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On Relations between DPRK and PRC

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Summary:

A comprehensive assessment of Sino-North Korean relations written by the Embassy of the German Democratic Republic in North Korea.

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GDR Embassy to the DPRK

Pyongyang, 17 November 1977

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1.0 General Assessment and Interests

1.1 Since their foundation, both states, the DPRK and PRC, have developed friendly relations and close cooperation in various areas. Of major importance was the participation of Chinese volunteers to push back the imperialist aggression against the DPRK between 1950 and 1953 and their sacrifices committed during this undertaking.

The development of relations, however, was not continuous. With the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in the PRC during the mid-Sixties relations drastically worsened at times. Reasons for this were attempts by the Chinese leaders to interfere into internal matters of the DPRK and apply pressure in order to move the DPRK towards a broad acceptance of Maoist positions and principles. Only with [PRC Premier] Zhou Enlai's visit to the DPRK in 1970 relations returned to normal, and they gradually improved until the current situation.

The most important event for building up relations in recent years was Kim Il Sung's visit to the PRC in 1975. It was the first official foreign trip of Kim Il Sung for many years and opened a series of visits to other countries. In 1976 relations stagnated due to the volatile domestic situation in China and the resulting uncertainties of the DPRK. In addition, during the Kim Il Sung [1975] visit China had denied his request for supporting a military solution to the problem of Korean unification. Then promised economic aid turned out to fall well below DPRK expectations.

1.2 The DPRK interest in close and friendly relations with the PRC represents a long-term strategy. In its pursuit of such the DPRK is guided by the following factors and goals:

- Geographical proximity and a long common border (DPRK - PRC: 1,336 kilometers; DPRK - Soviet Union: 16 kilometers), as well as the political, economic and military potential of the PRC;

- Aspirations to secure the maximum political and, if necessary, military support of the PRC in the DPRK's conflict with the U.S. and South Korea;

- Maintaining the strong DPRK economic ties to the PRC, in particular the major dependency of the DPRK on vital supplies (coke coal, coke, oil); as well as continuing DPRK efforts to receive economic, financial, and scientific-technological aid.

In addition, there are factors at work like the traditional ties between both Chinese and Korean peoples, the multi-year struggle by Korean partisans against the Japanese in Northeastern China, the important political-ideological influence by the CCP on the careers of leading Korean comrades in the 1930s, and the support of the DPRK for a united front of the "revolutionary peoples in Asia."

1.3 The PRC also has a major interest in close relations with the DPRK. The latter belongs to the small number of states China can count to a certain extent as an ally. This carries some weight for China after the distancing by the Socialist People's Republic of Albania, and in consideration of the development of Chinese-Vietnamese relations. Also the Chinese leadership is concerned about an improvement of relations between the DPRK on one hand and the Soviet Union and other socialist states on the other hand. For that reason the PRC currently undertakes major efforts to move the DPRK further away from the socialist fraternal states, or at least keep it in a "neutral" position in this regard. In the long run, the PRC has not changed its goal to include the DPRK in its big power chauvinist, anti-Soviet policy. Based on respective DPRK interests, the Chinese leadership uses the DPRK as its ally in the Non-Aligned Movement and towards developing countries, and it supports the DPRK in a focused way in its policy towards those states. Learning from the experiences during the "Cultural Revolution," the PRC is acting in a sensitive manner to give the DPRK the feeling it is treated by China as an equal partner.

2.0. On Concurring Opinions and Positions

2.1 The basis for close relations between DPRK and PRC is the consent in, or closeness of, opinions of both parties on some basic ideological concepts, on methods of socialist construction, and on international politics. With some gradual differences

only, this applies in particular to the following questions (though it is noteworthy that motives vary for certain positions of different kind):

- Definition of the character of the epoch, the main contradiction and the main forces in the course of the global revolutionary process;
- Overexposure of national specifics in the construction of socialism and actual negation of experiences made by the other socialist countries;
- Far-reaching turn away from the principles of proletarian internationalism;
- Overexposure of "independence" and "self-reliance" of the respective parts of the International Communist Workers' Movement and the socialist states, as well as efforts to establish special relations with those fraternal parties and socialist states that also emphasize in particular "independence" and "self-reliance;"
- Negation of role and function of the socialist community of states in current times and non-participation in collectively designed actions of the fraternal parties and the socialist states;
- The PRC is acting openly against Comecon and socialist economic integration, and the DPRK is extremely reserved against multilateral cooperation;
- The DPRK and PRC tout the "great-powers-theory" and stress the need for struggle against "hegemonism" (PRC) and "dominationism" (DPRK) (yet it is noteworthy that the DPRK apparently counts China as a "great power" and does not share at all the PRC position which considers the Soviet Union in its capacity as a "great power" to be the main enemy);
- Overexposure of the role of the Third World (there is no congruence of opinions as far as the "First and the Second World" are concerned);
- Positions on peaceful coexistence and the struggle for détente and disarmament (CSCE [Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe], Mutual Balanced Forces Reduction negotiations in Vienna, collective security in Asia).

In general, it must be assessed that current KWP positions on basic theoretical and practical issues are closer to those of the CCP than to those of the Marxist-Leninist fraternal parties.

2.2 The DPRK does not approach the global confrontation of the damaging theories of Maoism, and the PRC's anti-socialist and anti-Soviet policy, from a class-based position. The DPRK attempts to label these patterns as differences in opinion between the CPSU and CCP and between the USSR and PRC. Among else, this shows when the KWP calls the CCP a "Marxist-Leninist" party.

The DPRK does not endorse the open anti-Sovietism espoused by the Chinese leadership, yet it officially acts from a "neutral" position. In conversations with high-level representatives of other socialist fraternal states, Korean comrades voice criticism of the relentless anti-Soviet policy by the Chinese leadership, in particular as far as the characterization of the Soviet Union as "social-imperialism" and as "main enemy" is concerned. Based on its support for unity and closed ranks of socialist states, as well as looking at its own national interests, the DPRK wants to see a normalization of relations between the USSR and PRC.

3.0 On Differences in Opinions and Issues of Contention

There are some basic differences in interests, theoretical positions, and also in actual policy between the DPRK and PRC and their two respective parties. They might increasingly influence the relations between both sides.

3.1

- - In recent years, the DPRK apparently realized that the PRC does not sincerely support the DPRK struggle for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea. Instead the PRC regarded, in the context of its anti-Soviet policy, the American military presence in Asia as desirable (an implementation of the [current] U.S. withdrawal plans, however, would remove this contentious issue almost completely).
- Based on its anti-imperialist policy, the DPRK does not endorse the unprincipled collusion of the PRC with the U.S. and other imperialist powers in the pursuit of anti-Sovietism. In particular given the U.S. presence in South Korea, the DPRK follows these developments with mistrust.
- In contrast to the PRC, the DPRK cultivates friendly relations with the Soviet Union

and other socialist states. The DPRK is interested to further develop these relations and their very beneficial cooperation.

- The DPRK does not endorse the splittist activities of the CCP in the International Communist Workers' Movement and has no relations with Maoist splinter groups in third countries.

- There are also different opinions on policy towards Japan. The DPRK is concerned about Japan's increasing militarization accompanied by the PRC's silent tolerance. Thus the DPRK is very skeptical towards efforts by the PRC to conclude a friendship treaty with Japan.

In contrast to the PRC, the DPRK also argues against a security agreement between the U.S. and Japan.

- The DPRK does not share Chinese positions on NATO, but is right on target when condemning the latter as an aggressive military alliance of imperialist states.

- The PRC's open support for the most reactionary forces of imperialism in the FRG is also not condoned by the DPRK. In spite of its reluctance to support GDR policy vis-à-vis the FRG, which is mostly based on the divergence of this policy with DPRK unification concepts [for Korea], the DPRK embraces in general a class-based position in its assessment of FRG imperialism.

- There are also other current international problems where positions of the DPRK are basically different from those of the PRC, and actually closer to those of the other socialist states. Such concerns, for instance, the cases of Chile, Angola and the assessment of roots of the Middle East conflict. The DPRK does not support the PRC in its condemnations of Soviet policy in Africa.

3.2 Furthermore there are some straight contrasts between the DPRK and PRC that directly affect the interests of both states:

- Claim to improve and develop Marxism-Leninism ("Maoism" - "Juche Ideology"); as the DPRK does not support "Maoism" in general, the PRC also denies its support to "Juche Ideology;"

- Claim for international leadership, in particular in the "Third World" ("Great Chairman Mao" - "Great Leader Kim Il Sung");

- Territorial Issues (it is not known that the PRC officially confirmed Mount Baektusan, which is of special symbolic value to the DPRK, as part of DPRK territory; it is also said there are difference in opinions regarding the continental shelf in the Yellow Sea);

- Question of the Korean minority in the PRC (about 1 million citizens); the DPRK wants their autonomy which the Chinese leadership is not willing to grant;

- Apparently the PRC is no longer willing to tolerate the DPRK's non-compliance with its export commitments, and has therefore moved in 1977 towards a calibration of its exports to the DPRK which hurts the DPRK economy considerably

4.0. On the Current State of Relations

4.1. At every occasion, the DPRK and PRC underline the close relationship between parties, states and peoples and emphasize in particular that their friendship "was sealed with blood."

Domestic events in the PRC in recent years, however, created complicated problems for the DPRK. Still, the latter supported all the important campaigns, beginning with the [1976] criticism of Deng Xiaoping (during Kim Il Sung's visit to the PRC in 1975 Deng was his main partner!) and extending to the struggle against the "Gang of Four" (in September 1975 a CCP delegation led by Zhang Chungqiao had visited the DPRK and was also received by Kim Il Sung!).

From their side, the PRC also fully supports DPRK domestic policy, in particular everything related to the cult of personality.

Mutual propagandistic support in mass media is very extensive and based on the principle of reciprocity.

Since Mao Zedong's death one can observe DPRK tendencies to become evasive in openly supporting the PRC foreign policy course or resort to very general statements, with the exception of the Taiwan question. Apparently the DPRK follows its own interests in the Non-Aligned Movement. It is also guided by the insight that Chinese foreign policy is compromised in the eyes of the peoples and its open support could

be detrimental to the DPRK.

After Mao Zedong's death, DPRK efforts became obvious to establish a profile as an equal partner and to follow a more independent line towards the PRC.

In contrast to the years before Mao's death, in current publications of documents from the PRC, anti-Soviet passages are omitted (e.g. in Hua Guofeng's speech at the XI Congress of the CCP). Here the DPRK exploited the [Chinese] temporary cessation of polemics [against the USSR].

The PRC still supports all tendencies of "independence" and "self-reliance" in DPRK foreign policy. Within the U.N. and other international organizations the PRC actively acts on behalf of the [absent] DPRK.

Yet also the PRC is refraining from unconditional support for DPRK foreign policy, especially when its own interests are directly at stake. So China reacted, for instance, very reserved towards the August 1976 Panmunjom Incident ["axe murders"] since the PRC is not interested in an escalation of tensions on the Korean peninsula.

4.2. In 1976 activities in bilateral relations were somewhat reduced in comparison to 1975. Only one important CCP party delegation visited the DPRK in late 1976. There was no exchange of representative delegations on the state level.

Overall, in 1976 there were 18 DPRK delegation visits to the PRC (1975: 17) and 12 Chinese delegations came to the DPRK (1975: 20). Exchange of those delegations focused on the fields of trade, scientific-technological cooperation, culture, and sports.

Apparently there are no contacts between mass organizations.

However, assessments of delegation exchanges must take into account that mutual delegation visits are not always made public. Thus exchanges might be much more extensive than it can be gleaned from the press.

In 1976, the following contractual agreements were signed:

- Agreement on Postal and Signal Communication
- Protocol about Navigation of Border Rivers
- Trade Protocol for 1976
- Plan for Cooperation of the Academies of Sciences for 1977/1978
- Protocol about Railway Border Traffic

In 1977, activities increased again in political, economic, military and cultural fields. Yet one can still feel a certain restraint in party relations.

Currently there also is a certain unknown number of PRC specialists in the economy and the military present on site in the DPRK.

After Mao Zedong's death, Chinese literature was temporarily unavailable in the DPRK. Only recently the first four volumes of Mao Zedong's works in Korean language have become available again. The fifth volume, which contains anti-Soviet outbursts and the claim of Mao Zedong being the "greatest Marxist-Leninist," is not on sale.

4.3. Negotiations to conclude a new long-term trade agreement for the years between 1977 and 1981 and the trade protocol for 1977, concluded in March 1977, were tedious and complicated.

The PRC rejected the DPRK requests for credits. It only conceded to defer Korean debt repayments until 1980. New rates according to prices on the world market were established for oil and other resources. The long-term "Agreement about the Mutual Delivery of Important Goods for the Years 1977 to 1981" stipulated an increase of trade volume until 1981 by 12 percent. Yet in the 1977 trade protocol they agreed on a volume of 18 percent less compared to the 1977 numbers in the long-term 1977 to 1981 agreement. According to the annual protocol, the volume for 1977 is said to be 820 million Swiss francs, with DPRK exports to the PRC consisting of 420 million and Chinese exports to the DPRK of 400 million. These numbers are considerably lower than the plan for 1976 (975 million Swiss francs) that was fulfilled by the PRC to 86 percent and by the DPRK to only 52 percent.

The main features of the 1977 trade protocol are as follows:

DPRK Exports:

- 2.0 to 2.2 million tons of anthracite

- 1.0 to 1.3 million tons of iron ore
- 140,000 tons of black metal products
- 80,000 tons of zinc
- 1,500 tractors
- 100 trucks (2.5 tons each)
- 500,000 tons of cement
- 1,000 lathes
- 5 million square meters of textiles

DPRK Imports:

- 2.2 to 2.5 million tons of coke coal
- 80,000 tons of coke
- 1 million tons of oil
- 200 trucks (4 tons each)
- 10,000 tons of railroad trucks
- 20,000 pairs of tires
- 170,000 tons of salt
- 30,000 tons of soy beans
- 10,000 tons of sugar
- 100,000 tons of fish

Since the DPRK also insufficiently meets its export commitments during 1977, the PRC has moved towards calibrating its own exports in order to achieve a somewhat balanced sheet.

4.4. The PRC Embassy in the DPRK is maintaining very active contacts to various organs of the DPRK. They are extremely eager, in the context of their activities, to avoid anything that could upset the Korean comrades. Special emphasis they put on highlighting equality [between PRC and DPRK].

There exists an agreement between the DPRK and PRC to not permit anti-Soviet attacks by Chinese representatives in the DPRK. In recent years the Chinese Embassy has violated these rules very rarely; thus there is no concern about this embassy within the diplomatic corps.

Chinese diplomats are treating representatives of other states in Pyongyang with correctness and politeness.

Contacts by embassies of the fraternal socialist states to the PRC Embassy are basically limited to official diplomatic events.

4.5. According to the Soviet comrades, the DPRK population has the feeling that DPRK-PRC relations are closer and better than DPRK-USSR relations. This is a result of intense reporting on the PRC in DPRK mass media and apparently of internal political-ideological education as well. Yet there exists also a lack of understanding in the population about internal developments in the PRC like, for instance, the open power struggles and the absence of a long-term prepared successor for Mao Zedong, as well as reservations towards some minor features of Chinese policy.

Overall and to major degree, the feelings of the Korean people are still highly influenced by the participation of Chinese volunteers in the fight against the U.S. and South Korean armies during the war between 1950 and 1953—though the DPRK officially commemorates this only for the occasion of certain bilateral events.

5.0. Conclusions

5.1. In principle, the DPRK will continue its policy of “balancing” between the Soviet Union and the fraternal socialist states on one hand, and the PRC on the other. This will not preclude certain tilts towards one side or the other based on pragmatic considerations.

Yet there is no reason to expect in any foreseeable time any substantial changes in relations between the DPRK and PRC.

5.2. The PRC will further undertake major efforts to draw the DPRK closer to China, and to counter developments of friendly relations by the DPRK with the Soviet Union

and other socialist fraternal states.

Currently the policy of the Chinese leadership vis-à-vis the DPRK is pretending to bolster the DPRK in its overreaching efforts towards “independence” and “self-reliance.”

According to our opinion, the PRC will, however, not succeed in enlisting the DPRK for China’s anti-socialist and anti-Soviet policy. Actual interests and foundations of DPRK ideology and policy will not allow for this.

5.3. Since the death of Mao Zedong, the DPRK has sharpened its profile as an equal partner of the PRC and lessened to certain degree its tilt towards the PRC in the context of its “policy of balance.” Still, there will be a particular continuity in the future: The DPRK approach to certain international issues will take positions of the PRC into consideration.

Ourselves we must continue to monitor closely some recent indications for certain DPRK concerns regarding the PRC. Among other things, those might have been due to results of the recent China visit by U.S. Secretary of State [Cyrus] Vance and China’s cool reactions towards American measures concerning a planned withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea.

5.4. Differences in opinions and issues of contention, as listed above under 3.0, will increasingly influence relations between both states. Especially the strident anti-Soviet course of the Chinese leadership stands in contradiction to DPRK interests, North Korean notions of the enemy [U.S., not USSR], and DPRK goals to achieve unity and cohesiveness among the International Communist Workers’ Parties. Here we have some angles for our efforts to draw the DPRK closer towards the fraternal socialist parties. This makes it imperative for us to expose in appropriate ways, in particular by drawing on concrete examples, the character of the current Chinese leadership’s policy in internal talks with the Korean comrades at high, and at the highest, levels.

Steinhofer

Attache

CC:

- Central Committee, Department International Relations
- Foreign Ministry, Far Eastern Department
- Foreign Ministry, Main Department
- Embassy, Political Department

1.0 **목적**

1.1 본 연구는 1950년대부터 1953년까지의... 1960년대... 1975년...

1.2 본 연구는... (1,336 개; 16 개),... 1930년...

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2.0 **연구 방법**

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3.0 **결론**

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1970년대 중반 이후 “중화” “중국” 관련 보도. 1970년대 중반 이후 [중국] 관련 보도.

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4.2. 1976년 1975년 관련 보도. 1976년 1월 1일 관련 보도.

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- 1977년 1,500

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5.4. 3.0... Steinhofer

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[\[1\]](#) Mutual Balanced Forces Reduction negotiations in Vienna