

**September 1, 1976**  
**Telegram from Moscow to Bucharest, SECRET, Flash,**  
**No. 058.014**

**Citation:**

"Telegram from Moscow to Bucharest, SECRET, Flash, No. 058.014", September 1, 1976, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Archives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Matter 220 - Relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 1976. Obtained by Izador Urian and translated for NKIDP by Eliza Gheorghe.  
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114121>

**Summary:**

The Embassy of Romania in Moscow assesses the Panmunjeom or "Axe Murder" Incident of August 1976.

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

**Original Language:**

Romanian

**Contents:**

Translation - English

## TELEGRAM

Sender: Moscow

CLASSIFICATION: SECRET

Flash

Date: 01.09.1976/21:30

No.: 058.014

To: First and Second Directions - Relations

Synthesis Direction

Regarding: Assessments and Commentaries Regarding the Recent Korean-American Incident in Panmunjeom

Gathering from the discussions I, together with Gh. Micu, had with M[ikhail]. S[tepanovich]. Kapitsa, Director in the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as with Pak Su-gwon [Pak Su Gwon] and Ri Du-yeol [Ri Tu Yol], the Charge d'Affaires of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, respectively, and the First Secretary of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Embassy, and with Li Tingquan, First Secretary of the Chinese Embassy, as well as from the analysis of Soviet press materials, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The central written press and radio-television broadcasting stations provided brief news about the Korean-American incident in Panmunjeom, as well as about the press conference on this issue, held at the Korean embassy in Moscow. "Izvestia" and "Sovetskaya Rossya" dated August 28th published some commentaries, but against the background of the initiative taken by some socialist and non-aligned countries to register the Korean matter on the agenda of the forthcoming UN General Assembly session.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea embassy made pressures on the Soviet side to support the Korean position through press activity, by publishing some governmental declarations which would condemn the United States.

North Korean diplomats said that the "commentaries and the support from the Soviet Union, are of little importance."

2. Judging from our conversation with M.S. Kapita, the Soviets did not seem willing to amplify the incident per se and avoided for a or measures which would commit itself, such as the publication of a governmental declaration.

Explaining this to us, Kapita said that to his mind, the incident provoked by the North Koreans had a local character, not having originated, so it seems, from the center.

The coverage given by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea propaganda apparatus, the large-scale internal measures, including mobilizations, military maneuvers, measures adopted in relation to other countries (not to send nor to receive official delegations) do not have, according to Soviet beliefs, a ready ground on which these measures could be justified. This can be explained, in turn, through the internal difficulties, mostly in terms of economic matters, such as a bad harvest, drought, the failure to fulfill certain main indicators in industry, as well as an attempt to use this incident to promote even further the national vigilance spirit and the effective military preparedness of the entire people. We would like to mention that Pak Su-gwon pointed out that this year's harvest is very good, superior to that from last year. At the same time, he confirmed the existence of difficulties in other industrial sectors, such as energy, for example.

3. Answering to a question regarding the consequences of the incident, respectively

its influence on the whole of the Korean matter and on the larger-scale situation, M.S. Kapita said that to his mind, the United States are not currently and they will not be in the future interested in getting involved in Korea militarily. Moreover, the North Korean side must logically not be interested in the tensions in the area.

Through the measures taken by the United States, which, according to Kapita, "are understandable," as well as following the "regret" expressed by the North Koreans on the things which occurred [recently], it can be seen that in general, the incident overcame its critical moment.

Nonetheless, the United States will use the situation thus created and its concrete consequences (the killing of two American officers) in international organizations and first and foremost at the UN.

It is not to be ruled out that the situation in the region worsens. In addition, there are no reasons to fear the outbreak of a large-scale conflict. "Neither the USSR, nor the People's Republic of China will allow the United States to launch a war on the Korean peninsula. The possible attempts of the United States in this respect will encounter the unfavorable reaction of the Japanese too. At its turn, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will not benefit from the agreement and support of the USSR, of China or of other socialist countries if it is the initiator of a regional conflagration."

Against the background of the efforts and concerns for the reunification of Korea, this incident does not seem to have any special meaning, as Kapita pointed out.

4. Li Tingquan mentioned that the People's Republic of China unreservedly supported the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with respect to the incident, released a governmental declaration to the public, just like the Korean comrades asked them to do, decisively condemning the aggressive actions of the United States in the region, and it asked for the withdrawal of US troops from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"In contrast to this position adopted by China," the Chinese diplomat observed, "the Soviet action on this incident was ambiguous." To his mind, this situation has its origin in the approach the USSR adopted towards the United States, "to maintain control over international events together."

Regarding the evolution of the incident, the Chinese diplomat said that the situation is heading towards normalization.

Written: Gh. Micu

Signed: Gh Colt