

March 23, 1962

**Instructions from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs
and Public Security on the Issue of Ethnic Koreans
Crossing the Border to Korea**

Citation:

"Instructions from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Security on the Issue of Ethnic Koreans Crossing the Border to Korea", March 23, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 118-01025-02, 1-3. Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wan and Charles Kraus.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/115324>

Summary:

The Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Security explain North Korea's complaints regarding China's inability to effectively prevent illegal border crossings and summarize the Chinese understanding of the issue and specify instructions on resolving the issue of illegal border crossings.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Vice Ministers Zhang [Hanfu] and Huang [Hua], after reading and verifying, send to the Foreign Office for approval (Zhang and Huang have read the document)

Han Nianlong
23 March [1962]

On March 5, [North] Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Seong-cheol [Pak Song Chol] met with [Chinese] Ambassador Hao Deqing and discussed the issue of ethnic Koreans crossing the border into [North Korea]. He [Pak] said those who crossed the border into [North] Korea are unwilling to return [to China], and therefore the [North] Korean side could only work on settling [the immigrants]. However, most of them cannot settle down and work because they still have family [in China] who could not come to [North] Korea or because they still have property left in China. He [Pak] said there are more and more people crossing the border, and deaths have occurred [in the process]. [This trend] is having a negative political influence and is also affecting social order in [North] Korea. Lastly, Pak proposed that the two governments conduct negotiations in order for Koreans to come and go [between China and Korea] legally. He even accused our country of not properly implementing the relevant bilateral agreement concerning the movement of people [between China and Korea], stating that [North] Korea had issued many "authorization letters" but that [China] approves very few people to actually go to [North] Korea.

Before this, the Chief of the [North] Korean Foreign Affairs Consular Bureau twice requested that the Chinese Embassy assist in reuniting some [North] Korean leaders and cadres with 35 family members in China (Chinese nationals) wanting to go to Korea. Through our arrangements, most of them have traveled to [North] Korea, but some of them have not yet left. The [North] Korean side has expressed some dissatisfaction with our sluggish handling of [this issue].

Regarding this issue, [Chinese] Comrade Ma Lie orally informed the Premier [Zhou Enlai] of the instruction that if our side has made mistakes, then we should admit to our mistakes and apologize to the [North] Korean side.

According to our initial understanding, the situation of ethnic Koreans crossing the border to [North] Korea is particularly severe in Jilin Province. According to the report of the Jilin Provincial Public Security Department, last year our border defense guards discovered 28,028 people crossing the border. Of these, 7,939 people were convinced to return [to China]; there were also 7,528 people who returned [to China] on their own initiative after they went to [North] Korea. The [North] Korean side also sent back 2,361 people, but presently there are still 7,034 people in [North] Korea. In January of this year, 2,323 people crossed the border, which is basically the same as last year. Within one year, we found 243 corpses in the Yalu River and the Tumen River; of these, 82 corpses are Chinese nationals, 11 corpses are [North] Korean nationals, and 150 corpses are still unidentified. In Liaoning Province, a total of 8,237 people crossed the border to [North] Korea from January 1961 to March of this year [1962]. Of these, 1,266 people returned while the [North] Korean side sent back 213 people. We found nine people who drowned while trying to cross the border.

Regarding the issue of "authorization letters," according to statistics from the Yanbian [Korean] Autonomous Prefecture, last year they received 2,667 "authorization letters" from [North] Korea. Out of this number, there have been about 1,778 applications to travel to [North] Korea; 1,053 applications have already been approved, while 735 applications were not approved.

According to our understanding, the border crossing phenomenon has not eased mainly because we lack a process to resolve the temporary difficulties [facing China]. The density of urban populations is also a factor at play [in the problem]. In October 1961, the Northeast Bureau of the CCP received a forwarded report from local work units entitled "the Jilin Provincial Committee Report on Handling the Outflow of Ethnic Koreans." There have been problems and shortcomings, however, in implementing the measures offered in the report [to resolve this problem]. For example, we originally stipulated that each ethnic Korean should receive 360 catties of grain each year, but some production brigades can only provide 200 catties. Additionally, local authorities tend to be too strict, overly restrictive, and sluggish when processing the

applications of ethnic Koreans wanting to go to [North] Korea. The main reason behind the border crossings of ethnic Koreans, then, does not have much to do with the implementation of the [Sino-Korean] bilateral agreement on “authorization letters.”

As we recently held a meeting to specifically study [this issue], we believe that resolving the issue of [illegal] border crossing requires us to complete our internal work properly, make proper living arrangements for ethnic Koreans and improve production. In order to resolve these issues, we recommend sending a three man team from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Public Security, and the State Ethnic Affairs Commission to the Northeast. Apart from resolving some specific issues that the [North] Korean side has raised, they will work with the provincial committees to further understand the situation and the existing issues. [The group] will then write a report to the Central Committee and [recommend] measures for improvement. Regarding the issues raised by the [North] Korean side, we will ask [Chinese] Ambassador Hao [Deqing] to meet with the [North] Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs, and with a cooperative and truthful attitude, explain to the [North] Korean side the situation, the causes, and the measures we have adopted toward the [illegal] border crossings. We will thank the [North] Korean side for their past assistance and will express our regrets for the difficulties which our ethnic Koreans have caused as well as the deaths that have occurred during border crossings. We will apologize [to the North Korean side] for having been too strict in implementing [our agreements], for poorly handling [issues], and for other shortcomings in our business [conduct]. At the same time, we should also appropriately explain our present difficulties and ask that the [North] Korean side understands the difficulty in halting the border crossing phenomenon. Using the above [information], write telegrams to the [Chinese] Embassy in [North] Korea and, under the name of the State Council, to Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang Provinces. Approve both [telegrams] together.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Public Security
March 1962