

March 24, 1962

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

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Summary:

The Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Security announces that temporary economic difficulties in China and the failure of local authorities to process legal travel arrangements are the reasons underlying illegal border crossings between China and North Korea.

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North Korea
Additional Rush

[To the] [Chinese] Embassy in [North] Korea:

[We] received your telegram dated 6 March [1962].

According to [our] initial understanding, the situation of ethnic Koreans crossing the border to [North] Korea is quite severe in Jilin Province, and according to incomplete statistics, there were 28,028 people who crossed the border during the past year from Jilin Province alone. We also found 243 corpses in the Yalu and Tumen Rivers.

The border crossing phenomenon has not eased mainly because we still need a process to overcome the short term difficulties [in China]; the density of urban populations is also an influential [factor]. Additionally, at the local level, there are practical difficulties in [making] living arrangements for ethnic Koreans, and there are weaknesses in [our] work—[we have been] too stringent in examining and approving the applications from ethnic Koreans wanting to go to [North] Korea, and [we have been] too slow to process [these applications]. The fundamental way to resolve this problem is to complete our work well, make proper living arrangements for ethnic Koreans, and improve production. The implementation of the “authorization letters” protocol is not the main issue, and from today onwards we need to be significantly more lenient [with this protocol]. The Central Committee has already decided to dispatch personnel to understand the situation at the local level, and they will study further measures jointly with local authorities.

Please have Ambassador Hao [Deqing] meet with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Pak Seong-cheol [Pak Song Chol] and clarify the issue of Chinese-Koreans crossing the border along the following lines:

□ Since last year, huge numbers of ethnic Koreans have crossed the border into [North] Korea. Having caused many difficulties and troubles for the [North] Korean side, [North] Korea has adopted measures to return a portion of the people [back to China]. At the same time, [the North Korean side] has arranged work for many of these people. [These measures] are helpful to us, and we have expressed our thanks on this matter.

□ As many ethnic Koreans have crossed the border to [North] Korea, a number of deaths have also occurred [in the process]. The [national] government, as well as the affected localities, attaches great significance to this matter; we have adopted many measures and are trying to make proper living arrangements for ethnic Koreans and improve production. However, there are many causes behind the border crossings, and apart from historical habits, the most direct cause is the temporary difficulties currently facing China. The resolution of this problem will therefore still require a process. We ask that the [North] Koreans offer assistance and understanding on this point.

□ There were delays and other shortcomings with localities approving [legal] border crossings; [the cases of] individuals with “authorization letters” or others who applied to visit relatives in [North] Korea—especially the relatives of [North] Korean cadre going to [North] Korea for reunions—were not handled in a timely fashion. We apologize for this. We have already instructed local authorities to correct these shortcomings, and we have told local authorities to process those individuals possessing [North] Korean “authorization letters” as soon as possible and allow them to travel to [North] Korea, even with their property.

□ Regarding two specific issues, we have the following views: □ For those individuals who have already crossed the border into [North] Korea, if they are willing to reside in [North] Korea and the [North] Korean side is also willing to settle them, then those people can stay in [North] Korea. If the [North] Korean side has problems settling them, then [North] Korea can be asked to assist in mobilizing them to return [to China].

□ For those that have already settled and reside in [North] Korea, if they have family members in China and [the family members] are willing to go to [North] Korea, in principle we agree [for the family to go to North Korea]. They can also handle any property which they have left behind in China. However, because this will affect local work, production, and a number of other issues, it is difficult to resolve both these issues [family members and property] at once. These issues can only be processed gradually, and we ask that the [North] Korean side understands [the amount of time and work that is needed on this issue].

□ □

□ Foreign Minister Pak's suggestion to conduct government negotiations in order to allow citizens from both China and Korea [to cross the border] legally is excellent. However, considering that Chinese and Korean citizens already travel and back forth using the "authorization letters" protocol, and that there are huge numbers of border crossers—an irregularity which is caused by temporary difficulties in China as well as various shortcomings in our work—we can continue to implement the "authorization letters" protocol and need not renegotiate this specific issue at the present time. If the [North] Korean side still has other views, then we will not only welcome them; we will also consider and study them.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Public Security
24 March 1962