

May 20, 1967

**Telegram from Pyongyang to Bucharest, No.76.171,
TOP SECRET, May 20, 1967**

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Summary:

A description of the deteriorating relationship between North Korea and China.

Original Language:

Romanian

Contents:

Translation - English

Regarding your telegram no. 08/00316: [AS] we have already informed you, Sino-Korean relations have been marked since the fall of 1964 by a certain deterioration, which has been constantly aggravating especially politically, culturally and in the consular area, without affecting economic-commercial relations and the level of diplomatic representation. It is noteworthy that, in terms of duration and intensity, the deterioration of Korean-Chinese relations followed an inverse trend to Korean-Chinese relations [sic! probably Korean-Soviet relations]

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With the advent of the Cultural Revolution in China, which coincided with the unofficial visit exchanges between Kim Il Sung and Brezhnev, Shelepin's trip to Pyongyang and then Vice-President Kim Il's visit to Moscow in 1966 (unofficial visit) and in 1967 (official visit), economic relations between North Korea and China entered an open phase of crisis. The culmination of this crisis occurred on January 27, with the publication of a declaration by the Korean press agency and the press conferences organized by Korean diplomatic legations in Algiers, Havana and Jakarta criticizing China. This new phase of the crisis affected both economic relations and the level of diplomatic representation.

It is noteworthy that the Korean side was the one which took initiative to make public, internally and externally, the precarious character of its relations with China.

Internally, party members, the state apparatus and social activists were informed about this situation by means of meetings, held at various levels: from the regional level to the level of the primary party organization.

At these meetings, briefings about the situation in China and the state of Sino-Korean relations were made, assigning all the blame to China, which was accused of interfering in North Korea's internal affairs and of trying to strangle it economically.

In its relations with other socialist countries, the Korean authorities also wanted to make it known that their relations with China are worsening, making Beijing responsible for some of DPRK's internal economic problems: cooking oil and grain shortages, petroleum products, coke coal. These revelations were made particularly when the Korean authorities wanted to obtain loans and certain goods deliveries from its interlocutors. This [relationship] was one of the themes the North Koreans speculated most about, at their economic negotiations with the USSR in Moscow.

It is worth noting that the Chinese, although well aware of how North Korea exploits its relations with China, adopted an indifferent, immovable and expectative attitude, a position which implied no consequences or replies to the various actions undertaken by the North Koreans with a view to aggravating their relations with China. Therefore, the Chinese did not publish any materials on DPRK-PRC relations, they did not respond to the declarations made at press conferences or in newspapers, which should be noted as an exception to the rule. Through this [approach] the Chinese wanted to find out to what extent the North Koreans are willing to aggravate their relations with China.

It seems that the attitude of the Chinese confused the North Koreans, who expected harsh retorts from the PRC, based on the characteristic style of Chinese propaganda. The North Koreans were hoping to create an opportunity to pose as the victims of Chinese attacks, which would undoubtedly have increased their chances and leverage in their relations with other socialist countries. However, the attitude of the Chinese made the North Koreans more cautious [in their dealings with the PRC].

[A] The level of diplomatic representation for the two countries is that of charges d'affaires. The Chinese ambassador left Pyongyang on October 26, 1966, without having returned to his position.

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Unofficial sources stated that the ambassador has been imprisoned (previously, he was the first secretary of the Shenyang province party committee). This rumor also appeared in relation to his predecessor.

b. Sino-Korean cultural relations have been inexistent for almost two years, and beforehand, they were limited to sports teams exchanges. At the contests between these sports teams, no tickets were sold and the sports halls were filled with people selected [by the authorities].

c. As for economic-commercial relations, we ask you to look at our brief no.0042, page 2, regarding the discussion between Ionescu and the Chinese Counselor Van Pen from April 3rd, as we do not have any other information.

d. On consular affairs, individual traffic and on-the-border commerce reached a halt, while repatriations and family visits were stopped. Chinese language schools in the DPRK were closed down for an unlimited duration.

e. We are not aware of any state delegations exchanges (even less probable being party exchanges), with the exception of the delegation exchanges sent to sign the commercial and technical-scientific agreements.

f. The North Korean press does not publish any news related to the PRC.

3. There are no visible signs that the current state of Sino-Korean relations will change in one way or another. Because the North Koreans have not achieved the desired outcomes from aggravating the Chinese, meaning that the Chinese did not respond to Pyongyang's actions, which reveals the scorn and the self-confidence of the Chinese, it can be assumed that the North Koreans will limit themselves to those actions that they have undertaken until now. The Korean leadership does not want to irk the PRC too much because this would jeopardize the military support that the Chinese could offer in case of an armed conflict with the South Koreans and the Americans and because it fears this would reactivate the Yan'an faction, in exile in Beijing, composed of Kim Il Sung's old party activist comrades which the North Korean leader wanted to eliminate. This group is formed of the leaders of the Korean partisan movement who refused to withdraw together with Kim Il Sung to the USSR in 1940 and join the Red Army, and it also includes those leaders of the Korean underground leftist movement from the time of the Japanese occupation, who were ousted to make room for those who joined Kim Il Sung in the USSR or those who came with him from the Soviet Union.

At the time, these leaders were accused of undermining the party. The reactivation of this faction would create serious problems for the current North Korean leadership especially with regard to the cult of personality in North Korea, by disclosing the fictitious nature of some of Kim Il Sung's achievements.

North Korea's economic and technical-military interests dictate a good relationship with the USSR with a view to implementing the accords signed until now (loans, military assistance), which in turn, prevents an improvement in Sino-Korean relations.

Signed: N. Popa
19.V./10