

July 11, 1961 Minutes of Conversation between Zhou Enlai and Kim Il Sung

Citation:

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Summary:

Zhou Enlai and Kim Il Sung discuss economic cooperation between China and North Korea, including industrial development in North Korea, Chinese economic support to North Korea, bilateral trade, Chinese training of North Korean technicians, agricultural development in North Korea, cross-border migration, and development strategies in the DPRK.

Credits:

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Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

- English Translation

Time: 11 July 1961, 11:40 a.m.– 1:20 p.m.

Location: 18th floor reception room, Diaoyutai

Accompanying the visit [on the Chinese side] are: Members of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee Chen Yi and Li Fuchun, State Council Vice Premier Luo Ruiqing, Foreign Trade Minister Ye Jizhuang, State Planning Commission Deputy Director Fang Yi, Vice Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei, and [Chinese] Ambassador to [North] Korea Qiao Xiaoguang.

Seated on the Korean side are: Korean Workers' Party Central Committee Vice Chairman Kim Chang-man [Kim Chang Man], Korean Workers' Party Central Committee Standing Committee Member, Vice Premier, and Minister for the Protection of the Nation Kim Gwang-hyeop [Kim Kwang Hyop], Korean Workers' Party Central Committee Standing Committee Alternate Member, Vice Premier, and Chairman of the Heavy Industry Committee Ri Jeong-ok [Ri Jeong-ok], Foreign Minister Pak Seong-cheol [Pak Song Chol], and charge d'affaires of [North] Korean Embassy in China Ma Dong-san [Ma Tong San].

Translator: Ri Ji-chang [Ri Ji Chang]

Documentation: Feng Kexiang

Premier Zhou [Enlai]: (After greeting one another, [Zhou] introduced Comrade Fang Yi to Premier Kim.) Comrade Fang Yi is in charge of foreign economic assistance. Whether or not the projects we have helped you to build are good or not, you can ask him. Are there any signs of delay?

Premier Kim [Il Sung]: Things are very good. There are no problems.

Premier Zhou (to Comrade Fang Yi): You can go and see if there are any problems with equipment and expand [your] understanding [of what is going on in Korea]. When you go, you can pick a good season.

Premier Kim: The ball bearings factory and the textile factories are both good. We used to have to import ball bearings, [but] now we import fewer.

Premier Zhou (to Comrade Fang Yi): After the plans are approved by Chairman Li [Fuchun], go to Korea and then Mongolia. There is no need to go to Vietnam. Then go to Cambodia, Ceylon, and other Asian and African countries. Go once a year.

Vice Premier Luo [Ruiqing]: Are there any issues with military assistance [that you want] to talk about?

Premier Zhou: Military industries are a big burden. It was right for you to not get into these. We wanted to build these quickly, but, in the end, there are problems with quality.

Vice Premier Luo: Particularly with the MiG-19s.

Premier Kim: [We] can proceed slowly. We cannot supply that much gasoline.

Vice Premier Luo: I saw a steel factory on the west coast. This factory competes with the Shijingshan Steel Factory, and uses Chinese coal during production. I asked the factory manager what he thinks about Chinese coal and he said it is very good. I said you are treating me as an outsider! Then he said that the coal had rocks in it, so it was lost weight.

Minister Ye [Jizhuang]: [North] Korea mostly uses coal from Shanxi and Kailuan. They use less coal from Jixi.

Premier Zhou: [When] producing so much, even stones cannot be refined. Using them creates losses.

Premier Kim: Now there aren't any problems.

Premier Zhou (to Minister Ye): When exporting factory items to fraternal countries, the Ministry of Foreign Trade needs to dispatch personnel to supervise at the factory. Don't export what is not up to standard.

Vice Premier Luo: The [North] Koreans don't use much military aid, less than the Vietnamese.

Minister Ye: [We] must specify the quantity and quality of the coal from Heilongjiang, Kailuan, and Shanxi used by the [North] Koreans.

Premier Zhou: Comrade Fang Yi is responsible for the assignments and specifications of exports. The Ministry of Foreign Trade is responsible for the quality. Ensuring the quality [of] exports is [our] number one priority, quantity is second. The timing can be slower. Comrade [Li] Fuchun should see if this is okay.

Premier Kim: The quality of the equipment imported from China is good, especially the textile equipment.

Premier Zhou: Maybe the textile equipment is good, [but that is] because there is a foundation. But don't just say good things about us. It is best to say more about [our] shortcomings.

Deputy Director Fang [Yi]: The [North] Koreans use 60-cycle motors, [but] we supplied 50-cycle. These fall short of the specifications, [so we] want to exchange [them].

Ri Jeong-ok: [Even] during a difficult period in China, [you] helped us with a ball bearing factory. This was very helpful to us. Our cars and tractors use the ball bearings from this factory.

Premier Kim: In the past, the mining machinery which we produced lacked ball bearings. But now this issue is resolved.

Ri Jeong-ok: Even the motors use ball bearings from this factory.

Premier Kim: I recently visited the factory. With the help of Chinese technicians, Korean technicians have learned a lot.

Ri Jeong-ok: The Premier met with the Chinese technicians.

Premier Kim: The Chinese technicians told me that Korean technicians have already mastered the production techniques.

Premier Zhou: We should agree that if the equipment, goods, or technicians aren't any good, then do not hesitate to inform [us]. We will be ready to swap [them for better equipment or technicians].

Ri Jeong-ok: Contact is very close now. Every year we contact Chinese departments without any problems.

Premier Zhou: We have a lot of domestic problems because we are working too fast. There are problems with quality. If there are any problems in the future, notify the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Foreign Trade. This will be an exercise for our cadres. If the quality is poor, if anything is lost, we will send cadres to do an inspection. This will be beneficial to us. You had a good harvest this year and this is also helpful to us. We can export less grain. This is most helpful. But this also depends on the final harvest.

Premier Kim: It seems this year we might have a good harvest. [We] made various guarantees for agricultural production this year. Much machinery was provided. Last year 300,000 tons of chemical fertilizer were supplied, [and] this year 600,000 tons were supplied. Last year there was less acreage of corn, [but] this year it has increased.

Premier Zhou: How much land was sown this year?

Premier Kim: 2.4 million 2,400,000 *jeongbo*.

Premier Zhou: Fertilizing 36,000,000 *mu* with 600,000 tons of chemical fertilizer, that's quite a lot.

Premier Kim: The amount of fertilizer per *jeongbo* of paddy field is 400 kilograms. Corn fields take 200 kilograms. This year we focused on the production of grain; cotton less so. Last year, [we] sowed 50,000 *jeongbo* of cotton and each *jeongbo* produced 200 kilograms of seed cotton. This year it was reduced to 20,000 *jeongbo* [of cotton] sown. [We] estimate that for the 930,000 *jeongbo* of corn, each *jeongbo* will produce 2 to 2.5 tons. The slogan we have put forth is that each *jeongbo* will produce tons [of corn].

Premier Zhou: 2 to 2.5 tons [of corn] per *jeongbo* is very good. Producing three tons is even better.

Premier Kim: On flat plains, each *jeongbo* can produce 5 to 6 tons. Sloped land can at most produce 1 to 1.5 tons. On average every *jeongbo* produces 2 to 2.5 tons, with a total production of 2 million tons. Right now there are 520,000 *jeongbo* of paddy fields with guaranteed irrigation. The average *jeongbo* can produce 4 tons, [so we] estimate that we can produce 2 million tons. Four million tons when you put corn and paddy rice together. There is also wheat, potatoes, and other cereals with a total output of 60 to 70 tons. We proposed a slogan of producing 1 million more tons of grain this year than last year so we can generally resolve grain problems.

Premier Zhou (to Vice Premier Luo): How much grain was produced last year?

Vice Premier Luo: 3.7 million tons.

Premier Kim: Under the Seven-Year Plan, [we] are continuing to put agriculture at the center. [We are] reclaiming new arable land.

Premier Zhou: On average, each person has 900 kilograms of grain. Is your population larger than 10 million [people]?

Premier Kim: About 11 million [people].

Premier Zhou: A lot of people ran away from Yanbian [to North Korea]. It is very good [if] young people go. They can become able bodied men. When older people go, it's more burdensome. Did many young people go?

Premier Kim: About 20,000 people [total], half of whom were young, the other of whom were old.

Premier Zhou: This is the young matching with the old. Our borders are difficult to demarcate. We have implemented a policy of having an open door with you. We will give you as many people as you want.

Premier Kim: Since the end of the war, some people have come back. We mobilized them to return. Some people asked why we do accept those returning from Japan but not us [returning from Yanbian].

Premier Zhou: Don't mobilize them. Do you still have a need for them now?

Premier Kim: No.

Vice Premier Luo: [North] Korea's population is increasing rapidly. [But] there is not much land—an average of three *mu* per person.

Premier Zhou: Do your people have the habit of eating corn?

Premier Kim: Up in the mountains they do.

(redacted text)

Premier Zhou (to Minister Ye): How much cotton was exported to [North] Korea this year?

Minister Ye: 10,000 tons.

Premier Zhou: 10,000 tons is 200,000 *dan*. Although cotton production has decreased in China, we still need to guarantee exports. Otherwise your textile factories won't be able to operate.

Premier Kim: It seems we still have to be nervous over these next two years. It will be better in the future when we have chemical fiber.

Vice Premier Luo: Comrade [Alexei] Kosygin said chemical fiber takes one and half years. Comrade Ri Jeong-ok said three months. The Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party believes it takes eight months. We can't do it now, [but] we can go and learn.

Premier Zhou: It takes at least a year. Our labs can produce them, but we can't mass produce them. There are four junctures: the laboratory, pilot production, and mass production. Then there are gifts [special products]. With gifts, it is easy to give a false impression; that a successful special product means that production is possible. This year is the fortieth anniversary of our Party. [Party organization at] lower levels want [these] special products [to be presented to the Central Government], but [we] stopped this [procedure]. Because the materials used for special products are partially imported or are scraped together. Comrade [Li] Fuchun already concluded that there should not be special products, [and] that it is faster to stick to experiments, test production, and mass production. By championing special products, [one] puts a stop to honest and pragmatic lab work and pilot production. Wherever we went in 1958, it was to serve them. Of course there were results, but there were also some problem. There were some unreliable special products.

Premier Kim: We also have this kind of situation.

Premier Zhou: The special products come in two forms. One is an exhibition hall where you are invited to take a look; the other is a big performance. Chairman Mao [Zedong] does not go. He has his doubts. We were running all over the place to see [the special products]. Once we discovered this problem, we stopped this practice of [producing special products].

Ri Jeong-ok: There was also this kind of situation in [North] Korea's light industries. We don't have materials in [North] Korea, and they still made finished products.

Premier Kim: Kim Il Sung University used imported materials to successfully experiment with synthetic rubber.

Premier Zhou: During the initial period of construction, [we] did not have experience [so] these foibles were hard to avoid. If you do not experiment, you cannot learn. The Korean People's Army is very strong, and this was achieved through training. Construction is the same way. The common road determined by universal truths and the declaration of the Moscow Conference still required our own practice. In a sense, construction is even harder than fighting a war. Our cadres engaging in construction, including [Li] Fuchun, [Li] Xiannian, and [Bo] Yibo, have all become thin.

Vice Premier Luo: Only after fighting a long time did [we] become experienced. Construction is just beginning. Premier (to Premier Zhou), [North] Korea's seafood products are very good,

especially since Vice Premier Choe Yong-jin [Choe Yong Jin] became the Minister for Seafood Products. He personally went down to do business, and to learn as well.

Premier Zhou: How much seafood do you produce?

Premier Kim: Last year's plan was not finished. Originally, we had set out to produce 600,000 tons, but in the end we only produced 530,000 tons.

Premier Zhou: That's not bad. 530,000 tons is a lot. What's the plan for this year?

Premier Kim: We plan [to produce] for 700,000 tons. The slogan is for 800,000 tons.

Premier Zhou: That's a lot. It is very difficult for us to increase to 1 million tons this year. First, there was an issue with the nets, followed by tung oil and then ships. What kind of ships do you use?

Premier Kim: The ships we produced ourselves are pretty good. This year the focus is on converting our sail boats into motor junks through the seafood cooperative. This way we can double the production of seafood. The amount of fish caught by cooperatives is greater than the state owned enterprises. Their [production] plans have also been completed.

Vice Premier Luo: In [North] Korea, I see that thee equipment is about the same as ours. We can go and learn [from the Korean seafood cooperatives].

Premier Zhou: Are your main fishing areas on the West Coast or the East Coast?

Premier Kim: Mainly on the East Coast. We are also having problems with nets at the moment. Catching fish requires many different kinds of nets. Our experience is that when the weather is warm, then fish tend to swim in shallow waters; when the weather is cold, then fish tend to swim in deeper waters.

Premier Zhou: We have delimited fishing areas with Japan, but because [their] tools are advanced and [ours] are backwards, we are very far behind. Japan catches more fish than us. This is our doing. If Japan takes part in the Northeast Asia Treaty then we will block their fishing zones. Japan's fishing industry has many medium- and small-enterprises which have a direct relationship with the people. South Korea and Japan failed to reach an agreement because they were unable to resolve the disputes over fishing zones. The U.S. and Canada also restrict where Japan can fish. Only we have open fishing areas with Japan.

Vice Premier Luo: Last year [I] talked with Premier [Kim Il Sung] about us helping [North] Korea to develop light industries and handicraft industries. In the past Japan did horror things [to Korea].

Premier Zhou: Japan [did it] to turn Korea into its market.

Premier Kim: In the first three years of our Seven-Year Plan, the emphasis is on developing the handicrafts and light industries and improving the lives of people. Therefore the eighteen factories which China assisted [us] with last year were all light industries. After these factories began production, they were of tremendous help to us. They resolved many problems [for us]. Additionally, we also imported some light industry factories from Czechoslovakia and Poland. This way we can resolve the problem in three years.

Premier Zhou: It seems that the sequence of [focusing on] agriculture, [then] light industry, and [then] heavy industry is correct. Agriculture in socialist countries has never passed [the bar]. Comrade Khrushchev also agrees with this view. Czechoslovakia has also strengthened their attention towards agriculture. Otherwise, once something comes up, then it will be a very critical [situation].

Vice Premier Chen: Not having food reserves is very dangerous, particularly when something comes up. How good it would be if China has 1000 billion kilos of grain reserves.

Premier Zhou: During the initial recovery period, prioritizing the development of heavy industry was necessary. Without this base, [you] cannot support agriculture.

Premier Kim: The central task during the first three years of the Seven-Year Plan is to raise the people's living [standards] and to develop light industries. The development of the chemical industry will provide raw materials for light industries. After these factories are set up, [we] can produce 20,000 tons of micro-nylon and 40,000 tons of other artificial fiber for a total of 60,000 tons each year. At that point, there will be little need for cotton.

Premier Zhou: That requires two or three years. We must also learn too. All right, talk of construction ends here! Chairman Mao might still talk with you. Next we will have Comrade Chen Yi discuss the situation of the Geneva Conference.

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