



July 24, 1961

Cable from the Chinese Embassy in North Korea, 'Report and Request for Guidance on Chinese Residents Who Came to Korea After Illegally Crossing the International Border'

Citation:

"Cable from the Chinese Embassy in North Korea, 'Report and Request for Guidance on Chinese Residents Who Came to Korea After Illegally Crossing the International Border,'" July 24, 1961, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, PRC FMA 118-01026-07, 112-115. Translated by David Cowhig.

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Summary:

The Chinese Embassy in North Korea reports that DPRK treats Han Chinese and Chinese Koreans differently.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from the Henry Luce Foundation.

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

- English Translation

[Stamp:] Second Asian Department, Gong 1313

July 31, 1961 Confidential

Report and Request for Guidance on Chinese Residents Who Came to [North] Korea After Illegally Crossing the International Border

(61) [North] Korea Consular No. 059

To the Consular Department [of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs]:

Our Embassy does not have figures for just how many ethnic Korean residents of China are crossing the border. In recent contacts with the Korean side, we have sometimes had informal discussions about this issue. We have only anecdotal information gathered from letters or from conversations with people who came to the Embassy. The number of ethnic Han Chinese who have come to Korea, according to figures from the Overseas Chinese Federation, is about 40. After arriving in Korea they scatter to various places to stay with relatives. Fourteen of them came to Pyongyang recently. There are about ten Korean Overseas Chinese who crossed the border into China. They are mostly young workers or peasants who have their own purpose in going there. Most have little idea about the law and, seeing many people crossing the border, take the opportunity to do so as well. Some cross the border to visit relatives and then come back.

The Korean side takes different attitudes and adopts different methods for Korean nationality Chinese crossing the border than they do for Han nationality Chinese citizens crossing the border. Korean nationality Chinese are treated as Koreans returning to their country and are welcomed, sympathized with and taken care of. For example, at the beginning of the month, a draftsman from Shenyang's First Machinery Industry Design Department, Shenyang Section, named Jin Haishun came to the Embassy for a talk. On June 30, they took the train from Shenyang to Hamatang where they met a guide. The guide took a group of 30 – 40 people (he said that the guide charge each person 4 - 5 RMB). They walked 10 kilometers on the Chinese side until they get to Jiuliancheng where they waded in the river. In the river there is a Korean island. A guest house on the island, called the Frontline Reception Station, had been specially set up to receive guests. At the guest house, their documents were checked and they are registered as long as they do not have a political or other problem and are not smugglers. Everyone who says that they have come to Korea to take part in national construction are welcomed. After eating two meals there, a specially designated boat to receive guests takes them to Uiju.

A reception committee was set up at Uiju as a jointly organized reception organization by the Department for Compatriots Living Abroad and the Labor Department. Their work is essentially the same as the organization set up in 1959 to receive Korean nationality people who had come to Korea in groups. The committee is set up in a school and when he [Jin Haishun] was there, there were about 400 people there waiting to be assigned work. At this point, Korea also made a further, more detailed check of the people who had crossed the border. The check was less rigorous for entire households that had crossed the border together who were given an especially warm welcome. Bachelors, students, and cadres who had come alone were checked more rigorously and were asked if there were going to stay in Korea for a long while to participate in national construction. Those who had crossed the border with a large quantity of goods were handled according to the principle of voluntariness and a specialized organization bought their goods according to prices set by the state. A ball point pen that cost two RMB each in China could be sold for 8 – 9 won in Korean currency.

After the checks were completed, assignments were given according to the personal characteristics of the border crossers. They were issued residency certificates, and according to distance to the region or city (people sent to a city were generally sent there for agricultural work) of assignment, were given money to cover their hotel and transportation costs. For a trip from Sinuiju Prefecture to Pyongyang, each person is issued 3 – 5 won (which includes train and bus tickets

and living expenses), and 600 grams worth of ration coupons. It is said that special organizations like the one in Sinuiju have been set up in a number of places along the river . They all operate in a similar fashion. After the border crossers are settled, they are issued citizenship certificates.

The Korean side considers Han nationality people crossing the border to be Chinese citizens and so are not treated in the same way as Korean nationality people. Those who came to Pyongyang after crossing the border had all been to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Labor to resolve the issues of residency and employment. Korea said that it had even asked the Overseas Chinese Federation for advice on how to handle this issue. The Korean side's policy towards these people is to allow those with relatives in Korea to stay while those without relatives should return to China.

This is our view of the situation and tentative views on how to handle it. Our Embassy, according to the guidance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, handles the matter of Korean nationality people crossing the international border in the spirit of "taking diplomatic measures is not appropriate and there is no need to propose discussions about it to the Korean side". We have encountered these issues:

1. Some Korean nationality people who have crossed the border write letters to the Embassy or visit asking for help in returning to China. These people are students, employees, and technicians who had heard some partial information about how good life is in Korea and harbored unrealistic hopes or personal ambitions and so crossed the border together with many other Korean nationality residents. After getting to Korea, they would be assigned to some village and realized that reality did not match their expectations, felt unhappy, and decided to return. We have considered several possible solutions: (1) Our Embassy could propose to the Korean side, explaining the situation of these people, and ask that the Korean side assist them in returning to China. Considering the attitude and measures that the Korean side takes towards these people, the Embassy could not lightly make such a suggestion. (2) The Embassy not handle cases like these and tells these people that they should present themselves to the Korean authorities and request assistance in returning to China (in fact since they have already received some benefits from Korea and have been assigned jobs, the Korean side may not easily agree to them returning to China). Some people say that Korea only allows people to come but not to go back. We could give special treatment in special cases. Those who absolutely insist upon returning could be issued documents by the Embassy that would enable them to legally return to China. That would work in handling individual cases (for example, we did this in the case of Jin Haishun's request to return to China). But this will not be suitable for handling too many cases. We are now studying how to handle this issue and request guidance on how to handle it.

2. The issue of Han nationality people crossing the border is easier to handle because the attitude of Korea towards these people is different and does not involve the national sentiments of Korea or China-Korea relations. We believe that we should handle these cases more strictly so that the Korean side will see that we treat the issue of Han nationality people different from the way we treat Korean nationality people. Specifically, we suggest negotiating with Korea and implementing an agreement that would facilitate their return to China. There would be no special difficulty in doing this from the Korean side. In certain individual cases, where there are relatives in Korea or a special situation and the person absolutely refuses to return, it would not be appropriate for use to allow the Korean side to return the person to China by force. If Korean side does allow the person to remain in Korea, we would not express a position on it.

As for Korean citizens who are Overseas Chinese who have gone to China, we suggest handling these cases individually since they all go for their own personal purposes. Our handling of these cases could make some Overseas Chinese uneasy and so our opinion on handling these cases is that the departments concerned in China should carry out criticism and education of these people in order to encourage them to return to Korea. If they do not agree to return, they should not be forced to return and local governments may arrange for them to settle down. But it would be better if they were not settled in a city or given a factory job. It would be best for them to be

assigned as agricultural laborers on a people's commune. These suggestion for handling these cases have been discussed with the Overseas Chinese Federation. We have also exchanged views with the Liaoning Province Foreign Affairs Office on this matter.

We request that these opinions for handling these matters be studied and advice provided to us.

[Chinese] Embassy in [North] Korea

July 24, 1961

Distribution: Committee of Overseas Chinese Affairs; Ministry of Public Security; Liaoning Province Foreign Affairs Office