relations is also marked.

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from ROK Ministry of Unification

**Original Language:**

German

**Contents:**

Translation - English

[GDR Ministry for Foreign Affairs]  
1st Extra-European Department  
Section Korea

Berlin, 12 July 1965

On some changes of positions of the leadership of the Korean Workers Party  
and the government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

#### I. Assessment of their positions so far

Concerning their previous positions, it was assessed that since the XXII Party Congress in October 1961, KWP leadership and DPRK government adopted step by step positions of the Chinese leadership on all basic questions and actively advocated them. Differences of opinion with the CPSU and other parties (including the SED) were transferred to bilateral state-to-state relations. A substantial reduction of bilateral relations was implemented in all areas, also towards the GDR. This policy culminated in the years of 1963 and 1964.

#### II. Timing of notable changes

Certain changes of positions by KWP leadership and DPRK government were noted first in the economic area about the time of the second quarter of 1964. This occurred at a time where we received more and more frequent information about increasing economic problems in DPRK industry and agriculture. In this period, repeated offers on economic cooperation were made to the GDR with the objective of inducing the GDR to provide credits to the DPRK.

Since mid-1964 the DPRK also talked increasingly about political commonalities existing between GDR and DPRK (division, direct confrontation with imperialism, reunification, etc.). Those efforts made during this period were intended to improve state-to-state relations just with the GDR. They had to be seen as a DPRK policy of differentiation towards the GDR. This policy aimed at playing off the GDR especially against the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Friendly conversations between leading Korean comrades and us always had very strong anti-Soviet content, as it showed in particular during the farewell visit of Ambassador Becker and the introductory visit by Ambassador Brie. Since that time, we were also able to note a slight improvement in [DPRK] press coverage of German problems, especially concerning West Germany.

After the resignation of Comrade Khrushchev in October 1964 a general change occurred in the DPRK. It showed in publications, or during talks. and went in following directions:

□□□□ strengthening the unity of socialist countries in the struggle against imperialism and neocolonialism;

. improvement of cooperation with all socialist countries.

. displaying a Korean position of its own, showing restraint in polemics.

□□

### III. Where we do see changes in attitude:

□□ We can sense clear efforts by the DPRK to improve state-to-state relations with all socialist countries, including the Soviet Union. Daily newspapers feature again broader coverage of the European socialist countries, where the struggle of these peoples is supported. The GDR's struggle against West German imperialism and for the recognition of the GDR gets wider attention.

□□

While in the economic field the DPRK had focused for a while on capitalist and young national states, it now shows major interest in expanding economic relationships [with the socialist countries] and in securing extensive credits. Trade volumes with socialist countries have risen again. The external political focus to propagate "everything by our own force" has diminished. Internally the slogan continues to play an important role.

Exchange of delegations with socialist countries has increased. The delegation of both Kim Il to the [October] revolution festivities and the military delegation headed by the Chief of the General Staff to Moscow, as well as numerous delegations to the GDR (especially economists), are some of the examples in this regard.

□□ Changes are also noteworthy concerning the basic issues of our epoch. In DPRK publications we see a stronger leaning towards the language of the Moscow Statement and Declarations: role of the socialist camp, struggle for peace, fight against U.S. imperialism, et cetera. Regarding the solution of the Korean question, the peaceful path is now propagated exclusively. Ri Ju-yeon [Ri Ju Yon], member of the KWP politburo, Deputy Prime Minister, and Minister for Foreign Trade, stated in Leipzig [East Germany] that Korea needs peace in order to strengthen the DPRK. Only in the case of an attack will the DPRK retaliate with armed force.

□□

After the struggle so far had first and foremost focused on the United States, we now see an increase of focus on the struggle against Japanese imperialism, but also against West German imperialism. For instance, the statute of the Association of Agricultural Workers of Korea lists among the duties of their members "to hate imperialism with American and Japanese imperialism on the top." Publications dealing with West German imperialism stress on one hand its autonomous role and on the other hand its close connection and collaboration with the United States.

□□ The opinion voiced by politburo member Ri Hyo-sun [Ri Hyo Sun] has recently been validated, according to which the DPRK will neither publish Chinese nor Soviet material on their differences in opinion and will, if necessary, state its own position. Problems of those differences in opinion mostly appear in the Korean press in the context of publications about the Communist Parties of Indonesia [PKI] and Japan, respectively the appearances of Korean leaders in Indonesia (for instance Kim Il Sung at the [PKI] party school [for Marxism-Leninism] Aliarcham [Academy in Jakarta]). Polemics were conducted with much restraint and without naming names, but still contained attacks against the CPSU and Soviet Union (superpower chauvinism, interference in internal affairs, strong emphasis on struggle against imperialism). Some of those and other issues could as well have been directed to the address of the Chinese leadership.

□□

□□ Opportunities for more extensive activities by the embassies of the socialist countries have substantially improved. It is now again mostly up to the interests of the embassies whether they want to become more active.

□□

### IV. Reasons behind these changes in attitude

□□ The worsening of bilateral relationships, from the side of the DPRK, with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries has backfired for the DPRK. Kim Il Sung voiced

the opinion that no country has suffered so much from the differences of opinion [between China and the Soviet Union] than the DPRK. For four years the DPRK did not have any economic development but stagnated. In its 5th year, the DPRK is almost two years behind in fulfilling its Seven-Year-Plan. Though there is no mentioning of this in public, there were repeated hints to the need for increased defense spending at the expense of developing the economy.

□□

The domestic, especially economic, problems of the DPRK are a result of a wrong orientation towards "everything by our own force," and of reducing cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries while focusing on capitalist countries and the young national states. The PRC was unable to replace imports from the Soviet Union and the socialist countries (in particular complete facilities). Economic problems in the DPRK are evident in a lack of numbers for the workforce, insufficient modern technology, low means of investment, no scientific planning, and no leadership of the economy, et cetera. The atmosphere among the population is unfavorable, because there is no significant improvement in living standards despite ever increasing work duties. Due to bad harvest results in 1963, the supply of the population with food has even become worse. Kim Il Sung's remark that the domestic situation in the DPRK is more difficult than ever before is an indication for the existence of major problems. On the other hand this statement may not be overrated. Apparently it wants to increase the willingness [of foreign countries] to grant credits to the DPRK.

□□ The DPRK thinks it was dependent on the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union meddled in the internal affairs of the DPRK. When the DPRK moved toward Chinese positions, it did not harbor at all the intention to become dependent on China and place itself in the shadow of the PRC. Also, Kim Il Sung did not want at all to be overshadowed by Chairman Mao. China's attempts to exploit the DPRK economic dependency (demands to install a Chinese control commission to monitor the use of Chinese aid) had negative consequences for the PRC. Instead of achieving closer ties with the DPRK, the opposite has occurred.

□□

□□ The Chinese attitude concerning the Vietnam question (non-interference, solution by its own force) does not provide the DPRK with a guarantee of sufficient protection in case of a U.S. attack on North Korea. KWP leadership and DPRK government have high respect for the Soviet assistance to Vietnam. The fact that there is dissatisfaction with the Chinese position in this regard also showed when DPRK representatives voted against the Chinese Vietnam resolution at the World Peace Council meeting. Certainly the PRC position on the Vietnam question, and China's insufficient ability to deliver exports, has made a contribution towards the DPRK's return to closer cooperation with the Soviet Union especially in military matters.

□□

□□ Other reasons are without doubt experiences of KWP and DPRK from the international communist and workers movement and the international situation. The following should play a role here:

□□

- the course of CCP and PRC did not yield the desired results but suffered setbacks (regional conferences, South America etc.)

- the PRC cannot play the role the Soviet Union played and will continue to play (this applies to the international level as well as vis-a-vis each individual socialist country, especially with regard to economic assistance and military protection).

- KWP and DPRK do not fully agree with recent activities by CCP and PRC: [Chinese] publications with polemical attacks were not adopted or printed; there was no statement on important issues, as it had been the case in the past (apparently in order to avoid taking a position).

□□ The constructive policy of the GDR towards the DPRK was continued while differences in opinion were considered. The GDR conducted a bilateral state-to-state

relationship despite negative DPRK attitudes which had caused great difficulties. This led the DPRK to think again how to conduct relations on their side. [GDR] Foreign Ministry and GDR Embassy were always careful not to transfer differences in opinion to state-to-state relations.

□□

□□ In spite of all those many changes in attitudes of KWP leadership and DPRK government, there ought not to be any illusions whether the DPRK has moved away completely from Chinese positions. There are still many questions where there is agreement between Chinese and Korean leaders, and which differ from our opinions. This pertains, for instance, to the question of convening an international conference of communist and workers parties, the overemphasis of the role of national liberation movements, the Chinese nuclear tests, the invitation of splittists to the DPRK, the attitude towards Comecon (the DPRK does not reject joining Comecon any more because Comecon would be un-Marxist and make countries dependent, but because the DPRK would not have reached a sufficient level of development yet). Also, the fact must not be underestimated that in the past the Korean comrades in the politburo and in government were close related to activities of the CCP. Geographical location and historical developments also play a role.

□□

□□ Conclusions

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□□ KWP leadership and DPRK government emphasize for about a year how they conduct an independent and autonomous policy. As explanations made above have demonstrated, on some issues KWP and DPRK move away from Chinese positions. Hence our policy of differentiation between PR China and DPRK has yielded first results. The serious domestic situation will induce the DPRK to seek further paths of closer cooperation with the European socialist countries, without ending the close ties to the PRC. Changes in attitudes of KWP leadership and DPRK government have to be monitored continuously and attentively. New and further indications for changes must be reported.

□□

□□ State-to-state relations with the DPRK have to be developed further and must deepen in order to strengthen the indicated process of distance from Chinese positions. Respective measures are to be proposed and implemented, based on commonalities of both our countries. Based on reciprocity mutual support of political struggle must grow.

□□

□□ Economic relations with the DPRK have greater potential for further development. From the DPRK, the GDR can import important goods from capitalist foreign countries. Thus we should export to the DPRK complete facilities, also with long-term credits. This type of economic aid would effectively support our political intentions.

□□

□□ Continuous press coverage of the DPRK in the GDR is still unsatisfactory and must thus increase. Only in this way can we make our own propaganda abroad become more successful.

□□

□□ As before, our policy towards KWP and DPRK has to continue in coordination with the Soviet Union and the neighboring [socialist] countries [in Europe].

□□

[signed]  
Wegricht  
Head of Section

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