

June 17, 1960

Excerpts from V.P. Tkachenko 'The Korean Peninsula and Russia's Interests'

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Summary:

A compilation of conversations between various officials from the USSR and DPRK in terms of the USSR-DPRK treaty and its implications on the US-ROK relationship.

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[...]

[19-20]

[Materials from 17 June 1960 conversations with a KWP CC delegation. From the author's archive. Published for the first time]:

Kim Il Sung. Further, we would like to consult about the advisability of reducing our army. The situation is such that the South Korean army is now more than 700,000 men. In addition, there are 47,000 American troops and one Turkish battalion in the South.

N. S. Khrushchev. The US is pressuring the Turks right now to send at least one more company. How many men does your army have?

Kim Il Sung. Our People's Army in the North numbers 320,000 men and the border guards 60,000. As we have become aware the Americans want to reduce the South Korean army to 400,000 men. We think that if a reduction of the South Korean army is carried out then we also can carry out some reduction of our armed forces. Can this be done? We have already reduced the army by 80,000 men.

N. S. Khrushchev. When we discussed the issue of your invitation to our delegation to visit the DRPK we agreed with you that we would sign a treaty during this visit which would, in our opinion, exert a restraining influence on the militarist circles in South Korea. Last year we agreed with you for certain reasons not to sign such a treaty at that time.

I think that I could make a visit to you in September of this year and then conclude a treaty. Then you could reduce your army. The signing of a treaty between the USSR and DPRK would balance the forces of the South and North.

If they begin to threaten with missiles we respond to them in kind. We have missile installations in the Far East which could be targeted at both American bases in Japan as well as at their bases in South Korea.

I hope that have not taken back your invitation to visit your country.

Kim Il Sung. What are you saying, Nikita Sergeevich! Our next question is to ask you to set the date of your arrival. All the people are eagerly awaiting you.

We will reduce our army to a reasonable level in order to be able to repel an attack.

N. S. Khrushchev. Stalin was not confident that North Korea could be kept in our camp. Molotov also held to the same policy. For example, he stated that East Germany and Albania ought not to be included in the Warsaw Pact.

We did not do this. If we had stated this then the GDR would obviously no longer exist, and Albania would have been swallowed up by the Greeks and the Yugoslavs. We have included both East Germany and Albania in the sphere of the Warsaw Pact. Now our submarines are off the coasts of Albania and when it is necessary we can restrain [Translator's note: sderzhivat', which can also mean "to stand up to"] the fleet of our adversaries.

When we sign the treaty with you then no Syngman Rhee will dare attack. I think that

we will manage to make such a visit to you in September and then we will sign the treaty. What time in September would be best for you?

Kim Il Sung. The first half of September

[...]

[21-22]

[March 1961] N. S. Khrushchev. I would like to say a few words about my arrival in the DPRK in connection with the recent conversation between Cde. Puzanov and Cde. Kim Il Sung in order that the KWP leadership have a correct understanding of this issue.

We have formed the impression that Cde. Kim Il Sung is tying the postponement of my visit to the DPRK with the conclusion of the Treaty of Mutual Aid, as if this treaty would not promote the strengthening of our relations with the US and might be considered as a step against Kennedy. This is not at all so.

If I had an opportunity to go then we would sign such a Treaty. This, on the other hand, would promote the improvement of relations with the US. America has a treaty with South Korea, and we will have such a treaty with you. The Americans have a treaty with Jiang Jieshi and we have such a treaty with the People's Republic of China.

If we can come to an agreement with the US then these treaties might be abrogated. But since they have such treaties then we will also have them. I would like the Korean comrades to understand this, and Cde. Kim Il Sung, too. Or perhaps Cde. Kim Il Sung seems to be meeting us halfway and thinks that the conclusion of the treaty would harm us.

For when in 1958 a situation developed where American intervention threatened China we declared that an attack on China would be viewed as an attack on us and that we would participate in the struggle against the aggressors together. I also talked about this in a conversation with Eisenhower in 1959. And now an attack on Korea is tantamount to an attack on us. We are ready to seal this legally.

But Cde. Kim Il Sung is right, this year is very difficult for me. I would very much like to visit the DPRK but I do not know how to do this. I promised Cde. Kim Il Sung and I myself very much want to visit Korea but preparations for the [CPSU] Congress are underway right now, I have to prepare two reports, and the drafting of a program is taking much time.

I also want to tell you confidentially that yesterday we agreed to postpone our meeting with Kennedy to the last third of May when he will be in Europe although it had been planned to meet this year at the beginning of May. Yes, and there are also many other issues and matters. But the main thing is of course preparations for the Congress. Therefore we will think a little. Or the visit to the DPRK ought to be postponed to next year or our delegation headed by one of the CPSU CC Presidium members will go this year, as Cde. Kim Il Sung spoke of this. We will think a little, consult with Cde. Kim Il Sung, and decide.

But this of course does not depend on the meeting with Kennedy. If we have a treaty of mutual aid and cooperation before our meeting with Kennedy then I would announce to him that since the US has a treaty with South Korea we have concluded a similar treaty with North Korea. We favor a "nuclear-free zone in the Pacific Ocean". If the US is agreeable to this then we will also not reject it.

Kim Gwang-hyeop [Kim Kwang Hyop]. We understand this well. If such a treaty is signed then this will become a very great inspiring force for our people. When I left Korea the KWP CC Presidium and Cde. Kim Il Sung personally charged me with meeting with you. We would very much desire it if you could come, especially since your visit to the DPRK has already been postponed twice.

[...]

[25]

[8 October 1971. Pak Seong-cheol (Pak Song Chol)] In accordance with its plan for the peaceful reunification of Korea The DPRK government intends as a tactical step to announce the DPRK's readiness to denounce the treaties of friendship, cooperation, and mutual aid with the USSR and China on condition that the principal South Korean treaties with the US and Japan are abrogated at the same time. The Korean comrades would like to know the opinion of the Soviet side. In their opinion, such a statement will help achieve the withdrawal of American troops from South Korea and keep Japan from new aggression.

The Korean side expressed a desire that after its statement the Soviet Union would support the DPRK position and then turn to the US with a proposal to abrogate the American-South Korean treaty in exchange for the termination of the Soviet-Korean treaty and would also exert possible pressure on Japan for it to abrogate its treaty with South Korea.

[...]

[26]

L. I. Brezhnev. In the form in which the treaty exists it does not permit South Korea and the Americans to attack North Korea. We have spoken about this with Cde. Kim Il Sung more than once. A statement was made by the DPRK, its government, upon the conclusion of the existing treaty that in the event of the reunification of North and South Korea, that is, after reunification, the treaties between the Soviet Union and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the DPRK and China, and South Korea and the US and Japan might be abrogated. I am reading what it was said about this in the document: "The government of the DPRK states that all military-political treaties and agreements concluded by both South and North Korea before reunification of the country would cease to be in force when Korea is reunited on a peaceful and democratic basis".

Pak Seong-cheol. Of course, this issue will not arise after reunification.

L. I. Brezhnev. I have read your document. But such a formulation of the question as you have described today changes the substance of the matter. It turns out, if we have correctly understood your proposal, that the ties of alliance are dissolved even before reunification.

I would like to stress in connection with this that our treaty is a significant [otvetstvennyy] intergovernmental act concluded in a specific political situation. It was discussed in the Central Committees of our Parties and in the governments, after which it was signed. Therefore I request that you pass to Cde. Kim Il Sung that we would like to study this issue more deeply and discuss it in the Central Committee. It is possible to begin some consultations in advance. We will try to reply to Cde. Kim Il Sung in the near future in response to the question which has been raised. I think that you should understand us correctly. This in no way runs counter to your and our

desires to promote the fastest possible reunification of the country. This issue is quite large and one of principle, and it might exert its own influence not only on the fate of North and South Korea, but might have international significance. Therefore we need time to think about it and state a considered opinion. We have to consult in the Politburo and work out a common opinion of our CC and Government on this issue. There is time to do this.

[...]

[27-28]

[17 November 1971. Text of a Soviet note to the DPRK]

The views of the Korean comrades expressed by Cde. Pak Seong-cheol during a conversation in the CPSU CC on 8 October of this year relative to a possible DPRK statement of readiness to terminate the validity of the 6 July 1961 Treaty with the USSR if South Korea abrogates its principal treaties with the US and Japan have been carefully examined in Moscow.

As always in the past, the CPSU CC and the Soviet Government regard with understanding the efforts of the Korean comrades directed at restoring the national unity of the country and maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula. These active efforts by the KWP CC and the DPRK government find deep sympathy and support from our Party and the entire Soviet people. All possible steps will be taken from our side to support the constructive program of the DPRK in the international arena directed at realizing the national aspirations of the people, the reunification of the country by peaceful, democratic means and ensuring social and economic progress in both parts of Korea.

As we understand, the allied relations between our countries consolidated in the 1961 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Aid between the USSR and DPRK promotes the development of friendly Soviet-Korean relations on the basis of the principles of socialist internationalism.

The Soviet-Korean Treaty plays an important role in the maintenance of peace on the Korean peninsula and in the realization of the program of peaceful reunification of the country. As experiences shows the Treaty has reliably served and is serving the cause of protecting the interests of socialism from the encroachments of imperialism in the Far East and ensuring conditions favorable for the development of the building of socialism and the strengthening of the positions of socialism in this region of the world. The Treaty has been and remains the principal intergovernmental document consolidating the friendly alliance between the USSR and DPRK. Cooperation in the political, economic, military, and other spheres has been developing productively on the basis of this Treaty between our countries.

During the conclusion of the Soviet-Korean Treaty the governments of the USSR and DPRK agreed that it should promote the restoration of the national unity of Korea. In Article 5 of the Treaty it says that "the reunification of Korea should be conducted on a peaceful, democratic basis and that such a decision meets both the national interests of the Korean people as well as the cause of maintaining peace in the Far East".

Like the Korean comrades, we would like the reunification of Korea to be achieved as soon as possible on this very basis, as well as the removal of the American and Japanese military presence in South Korea.

As regards the question being considered by the Korean comrades of making a statement about the possible termination of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Aid between the USSR and DPRK right now, before reunification of the country, then inasmuch as this is an issue of a Treaty which is an important factor of the relations between our two socialist countries and which has grave international importance it seems to us necessary to comprehensively and deeply study the possible consequences and foreign policy response of this significant step. It cannot be excluded that this step might not yield the expected effect with respect to accelerating the withdrawal of American troops from South Korea and a resolution of the issue of the peaceful reunification of the country, and the enemies of socialism [might] use this against us and the interests of the peoples of the socialist countries.

As the Korean side stated on 6 July 1961 during the signing of the Treaty the government of the DPRK "proceeds from the position that all military-political treaties and agreements concluded by both South Korea and North Korea before the reunification of the country will cease to be in force when Korea is reunited on a peaceful, democratic basis".

In our opinion, it would be advisable to continue and further use this formula which was coordinated at one time between our two countries in order to put pressure on South Korea and its allies and to pursue an aggressive line on the issue of the peaceful reunification of the country.

The other desires of the foreign policy plan of which Cde. Pak Seong-cheol spoke in the CPSU CC on 8 October of this year regarding possible pressure on the US and Japan and support of the DPRK position at the UN have been considered and will be considered by us in the future when the Soviet Union carries out corresponding foreign policy measures.

[...]

[31]

[from the draft notes of a conversation between L. I. Brezhnev and Pak Seong-cheol on 9 December 1969]

[Pak Seong-cheol] We would like to achieve the reunification of the country by peaceful means, and not by force. But whatever restraint we exhibit, this cannot be achieved as long as the Americans are present in South Korea and continue their provocations.

A situation might arise in South Korea where armed assistance of the North would be needed to the revolutionary forces of the South. A war might begin, and in the event that a revolution occurs in South Korea. The Americans would unquestionably strive to suppress it with the aid of bayonets. But the people of South Korea will turn to us with a request for support and we, as a united nation, will not be able to refuse such aid. In this event the same situation might develop in Korea as in Vietnam.

A revolution might occur at any moment with the existing oppression and exploitation in South Korea. Right now South Korean youth are burning with a desire to rise to the struggle. But we are restraining them in order to build up and better train the revolutionary forces.

A war in Korea will not be such as in Vietnam, it will grow beyond a local war and its flames might quickly spread to the Soviet Union and China, with whom we have treaties of alliance.