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North Korean “Adventurism” and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972*

By **Bernd Schaefer**

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North Korean “Adventurism” and China’s Long Shadow, 1966-1972*

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When North Korean leader Kim Il Sung met V. N. Novikov, Deputy Head of the Soviet Council of Ministers, in Pyongyang on 31 May 1968, he had a rather special request for the leadership in Moscow. As relayed by First Secretary Zvetkov of the Soviet embassy in Pyongyang:

The government of the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] requests from the government of the USSR permission to use an air route for special flights by members of the [North Korean] party leadership or the government, which would fly over the mainland straight from the DPRK into the USSR. This way, any contact with Chinese territory or flight over the open sea would be avoided. [...] Explaining this request, Comrade Kim Il Sung said that a forced landing might happen on flights over Chinese territory and insults by Red Guards might occur. The flight route over the sea would be dangerous, especially after the [USS] *Pueblo* incident. [...] Kim added: 'We do not fear death, but we have to live in order to finish the revolution.'"¹

As audacious and bold as the North Korean leader sounded in public, he felt deeply threatened by the Cultural Revolution unleashed in China two years earlier by Mao Zedong, whose mantle as the leader of Asian communists he had dared to challenge. No less did Kim Il Sung fear the Americans, whom he had provoked earlier that year with the seizure of the naval intelligence ship *USS Pueblo*. North Korean "adventurism," as the Soviets and Chinese termed it, had come back to haunt its creator, while China's long shadow compelled Kim Il Sung to display patience and accommodation.

Archival records of the DPRK's former ally, the German Democratic Republic, reveal that the challenges and opportunities Kim Il Sung faced as a result of China's Cultural

¹ Embassy of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). 19 July 1968. Memorandum on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK, Comrade Zvetkov, and Comrade Jarck on 26 July 1968. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes [Political Archive of the Foreign Office (PoLA AA)], Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR [Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the GDR (MfAA)], G-A 320.

Revolution, and the effect of that cataclysm on Pyongyang's foreign policy, were greater than previously realized.² The revolutionary fervor Mao Zedong fomented in China was a serious threat to Kim Il Sung's rule and to the security of the DPRK. The two neighbors were, in fact, brought to the brink of armed conflict. At the same time, however, the inward focus of Chinese policy and the self-flagellation of the Chinese Communist Party provided Kim Il Sung an opportunity to seek a larger role as a leader of Asian communism. Following the Vietnamese model of fighting the Americans to achieve national unification, Kim Il Sung made use of this opportunity to take the 'adventurist' path toward unifying the Korean peninsula—plotting unrest in South Korea and providing a pretext for intervention. The seizure of the *USS Pueblo* in January 1968 was one step along this path—a daring game of brinkmanship in which Korean adventurism was joined with militant anti-Americanism. It is questionable, however, whether this pattern also applied to the April 1969 shootdown of an American EC-121 spy plane. Only when China's foreign policy became more moderate in late 1969 did North Korea embrace its giant neighbor as an old friend and simultaneously alter its strategy toward unification.

The Threat of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966-1969

It must have been quite a traumatic experience. Many years after the events, during a meeting with East German leader Erich Honecker in December 1977, Kim Il Sung recounted the sense of threat he felt during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that convulsed China from

² The literature in English on North Korean foreign relations is very limited, but brief discussions of Sino-North Korean relations during the Cultural Revolution can be found in Chin-Wee Chung, "North Korea's Relations with China," in Jae Kyu Park, Byung Chul Koh, and Tae-Hwan Kwak, eds. *The Foreign Relations of North Korea: New Perspectives* (Boulder: Westview Press, and Seoul: Kyungnam University Press, 1987): 175-179; and Donald S. Zagoria, "North Korea: Between Moscow and Beijing," in Robert A. Scalapino and Jun-Yop Kim, eds. *North Korea Today* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California Press, 1983): 351, 357.

1966-69. Kim noted that the DPRK has a border with the PRC of approximately 1,500 kilometers, and that although the two countries are close, the DPRK does not agree with everything China does. Relations with the PRC had been especially poor during the Cultural Revolution, when China had agitated against the “Korean revisionists” over loudspeakers set up along the entire Sino-Korean border. Nevertheless, the DPRK had been compelled to improve relations with China so as not to worry about the military threat from the United States. Since the DPRK could not concentrate troops simultaneously in the North and in the South, it had mended fences with the PRC after the end of the Cultural Revolution.³

In a conversation with the East German leader on 31 May 1984, Kim Il Sung went into more detail:

During the Cultural Revolution there were major propaganda actions against us on the Yalu. There were provocations in North Korea at the time of the Chinese/Soviet conflicts on the Ussuri in 1969. While I was recuperating in the countryside, I received a call from our Minister of State Security that Chinese troops were crossing the Tumen into our territory. I gave the order not to shoot, but to let them come ahead so that we could take them on our territory, if necessary. We sent a group of soldiers there. Then the Chinese withdrew. The Chinese castigated the Soviet Union and even us as revisionists. It lasted about five years in our case, and we had to keep our peace because of our situation. We had to be patient.⁴

Kim Il Sung’s first response to the Cultural Revolution was to seek rapprochement with Moscow. Officially, Pyongyang began to attribute the deterioration of relations with Moscow after 1961 exclusively to the impertinent behavior and wrong-headed policy of Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev. His overthrow in 1964 therefore allegedly paved the way for a smoother

³ Report on the Official Friendship Visit to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea by the Party and State delegation of the German Democratic Republic, led by Comrade Erich Honecker, Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and Chairman of the State Council of the German Democratic Republic, from 8 to 11 December 1977. 13 December 1977. Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv [Foundation Archive of Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archive (SAPMO-BA)], DY 30, J IV 2/2A/2123.

⁴ Memorandum on the Meeting between Erich Honecker and Kim Il Sung on 31 May 1984. SAPMO-BA, DY 30, 2460.

relationship, but in actuality it was Mao Zedong's decision to launch the Cultural Revolution that was the decisive factor. Observers in the diplomatic corps in Pyongyang noticed in July 1966 that the DPRK paid nearly the same attention to each of the two socialist superpowers during celebrations of the 5th anniversaries of its 1961 friendship treaties with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China.⁵ The GDR Embassy learned from its informants in Pyongyang that a new line was being expressed in political meetings proclaiming that the DPRK would not bow to pressure to follow the "Chinese course." Friendship with the Chinese people would be maintained, but North Korea would increasingly distance itself from the official policies of the PRC.⁶

Good relations with China soon proved difficult to maintain, however, as both sides challenged each other on various fronts. In September the Cuban ambassador in Pyongyang, Comrade Vigoa, who was closer to North Korean party officials than most of his fellow socialist diplomats, noticed a mounting tendency by the Korean side to speak of China's Cultural Revolution with arrogance and contempt. DPRK officials would crack jokes about events across the border, and even about Chairman Mao himself. Mao had become senile, Koreans remarked to Amb. Vigoa, and perhaps the only remedy for him was Korean ginseng root.⁷

In some respects, Beijing and Pyongyang had already become political rivals, even if unequal ones. By 1965 Koreans criticized their giant neighbor for providing insufficient economic aid. They also repeated complaints voiced by their Vietnamese comrades that China

⁵ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 23 July 1966. Information on the 5th Anniversary of the "Treaties on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance", DPRK-USSR and DPRK-PRC. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1088/70.

⁶ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 29 July 1966. Report on an Informational Note from 28 July 1966. PolA AA, MfAA, C/1088/70.

⁷ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 12 September 1966. Memorandum on a Conversation with the Cuban Ambassador, Comrade Vigoa, on 10 September 1968. PolA AA, MfAA, G-A 316.

was blocking Soviet shipments to support their struggle against the U.S. Pyongyang viewed China's pressure on Cuba to reject Soviet support as another case when Beijing's policy prevented a united and more aggressive "socialist front against U.S. imperialism." As China began propagating the Cultural Revolution across Asia, the North Korean and Chinese brands of communism openly began to rival one another. The Chinese were eager to maintain the upper hand in every ideological struggle, which became particularly obvious in their intervention in factional conflicts within the Japanese Communist Party and among citizens of North Korean descent in Japan. Moreover, after China arbitrarily discontinued vital shipments of coke and oil, Pyongyang concluded that it would gain much more economically by relying on assistance from Moscow and its European allies than by depending too heavily on the PRC.⁸

In the fall of 1966, the Korean Workers' Party (KWP) began to agitate against China's "superpower chauvinism," replacing the charge of "modern revisionism" that it had previously directed against the Soviet Union. The KWP portrayed the Cultural Revolution as incomprehensible and the Red Guards as "just kids who know nothing about politics." In contrast, the DPRK emphasized its own Korean cultural heritage.⁹ The anti-intellectualism displayed so prominently in China during the Cultural Revolution was particularly problematic for Pyongyang because it hampered North Korean efforts to gain support among intellectuals in South Korea and Japan. Moreover, the Chinese challenged the North Koreans by demanding that they pursue revolution in South Korea, even at the cost of sacrificing the weak "patriotic forces"—pro-DPRK partisans—in the ROK. In response, the KWP party conference in October

⁸ GDR Ministry for Foreign Trade Berlin, Deputy of the Minister. 31 January 1972. Memorandum on Consultations in the Ministry for Foreign Trade of the USSR on 25 January 1972. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 500/75.

⁹ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 5 October 1966. Information. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 1088/70.

1966 publicly expressed a centrist standpoint with a strong emphasis on self-reliance, thus implicitly aiming its criticism at Beijing rather than Moscow.¹⁰

On 21 January 1967 the DPRK issued its first explicit and official public statement criticizing an action by China. The KWP newspaper *Nodong Sinmun* denounced as “propagandistic lies” speculations printed in Red Guard publications to the effect that an alleged coup attempt against Kim Il Sung had failed in Pyongyang.¹¹ Somewhat contradictorily, DPRK officials spread rumors that China intended to make use of North Korean defectors who had fled after the failed 1956 coup attempt against Kim Il Sung. The Cuban ambassador in Pyongyang, Comrade Vigoa, who reported these rumors, also quoted his Korean informants as having called Mao’s government a “military dictatorship” that was pursuing “a policy that was much more disastrous for the worldwide communist movement than Khrushchev’s had been.”¹² A North Korean diplomat in Beijing told his East German counterpart that Mao’s policy amounted to “counterrevolution,” though he still held out hopes that within two to three months “healthy forces” would prevail.¹³

This proved to be wishful thinking. Anti-Korean propaganda in the PRC continued on and off throughout 1967 and beyond. The DPRK was now branded as “revisionist” along with the Soviet Union. The Chinese derided Kim Il Sung for having a “bourgeois” lifestyle and earning

¹⁰ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. Ambassador Horst Brie to GDR Foreign Ministry/State Secretary Josef Hegen. 13 October 1966. PolA AA, MfAA, G-A 316.

¹¹ GDR Foreign Ministry Berlin, Far Eastern Department, Korean Division. 22 February 1967. Information about the Official Statement of 26 January 1967 by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on a Defamation Campaign against the DPRK in the PRC. PolA AA, MfAA, C 149/75.

¹² GDR Foreign Ministry Berlin, Far Eastern Department, Korean Division. 15 March 1967. Information from Memoranda of the Pyongyang Embassy. Conversation between Ambassador Vigoa and Ambassador Brie of 29 January 1967. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1088/70.

¹³ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 9 March 1967. Memorandum on a Conversation of Comrade Dr. Peters with a Diplomat of the DPRK Embassy in the PRC on 22 February 1967. PolA AA, MfAA, C 149/75.

ten times as much as the average worker in his country.¹⁴ The PRC clearly wanted to prompt a coup in the DPRK, mused the North Korean ambassador to Romania in June 1967.¹⁵ As if to confirm that theory, in October a Chinese Red Guard newspaper chided the “Korean revisionists” for their alleged “anti-Chinese” behavior: “We sternly warn Kim Il Sung and his breed that those who collaborate with the U.S. or with revisionism, and continue with anti-Chinese policies, will come to a bad end. Sooner or later the Korean people will rise up and settle scores.”¹⁶ The North Korean government refrained from answering this provocation publicly, but in November 1967 Deputy Foreign Minister Ho Sok-tae transmitted to PRC Acting Ambassador Wang Peng in Pyongyang a strongly worded protest against the charges coming out of China.¹⁷ However, Mao Zedong’s wife, Chiang Ching, continued to inspire Red Guards to publish anti-Korean wall posters, and her protégé, the radical Shanghai literary critic Yao Wenyuan, called Kim Il Sung a “revisionist” in an internal foreign policy speech in Beijing in November 1967.¹⁸ In the coded Chinese ideological language, this was tantamount to calling the North Korean leadership pseudo-socialist, like its Moscow equivalent, and therefore illegitimate and worthy of being replaced.

Since open criticism of the PRC or retaliation in the same vein would have been suicidal for the DPRK, Pyongyang instead attempted to weather the storm, and to shield the country as

¹⁴ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 9 March 1967. (Translation of) Wall Poster of “Red Flag” of Beijing’s Aviation Institute from 19 February 1967. PolA AA, MfAA, C 149/75.

¹⁵ GDR Foreign Ministry Berlin, Southeast European Department, Romanian Division. 26 June 1967. Excerpts from an Information Report by the Embassy in Bucharest. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1088/70.

¹⁶ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. November 1967. (Translation of) Report in the International Section of the Red Guard Paper “Dunfanjun” 27 October 1967. PolA AA, MfAA, C 149/75.

¹⁷ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. Ambassador Horst Brie to GDR Foreign Ministry/State Secretary Josef Hegen. 22 December 1967. PolA AA, MfAA, G-A 360.

¹⁸ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. Information On Some New Elements in Chinese-Korean Relations. 19 November 1970. PolA AA, MfAA, G-A 339.

much as possible from the disturbing events spilling over from the North. One means of doing this was to escalate the cult of personality of the embattled Kim Il Sung.¹⁹ Although the North Koreans carefully avoided alienating the Chinese outright,²⁰ when Kim secretly met CPSU General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev in Vladivostok in December 1966, he characterized the Cultural Revolution as “massive idiocy.” The DPRK had to devote itself to its own revolution, the North Korean leader stated. He could not openly voice disagreement with the PRC, given its geographical proximity, but Kim was said to have professed his deep awareness of “Chinese wickedness.”²¹ His strategy was to minimize the tension as long as possible, treat it as an internal matter of the PRC, and stay calm. “When the Red Guards insult us,” Kim told a visiting GDR Politburo member in April 1968, “the Chinese tell us that the party and government are not responsible. Only if, for example, the *People’s Daily*²² were to attack us would they be at all responsible. Some comrades in our politburo have suggested that we should also organize Red Guards to insult the Chinese, but not write articles. I am against that. It doesn’t work that way.”²³

[Document 8]

China in fact posed a real threat, not just to the political survival of Kim Il Sung, but also to that of the DPRK itself. The PRC deployed troops north of the Tumen and Yalu Rivers and

¹⁹ Romanian Ambassador Ionescu, not happy with either the Cultural Revolution in China or North Korea’s turn towards the Soviet Union, in a conversation with GDR diplomat Strauss on 26 May 1967 characterized the increased personality cult as “preemptive”. The Chinese would know the actual biography of Kim Il Sung, which stood in contrast to official North Korean propaganda, and might publish some revelations in the future. Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 30 May 1967. Memorandum. PoLA AA, MfAA, G-A 332.

²⁰ See GDR Foreign Ministry Berlin, Far Eastern Department, Korean Division. 19 October 1967. Information about the Relations between the DPRK and the PRC. PoLA AA, MfAA, C 149/75.

²¹ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 16 March 1967. Memorandum on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, Comrade Zvetkov, on 15 March 1967. PoLA AA, MfAA, G-A 364.

²² “Renmin Ribao”, the official newspaper of the CCP.

²³ SED Central Committee, Department of International Relations, Berlin. 23 April 1968. Memorandum on the Visit of the Party and Government Delegation of the GDR, led by Comrade Prof. Dr. Kurt Hager, with the General

raised the old question of the border demarcation on Mt. Paektusan. When a South Korean book was published highlighting the complex history of the Korean-Manchurian border, which had shifted according to Chinese and Japanese imperial claims, the Soviets eagerly obtained a copy, translated it, and informed the GDR Embassy in Pyongyang about the troubling history that was about to be repeated.²⁴ The threat became more ominous in the fall of 1967, when, following clashes between Red Guards and ethnic Koreans in China's Northeastern province, bodies of Korean casualties were displayed on a freight train traveling from the Chinese border town of Sinuiju into the DPRK, along with graffiti such as "Look, this will be also your fate, you tiny revisionists!"²⁵ One of the excuses Kim Il Sung gave the Soviet ambassador in Pyongyang for not leading a Korean delegation to Moscow for the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution in November 1967 was that he feared that something could happen along the Chinese-Korean border during his absence.²⁶

Along with the danger it carried, however, the Cultural Revolution also created opportunities for Kim Il Sung. Its chaos had turned the PRC into an inward-looking country, jeopardized the conduct of its foreign policy, and temporarily diminished its influence among Asian and Third World communists. Thus freed from ideological subordination to China, the 55-year-old Kim Il Sung perceived an opportunity. As the Vietnamese Acting Ambassador to Pyongyang, Hoang Muoi, wrote in May 1967: "Our President Ho Chi Minh is already very old

Secretary of the KWP and Prime Minister of the DPRK, Comrade Kim Il Sung, on 16 April 1968. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 159/75.

²⁴ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 22 April 1967. Memorandum on a Conversation with Comrade Titorenko, Officer in the Soviet Embassy, on 12 April 1967. Unofficial Rough Translation from the Russian: The Problem of the Korean-Manchurian Border. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 149/75. The GDR Embassy was allowed to do its own translation of the Russian text before it had to return it to the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang.

²⁵ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 20 October 1967. Memorandum on a Conversation with the Acting Ambassador of the People's Republic of Poland, Comrade Pudisch, on 9 October 1967. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 149/75.

²⁶ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 1st Secretary Dietrich Jarck to GDR Foreign Ministry/Department Head Kurt Schneidewind. 13 November 1967. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 146/75.

and will die soon. Whatever happens to Mao Zedong, his role as a world leader is nearing its end. [The Mongolian leader] Tsendenbal has a very weak personality. Kim Il Sung is relatively young and has a strong personality. The Korean leadership is pursuing a long-term strategy to propagate Kim Il Sung as the leader of the Asian people. They are assuming Kim might become the strongest personality of the revolutionary movement in Asia within ten to fifteen years.’²⁷

Kim Il Sung readily adopted the self-styled role of mediator between the two major antagonistic communist powers and contributor to the further development of the theoretical foundations of the international Marxist-Leninist movement. In articles such as “Let’s Turn the Spearhead of Fighting Against U.S. Imperialism,” published in *Nodong Sinmun* on 16 November 1967, North Korea addressed communists around the world, focusing particularly on Asian, African, and Latin American national liberation movements. While China and the Soviet Union regarded this appeal as preposterous,²⁸ Vietnam understood it as a broadside in the ongoing nationalistic contest. The DPRK attempted to portray itself as being on equal footing with Vietnam as a “fighting country,” and hence drummed up claims of clashes along the South Korean border and skirmishes with intruders on North Korean territory. Such allegations of permanent warfare had the side effect of providing grounds for soliciting substantial military aid from other socialist countries, mostly free of charge. For their part, many diplomatic representatives of the Hanoi government and the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF) who served in Pyongyang were dismissive of North Korean military strength and fighting capabilities in comparison to those of their own country. They were annoyed that DPRK propaganda borrowed from Vietnam’s prestige when it defined North Korea as another “real

²⁷ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 19 May 1967. Memorandum on a Conversation with the Vietnamese Acting Ambassador, Hoang Muoi, on 19 May 1967. PolA AA, MfAA, G-A 347.

²⁸ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 27 November 1967. Memorandum on a Conversation between Comrade Brie and the Soviet Ambassador, Comrade Sudarikov, on 23 November 1967. PolA AA, MfAA, C 146/75.

fighter” against U.S. imperialism and hyped the American threat. Vietnamese diplomats pointedly noted that the North Koreans were incapable of creating any indigenous revolutionary movement in South Korea, and were certainly not able to defeat Seoul militarily. The North Vietnamese noted that up to 50,000 South Korean soldiers fought on a rotating basis alongside the Americans in South Vietnam, while the North Korean contribution to the war was limited to sending about twenty pilots to North Vietnam to acquire first-hand experience with Soviet fighter planes.²⁹

Nevertheless, the DPRK’s political autism, which the socialist countries of the Soviet camp defined as “centrist-nationalistic,” struck a chord with political movements of similar isolationist thinking, such as those in Ghana, Guinea, and Mali. In 1968 the North Korean leader began presenting himself as the leading theorist for the “small states,” which, in his view, distinguished themselves by actually fighting against the U.S., in contrast to the mere rhetorical course pursued by both Beijing and Moscow. Beginning in July of that year, a new slogan, “Cutting off the Limbs of U.S. Imperialism Everywhere,” was repeated throughout North Korea: “Vietnam is breaking one leg of the American bandit, we are breaking the other one. In Cuba and in Latin America they are tearing out the first arm, in Africa the second. If the small countries jointly dismember him, the American bandit will be torn apart.”³⁰ On 8 October 1968, the first anniversary of the death of the Latin American revolutionary hero, Che Guevara, Kim Il Sung published a major theoretical article in a new journal, *Tricontinental*, titled “The Great Anti-

²⁹ This paragraph draws on various memoranda by the East German embassy to the DPRK regarding conversations between GDR diplomats and representatives of the DRV and the NLF between 1966 and 1969 in Pyongyang. PoLA AA, MfAA.

³⁰ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 16 August 1968. Information about the Visit by a Government and Friendship Delegation, and a Government Delegation for Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation, from the Republic of Cuba to the DPRK between 23 July and 7 August 1968. PoLA AA, MfAA, C 1023/73.

Imperialist and Revolutionary Cause of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America is Invincible”.³¹

Emulating Mao’s sinocentrism, North Korea also began to sponsor worldwide sectarian study groups of “Kim Il Sung thought” and furthered the publication of Kim’s works in many languages. It invited obscure representatives from a variety of countries to the DPRK, treated them as political leaders, and published their addresses of praise of Kim Il Sung. Like the Chinese population, the North Korean people were left with the impression that the world rotated around their country’s axis and that adoration of their ingenious leader was global.³²

Kim’s relations with China, however, remained at a low point through 1968. After the seizure of the *USS Pueblo* in January, discussed below, Sino/Korean relations seemed to improve. The PRC issued a public statement in support of the action and even sent a delegation to Pyongyang to negotiate the renewal of the annual bilateral trade agreement. A Romanian diplomat quoted the PRC’s Acting Ambassador in Pyongyang, Wang Feng, as stating that China would support the DPRK with arms and troops in any military confrontation with the U.S., regardless of the two states’ current political and ideological differences.³³ The Hungarian Acting Ambassador even spread unsubstantiated rumors that Zhou Enlai had sent Kim Il Sung a letter promising a new deployment of Chinese “Volunteers” to North Korea, repeating the military

³¹ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 21 October 1968. Assessment of Kim Il Sung’s Article. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1023/73. *Tricontinental* was an offspring of an April 1967 conference in Havana with representatives of movements from the continents of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It was intended as continuing the legacy of Che Guevara, who had sent the assembled representatives a welcome “Message to the Tricontental,” alluding to the “Third International” and appealing for the creation of “two, three, many Vietnam!” Che died in October 1967 as a guerilla fighter in Bolivia, where he had attempted in vain to instigate revolutionary “liberation from imperialism.” The fiercely anti-imperialistic rhetoric Kim Il Sung developed for global consumption clearly borrowed from Che Guevara’s.

³² Cf. Bruce Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun. A Modern History* (New York: Norton 1997), p. 404.

³³ Attachment to a Letter by Comrade Hegen, GDR Foreign Ministry, to Comrades Ulbricht, Stoph, Honecker, and Matern, SED Politburo. 23 February 1968. Excerpt from a Personal Letter of the Acting Ambassador of the GDR in Pyongyang, Comrade Jarck [of late January 1968]. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1093/70.

assistance they had provided during the war of 1950-53. The GDR Acting Ambassador, however, regarded it as unlikely that such a communication had been sent, since he judged the prospects for improvement in Sino/Korean relations to be poor.³⁴ His analysis was corroborated by an assessment from the GDR Embassy in the PRC that described the further deterioration of Chinese-North Korean relations, with no brighter perspective in sight.³⁵

The skeptics were right, as Kim Il Sung confirmed in his remarks to a visiting GDR Politburo delegation on 16 April 1968. Referring to China, the North Korean leader stated: “We cannot follow one country and make a cultural revolution. So the emphasis on self-reliance is an action of self-defense.” Kim Il Sung listed the anti-intellectual excesses of the Cultural Revolution as one of the major problematic features of the PRC. In order to further the goal of reunification, the DPRK would have to work with intellectuals in South Korea, who were frightened by events in China and expected the DPRK to distance itself from them. On the other hand, Kim Il Sung stressed to his East German visitors, North Korea must preserve its ties with the PRC, “because that is important for securing peace.” Referring to the northern border of his country, Kim said: “More than one million hostile troops are facing us directly. Therefore we don’t want to end the alliance with China since it would mean we would have enemies at our back as well.” Although he still expected the Chinese to fight with North Korea against the U.S., “if that proves necessary,” Kim Il Sung stated that the only viable option for the DPRK was to stay calm and wait.³⁶

³⁴ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 3 March 1968. On the Current State of Relations between the DPRK and the PRC. PoIA AA, MfAA, G-A 360.

³⁵ GDR Foreign Ministry Berlin, Far Eastern Department, Korean Division. Excerpts from the Monthly Report by the GDR Embassy in the PRC. Beijing, 5 March 1968. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 149/75.

³⁶ SED Central Committee, Department of International Relations, Berlin. 23 April 1968. Memorandum on the Visit of the Party and Government Delegation of the GDR, led by Comrade Prof. Dr. Kurt Hager, with the General

Waiting turned out to be tedious. In a meeting with a Soviet visitor on 31 May 1968, Kim defined the DPRK's relationship with the PRC as at a "complete standstill," notwithstanding some meager trade still trickling across the border.³⁷ Public coverage of the 7th anniversaries of North Korea's friendship treaties with the USSR and the PRC in July revealed for the first time a more cordial treatment of the Soviet Union. To the PRC, by contrast, Pyongyang addressed mostly importunate appeals, together with sober statements of friendship.³⁸ China remained hostile, failing to send a delegation to the festivities marking the 20th Anniversary of the DPRK in early October. Beijing justified this snub by noting the participation of Soviet "revisionists" in the festivities, the absence of an opportunity openly to voice Chinese opinions in Pyongyang, and North Korean support for the Soviet position regarding Moscow's military intervention in Czechoslovakia.³⁹ The summer of 1968 also brought the onset of the "loudspeakers' war" along the Chinese-Korean border. A Cuban diplomat returning from an official excursion to the border region reported that slogans were broadcast from both banks of the Yalu River between ten and twelve hours daily, despite the presence of Chinese and Korean workers jointly repairing a dam.⁴⁰

The following spring, when Soviet and Chinese troops clashed along the Ussuri River, the Tumen border region again became tense. Upon receiving reports of these clashes from the Soviet embassy, Pyongyang refrained from taking sides, but Soviet diplomats reported that the

Secretary of the KWP and Prime Minister of the DPRK, Comrade Kim Il Sung, on 16 April 1968. PolA AA, MfAA, C 159/75.

³⁷ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 19 July 1968. Memorandum on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the Embassy of the USSR in the DPRK, Comrade Zvetkov, and Comrade Jarck on 26 July 1968. PolA AA, MfAA, G-A 320.

³⁸ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 19 July 1968. Information on the 7th Anniversary of the Signing of the Treaties of Friendship between DPRK and USSR, and DPRK and PRC. PolA AA, MfAA, C 146/75.

³⁹ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 16 September 1968. Memorandum on a Conversation between the Acting Ambassador of the CSSR, Comrade Horshenovski, and Comrade Jarck on 13 September 1968. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1091/70.

North Koreans hinted at border problems of their own with China. People living in the area know about this, they said.⁴¹ There was no need to report these incidents in the Korean press, they asserted, as this would be to “no avail.”⁴² A Vietnamese diplomat in Pyongyang confirmed “some minor border incidents” between the PRC and the DPRK, though he declined to give his East German conversation partner further details.⁴³ Acting Soviet Ambassador to Beijing Yelisavetin informed his colleagues on 28 March 1969, during the routine bi-weekly meeting of Soviet-leaning socialist ambassadors, about an “incident on the Chinese-Korean border.”⁴⁴

Just as Sino-Korean relations reached their lowest point, the two states were brought back from the brink of military conflict by the shock to Beijing of the heavy casualties the Red Army inflicted as it repelled Chinese provocations along the Ussuri.⁴⁵ The bloody clashes of March 1969 began the process that culminated, despite twists and turns, in the historic Sino-American rapprochement barely two years later. The major shift in the international equation that ensued cleared the way for the PRC and the DPRK to repair their relations, as well as for Pyongyang temporarily to alter its strategy toward South Korea.

⁴⁰ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 23 August 1968. Memorandum on a Conversation between the 1st Secretary of the Cuban Embassy, Comrade Mulet, and Comrade Jarck on 16 August 1968. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1091/70.

⁴¹ See a report by a Soviet diplomat who visited a Korean border town about one year later. Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 16 July 1970. Memorandum on a Conversation with the Embassy Officer of the USSR, Comrade Acharov, on 16 June 1970. PolA AA, MfAA, C 944/76.

⁴² Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 13 March 1969. Memorandum on a Conversation between the Embassy Officer of the USSR, Comrade Nemcinov, and Comrade Jarck on 12 March 1969. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1025/73.

⁴³ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 30 April 1969. Memorandum on a Conversation with the Embassy Officer of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Comrade Trinh, and Comrade Jarck on 25 April 1969. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1025/73.

⁴⁴ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 1 April 1969. Memorandum on a Business Breakfast of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the Countries on Friendly Terms on 28 March 1969 in the Bulgarian Embassy (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, GDR, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, Soviet Union). PolA AA, MfAA, C 1365/74.

⁴⁵ Yang Kuisong, “The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969: From Zhenbao Island to Sino-American Rapprochement,” *Cold War History*, 1 (1/2000), 21-52; William Burr, Sino-American Relations, 1969: The Sino-Soviet Border War and Steps Towards Rapprochement, *Cold War History*, 1 (3/2001), 73-112; Lyle J. Goldstein, “Return to Zhenbao Island: Who Started Shooting and Why it Matters,” *The China Quarterly*, 168 (December 2001), 985-997.

“Cutting off the Limbs of U.S. Imperialism”?

The *Pueblo* and EC-121 Incidents, 1967-1969

When North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Song-ch’ol met East German Deputy Foreign Minister Peter Florin in Pyongyang on 9 July 1970, the former characterized “U.S. imperialism” as the predominant source of tension on the Korean peninsula. Unless U.S. troops left South Korea, peace would never be achieved. The United States’ aim was to conquer North Korea and provoke the DPRK into a “total war.” Citing the “incursions” of the U.S. intelligence ship *Pueblo* in January 1968 and the U.S. Navy reconnaissance plane EC-121 in April 1969, Pak Song-ch’ol asserted that in both cases North Korean army units had had to act “immediately and autonomously.” The DPRK “did not like such incidents, but nobody could know whether something like that might happen again.”⁴⁶ In a conversation with GDR Minister of Justice Kurt Wünsche on 29 September 1971, Pak Song-ch’ol was even more explicit. He stated that during an enemy attack, military commanders would not have time to wait for orders from above. All military units had received instructions to “destroy” the enemy upon its arrival. The *Pueblo* and EC-121 incidents must be viewed in this light, the North Korean Deputy Prime Minister contended. In both cases, the “enemy” had vowed retaliation, but instead had backed off and refrained from attacking – and “one doesn’t know why.”⁴⁷

It remains doubtful whether these assertions reflected the truth in both cases. As will be discussed below, it was neither coincidence nor a spontaneous action when DPRK naval forces seized the *Pueblo* and took its crew into custody. While this incident was deliberately staged and

⁴⁶ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 10 July 1970. Memorandum on a Visit of Comrade Florin with the Deputy of the Chairman of the Cabinet and Foreign Minister of the DPRK, Comrade Pak Song-ch’ol, on 9 July 1970 in the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK. PolA AA, MfAA, C 137/75.

exploited by Pyongyang for propaganda purposes, the shootdown of the EC-121 barely one year later, which killed all 31 servicemen on board, did not fit into any larger scheme. In both cases, the DPRK leadership expected military retaliation, which, for rather sensible reasons in 1968, and less sensible reasons in 1969, did not happen. Washington's restraint was a result of the military and political shield the Soviet Union provided North Korea, which Moscow was eager to strengthen in order to ensure Pyongyang's loyalty in the Sino-Soviet confrontation. Nonetheless, the Soviets were neither informed nor consulted in advance of either incident, nor in any other way involved. On the contrary, the Soviets worried about what they regarded as dangerous North Korean "adventurism," which had the potential to drag the socialist camp into another military conflict on the Korean peninsula.

Both of these North Korean clashes with the U.S. occurred within the context of the Cultural Revolution in the PRC, which threatened Kim Il Sung's rule but also afforded him an opportunity to claim the mantle of Asia's foremost communist leader. Toward this aim, the North Korean leader propagated his own version of Mao Zedong's "paper tiger theory" belittling the potential of the "imperialist" enemies. Consequently, during the Cultural Revolution, there was a dramatic increase in violent incidents at the DMZ and armed incursions into South Korea. Most incidents were instigated by the DPRK, as even North Korea's allies in the diplomatic corps in Pyongyang admitted in private. To match the shining example of the Vietnamese communists, the DPRK sought to earn the status of a "real fighter" against "imperialism." Moreover, the North Koreans asserted to their socialist allies that by keeping tensions high at the DMZ they were

⁴⁷ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 15 October 1971. Memorandum on a Conversation between the Deputy Chairman of the GDR Council of Ministers and Minister of Justice, Dr. Kurt Wünsche, with the Deputy of the Chairman of the Cabinet of the DPRK, Comrade Pak Song-ch'ol, on 29 September 1971. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 6855.

supporting “the Vietnamese people” by tying down U.S. forces in Korea and distracting them from Vietnam.⁴⁸

North Korean “Adventurism”: Reunifying Korea by Force and the *Pueblo* Incident, 1967/1968

In his speech at the Plenary Session of the KWP in October 1966, Kim Il Sung stated that Korean “unification cannot be delayed by one hour.” He defined the “liberation of South Korea” as a “national duty.” Asserting the existence of a revolutionary movement in South Korea, he ordered the North to be on constant alert and eventually seize the right opportunity to act.⁴⁹ Since the U.S. was preparing to attack North Korea and was arming its “puppets” in the South, North Korea’s people were told to get ready for a preemptive strike by DPRK armed forces.⁵⁰ People should be prepared for final victory; there was no need to worry about the “imperialists.” Following this proclamation, DPRK propaganda began to demand the “liberation” of South Korea in the current generation, meaning under the present leadership and during the lifetime of Kim Il Sung,⁵¹ who turned 55 in April 1967. **[Document 1]**

⁴⁸ Record of Conversation between Nikolai V. Podgorny and the Ambassador of the DPRK in the USSR. 20 January 1967. Russian Foreign Ministry Archive, Moscow. [CWIHP Document Reader “Inside North Korea”, VI, p. 35. Workshop at The George Washington University, Washington D.C. 8 March 2003.] Narushige Michishita, in a comprehensive survey of the DPRK’s military and diplomatic initiatives, concludes that US involvement in Vietnam, Pyongyang’s 1961 treaties with Moscow and Beijing, and its military buildup in the early 60’s enabled and encouraged North Korea to pursue adventurist policies in the late 60’s. While agreeing that those factors played a role, this author argues that the Vietnam War and relations with China affected North Korean policy in a more complex, less obvious manner, as well. For a summary of Narushige Michishita’s doctoral dissertation, “Calculated Adventurism: North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns, 1966-2000,” see the article by the same title in *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, Fall 2004.

⁴⁹ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. Information on the KWP Delegates’ Conference from 5 to 12 October 1966 in Pyongyang and on the 14th Plenary Session of the KWP Central Committee on 12 October 1966. 3 November 1966. PolA AA, MfAA, C 153/75.

⁵⁰ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK, Ambassador Horst Brie, to GDR Foreign Ministry, Deputy Foreign Minister Josef Hegen. 12 December 1966. PolA AA, G-A 316.

In June 1967 First Secretary Zvetkov from the Soviet Embassy voiced serious concerns about the DPRK's unification propaganda. It would lead to a dead-end, he believed, and, in conjunction with events in the ROK, might result in an armed conflict, which would create a dangerous predicament for the Soviet Union.⁵² These fears were heightened in November 1967, when Kim Il Sung declined an invitation to attend the festivities in Moscow celebrating the October Revolution's 50th Anniversary, explaining to Ambassador Sudarikov that he could not leave the country because the tense situation on the demarcation line reminded him of the situation in the summer of 1950.⁵³ "Recent events suggest that war could be resumed at any time," Foreign Minister Pak Song-ch'ol told his rather disbelieving Soviet counterpart, Andrei Gromyko, on 20 November 1967.⁵⁴ **[Document 2]**

In late 1967, after a year that saw the greatest number of incidents along the DMZ since 1953, GDR Ambassador Horst Brie made a comprehensive analysis of the situation in North Korea, astutely assessing the acute danger of war. Listing examples of how the country had been put on a war footing, he reported that people in the DPRK were not allowed to travel more than two kilometers from their residence, and that rumors circulated that about one-third of Pyongyang's population would be evacuated in case of war. Since improvements in American defenses had made it increasingly difficult for North Korea to invade the South by land, the DPRK would focus on attacks by sea. Based on conversations he had had in North Korea that he had so far confided only to private handwritten notes, Brie outlined three options the DPRK

⁵¹ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. Information on Some New Aspects of the KWP's Attitude on Internal and External Matters. 18 August 1967. PoA AA, MfAA, C 153/75. See also the richly detailed embassy report on the 1st of May celebrations in Pyongyang in 1967: PoA AA, MfAA, C 1088/70.

⁵² Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. Memorandum on a Conversation with Comrade Zvetkov, 1st Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, on 15 June 1967. 17 June 1967. PoA AA MfAA, G-A 332.

⁵³ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK, 1st Secretary Dietrich Jarck, to GDR Foreign Ministry, Department Chief Kurt Schneidewind. 13 November 1967. PoA AA, C 146/75.

leadership was considering for solving the national question: a major revolutionary uprising in South Korea; a coup d'état by military leaders against President Park Chung Hee sparked by an environment of temporary disorganization; and an aggravated international situation that would commit American forces to such an extent that they would be unable substantially to support the South Korean regime. The East German Ambassador bluntly concluded that the DPRK had completely given up on the idea of a peaceful and democratic unification of the country. Furthermore, it seemed no longer possible to believe in a broad revolutionary development in South Korea. Therefore, only the two latter "adventurist variations" remained as the goals toward which the North Korean leaders seemed increasingly to aim. Finally, Brie laid out rational arguments why, in his personal opinion, nothing of this sort would occur "in the near future."⁵⁵

[Document 3] Less than two months later, however, the ambassador's conclusion was proven incorrect, if not his astute observations; Pyongyang moved ahead with option two for reunifying the peninsula.

Late on the evening of 24 January 1968, DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Chae-bong convened the socialist countries' ambassadors in Pyongyang and informed them of the seizure of an "armed invading American ship" that was spying on North Korea in the DPRK's territorial waters. Kim asked the diplomats to "fully support North Korean actions and attitudes and condemn unanimously the serious machinations of U.S.A. imperialism." Asked by the acting Bulgarian ambassador about a connection between the incident with the *Pueblo* and "events in Seoul," Kim Chae-bon replied that it was not accidental that the U.S. "provocation" was happening at the same time "as armed partisans acted in South Korea." The enemies "mobilized

⁵⁴ Record of Conversation between Andrej A. Gromyko and Pak Song-ch'ol. 20 November 1967. Russian Foreign Ministry Archive, Moscow. [CWIHP Document Reader "Inside North Korea", VI, p. 44.]

⁵⁵ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK, Ambassador Horst Brie, to GDR Foreign Ministry, Deputy Foreign Minister Josef Hegen. 8 December 1967. PoIA AA, G-A 320.

divisions and army corps” to suppress the partisans and, after losing the *Pueblo*, would “prepare for another war of aggression.”⁵⁶ [Document 4]

The Americans may have shown a dramatic lack of wisdom in sending an ill-prepared naval surveillance ship near the North Korean coast at a time of heightened tension, but this inept mission was not part of any elaborate political or military plot.⁵⁷ Quite the opposite was the case with Pyongyang’s actions. A few days before the *Pueblo*’s seizure, the DPRK had sent thirty-one well-trained commandos into Seoul to assassinate President Park Chung Hee at his residence, the Blue House. Pyongyang’s goal was to instigate a military coup and a popular uprising that would bring “patriotic forces” to power in order “to liberate South Korea under the pretext of a coup d’etat.” In such a scenario, the DPRK might be “asked” by the South to send military support, or might come to the rescue of the “patriots” without being “asked” beforehand.⁵⁸ This audacious scheme failed. All but one of the thirty-one commandos were killed before they reached the Blue House. The remaining soldier was captured and later revealed the scheme to the South Korean public. The East German documents confirm that the North Koreans seized the *Pueblo* in order to divert attention from this failed operation, as the Soviet Embassy in Pyongyang assumed. They seized the ship when it was not in North Korean territorial waters, even though they had

⁵⁶ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. Information of the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK on 24 January 1968, 9.00 p.m. to 9.40 p.m., for the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of all Socialist Countries accredited to the DPRK. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 1023/73.

⁵⁷ For a detailed history of the *Pueblo* incident, see Mitchell B. Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident. A Spy Ship and the Failure of American Foreign Policy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002). For a discussion of the new light thrown on the incident by the documents CWIHP scholars, including this author, obtained from East European archives, see Mitchell B. Lerner, “A Dangerous Miscalculation: New Evidence from Communist-Bloc Archives about North Korea and the Crisis of 1968,” *Journal of Cold War History*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Winter 2004): 3-21.

⁵⁸ In an analysis of possible rationales behind the Blue House raid, B.C. Koh highlighted the impact of Seoul’s normalization of relations with Japan and its dispatch of troops to Vietnam, but not the effect of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and North Vietnam’s struggle on DPRK reunification policy. See B.C.Koh, *The Foreign Policy Systems of North and South Korea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 134.

observed its movements—including temporary violations of DPRK territorial waters—for many days without acting.⁵⁹ **[Document 7]**

Seizing the *Pueblo* enabled the DPRK to turn the tables and accuse the U.S. of committing an act of aggression against North Korea. Pyongyang expressed its willingness to send a delegation to the United Nations after the U.S. asked for a Security Council meeting to condemn the illegal seizure of the ship and its crew.⁶⁰ **[Document 5]** Not only the North Koreans, but also their socialist allies, became nervous about the possibility of military retaliation by the United States. According to Eastern European diplomats, even the Soviet Union thought it would be best if the DPRK returned the ship and crew after the North Koreans had duly exploited them propagandistically. However, it took nearly a year before Pyongyang agreed to release the American sailors, and then only after the US had capitulated to their demand for a public apology.

In the meantime, North Korea not only asked for solidarity against “imperialist U.S. aggression” from the socialist countries, but also pressured them to uphold Pyongyang’s version of the Blue House raid, according to which indigenous South Korean partisans had attempted to attack Park Chung Hee.⁶¹ **[Document 6]** The DPRK emphatically denied to its own people as well as to the United Nations that it had had any involvement in the Blue House raid. After all, the adventurist North Korean attempt to reunify the country by force had not only failed militarily, but had also demonstrated the absence of substantial partisan forces in the South

⁵⁹ Excerpt from a Personal Letter of the Acting Ambassador of the GDR in Pyongyang, Comrade [Dietrich] Jarck. Attachment to a letter of Comrade [Josef] Hegen, GDR Foreign Ministry, to [Politburo Members] Comrades [Walter] Ulbricht, [Willi] Stoph, [Erich] Honecker, and [Hermann] Matern. 23 February 1968. PolA AA, MfAA C 1093/70. This letter discusses in straightforward terms North Korean responsibility for the ‘Blue House’ raid, the linkage with the *Pueblo* seizure, and the consequences of both incidents.

⁶⁰ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. Memorandum of a Conversation with the Ambassadors of the CSR, Comrade Holub, and of the People’s Republic of Poland, Comrade Naperei, on 28 January 1968. 29 January 1968. PolA AA, MfAA, G-A 360.

willing to overthrow the regime in order to reunify with the North.⁶² Moreover, the failed attack enabled Seoul to stir up domestic anti-communist fervor and elicit further military support from the U.S.. In a rather quixotic action, in April 1968 South Korean dictator Park Chung Hee even recruited his own thirty-one would-be assassins, training them on remote Silmido island for a commando raid into North Korea to assassinate Kim Il Sung.⁶³

The Shootdown of the EC-121, April 1969

On 14 April 1969 the DPRK shot down an American EC-121 navy reconnaissance plane over the Sea of Japan in international airspace about eighty miles from the North Korean border. Thirty-one crewmen were killed. U.S. President Richard Nixon, in office for barely three months, viewed this attack as having come from a “completely unexpected quarter of the Communist world.”⁶⁴ Based on intelligence intercepts described by unnamed persons within the National Security Agency (NSA), author Seymour Hersh concluded in 1983, that “the incident was apparently a command-and-control error involving a single North Korean airplane.” Although the shot downing the plane may have been fired in “cold blood,” it had not been “a deliberate act of defiance.” There were no indications that the DPRK government knew of the attack in advance, as had been the case, Hersh assumed, with the *Pueblo*’s seizure. An unnamed former NSA analyst was quoted as saying that evidence on the shootdown indicated that it had

⁶¹ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. Memorandum of a Conversation with the Ambassador of the People’s Republic of Hungary, Comrade Kadas, on 27 January 1968. 29 January 1968. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1091/70.

⁶² Embassy of the CSR in the DPRK, Ambassador Holub, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague. Some Aspects of the Political Line of the KWP after the January Events. 15 February 1968. Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prague. [CWIHP Document Reader “Inside North Korea”, VII, p. 19.]

⁶³ For several reasons, the raid never materialized and was called off in 1969. In 1971 the commandos instead attacked the Blue House, where they met a bloody end. See “South Korean Movie Unlocks Door on a Once-Secret Past”, *New York Times*, 15 February 2004, p. 8. This 2003 film on the raid became “the biggest drawing movie” in the cinematic history of the Republic of Korea.

been “a screw-up.” It would not have fit into the North Korean pattern to provoke the U.S. by firing on a plane in international airspace far from DPRK territory. Hersh also contended that there was no evidence whether this NSA analysis ever reached the decision-makers in the White House.⁶⁵

It remains difficult to assess Hersh’s claims. More than a year after the incident, the DPRK Foreign Minister asserted to East German officials that the decision to shoot had been made by low-level commanders acting spontaneously.⁶⁶ It is somewhat hard to imagine, however, that such decisions were not taken up with the highest political leaders. Even less persuasive are official versions, which boast that North Korea downed the plane with a single shot, and allege that the EC-121 was deep in North Korean airspace.⁶⁷ There were rumors in the Pyongyang diplomatic corps⁶⁸ and among North Korean party members⁶⁹ that North Korean fighter pilots wanted to force a landing of the EC-121 and capture the crew, but instead mistakenly shot down the plane.

In early May 1969, a representative of the South Vietnamese NLF based in the North Korean capital called the EC-121 incident a “big mystery.” He could not understand why this shootdown had occurred when it did, since such reconnaissance flights had been conducted for

⁶⁴ Richard Nixon, *RN. The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978): 382.

⁶⁵ Seymour M. Hersh, *The Price of Power. Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983): 69-70.

⁶⁶ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 10 July 1970. Memorandum on a Visit of Comrade Florin with the Deputy of the Chairman of the Cabinet and Foreign Minister of the DPRK, Comrade Pak Song-ch’ol, on 9 July 1970 in the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK. PolA AA, MfAA, C 137/75

⁶⁷ GDR Foreign Ministry, Far Eastern Department. 23 April 1969. Memorandum on a Conversation between the Chief of the Far Eastern Department, Comrade Schneidewind, and the Acting Ambassador in the Embassy of the DPRK in the GDR, Comrade Han Tae-hun, on 21 April 1969. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1027/73.

⁶⁸ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 30 April 1969. Memorandum on a Conversation between the Embassy Officer of the DRV, Comrade Trinh, and Comrade Jarck on 25 April 1969. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1025/73.

⁶⁹ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 8 May 1969. Information of 7 May 1969. PolA AA, MfAA, C 191/74.

quite a while. The diplomat was surprised that Pyongyang did not make an official statement for eight days, and that many phrases in this statement began with “if.” He voiced his expectation that the unit that had downed the U.S. plane might send an official letter to the DPRK Minister of Defense. During the *Pueblo* affair the Minister had sent the soldiers a congratulatory note. If he did so in this case as well, suggested the Vietnamese diplomat, one might be able to draw conclusions from the wording of the unit’s reply.⁷⁰

It is worth noting what was not occurring in the DPRK before and after the April 1969 shootdown, in contrast to the measures taken during the *Pueblo* incident. There were no contingency plans for a military conflict, no special drills for the population, and no indications of public paranoia or preparations for potential attacks.⁷¹ Official propaganda made no connection to incidents along the DMZ or actions regarding South Korea. The North Korean leadership clearly did not consider the situation to be as dangerous as that after the *Pueblo* seizure, when it had immediately informed its allies and requested propagandistic support and potential military support. In this case, Pyongyang did not even inform the Soviet Union about the situation for several days.

In contrast, it was Washington rather than Pyongyang that took steps toward military escalation. It was only after the arrival of an impressive U.S. flotilla of twenty-four ships, including four aircraft carriers (‘Task Force 71’), in the Sea of Japan on April 17, and the movement of the flotilla into the North Korean vicinity on April 20,⁷² that DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Song-ch’ol spoke to East German ambassador Josef Henke and Soviet Ambassador

⁷⁰ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 7 May 1969. Memorandum on a Conversation between the Acting Ambassador of the Office of the NLF of South Vietnam in the DPRK, Comrade Luong, and Comrade Jarck on 6 May 1969 in the GDR Embassy. PolA AA, MfAA, C 1025/73.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Hersh, *Price of Power*, p. 75.

Sudarikov about the situation. The Foreign Minister expressed anxiety to both allies over the U.S. buildup. He pointed out that the DPRK would not welcome any escalation of tensions and absolutely wanted to avoid war. He requested that Ambassador Sudarikov ensure a steady exchange of information on the situation between the USSR and the DPRK.⁷³ Accordingly, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vassily Kuznetsov summoned U.S. Ambassador Jacob Beam in Moscow to express the Soviet Union's concern over the action of the American fleet. President Nixon informed the Soviets that they were "communicating with the wrong party" and should address the North Koreans instead, but Moscow nonetheless put parts of its Pacific Fleet on alert. Soviet diplomats were correct to believe that it was their actions that persuaded the U.S. to withdraw. Washington first changed the flotilla's position, then reduced its size, before finally redeploying the ships, and thus effectively disbanding it.⁷⁴

What might have been the rationale behind Pyongyang's action, if indeed there was one? North Korea was in a critical situation in April 1969. The Soviet Union and China, the DPRK's northern neighbors and most important allies, on whom it depended economically and politically, had allowed their ideological split to deteriorate into military conflict. Moreover, in March 1969 DPRK forces had clashed with Chinese troops along the Sino/Korean border. The Soviet Union, toward which Pyongyang had tilted in the late 1960s, demanded North Korean loyalty and support in its conflict with China. Moscow expected Pyongyang to line up behind the Soviet version of the border clashes, but North Korea scrupulously avoided taking sides.

⁷³ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 22 April 1969. Memorandum on a Conversation with the Ambassador of the USSR, Comrade Sudarikov, on 21 April 1969 in the Soviet Embassy. PoLA AA, MfAA, C 1025/73.

⁷⁴ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 5 May 1969. Memorandum on a Conversation between USSR Embassy Officer Comrade Nemcinov and Comrade Jarck on 5 May 1969 in the GDR Embassy. PoLA AA, MfAA, C 1025/73; Alexander Haig, Memorandum for the Record. 21 April 1969. NARA, NPMP, White House Special Files, Alexander Haig, Box 956; Memorandum from Peter W. Rodman to General Haig. 16 September 1971. Subject: History of EC-121 Incident for Victor Lasky. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 831, Name File Rodman, Peter W.

In the midst of this tense and dangerous situation came the shootdown of the U.S. plane. One could hypothesize that the action might have been intended as a diversion designed to persuade both Beijing and Moscow to support Pyongyang against a common American threat, particularly since the EC-121 and similar planes were also monitoring the situation along the Sino-Soviet border. However, in contrast to the *Pueblo* incident of early 1968, at this time the DPRK could not count on Chinese military support. April 1969 was, therefore, a very poor choice of timing for risking conflict with the U.S., and ultimately with South Korea. Thus, until further evidence is unearthed, Pyongyang's rationale remains unclear.

Rapprochement with the People's Republic of China, 1969/1970

As early as February 1969, the diplomatic corps in Pyongyang was brimming with unsubstantiated rumors of a secret trip to Beijing by DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Song-ch'ol. By the time of the CCP's 9th Party Congress in April 1969, the PRC still recognized only Albania and itself as truly socialist. It labeled most members of the Soviet camp "revisionists," with a few in the intermediate category of "anti-imperialist," but "non-socialist" and "semi-revisionist" countries. Along with Cuba, Romania, and Vietnam, the DPRK fell into this middle category. Although the description of the "semi-revisionists" was somewhat more favorable than that of the Soviet Union, Beijing nonetheless defined the leaders of such countries as illegitimate usurpers, since if they were otherwise they would clearly have followed Maoist models.⁷⁵ After the Cultural Revolution subsided somewhat following the April 1969 Party Congress, those definitions became open to modification. According to Pyongyang's diplomatic corps, in the summer of 1969 there was credible evidence of a Chinese-Korean meeting in the Yalu border

⁷⁵ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 3 June 1969. Memorandum on a Conversation with the Acting Ambassador of the Republic Cuba, Comrade Garcia-Triana, on 20 May 1969. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 1365/74.

area. There might be problems in DPRK-PRC relations, opined Czechoslovak diplomat Horshenevski in August, “but they are certainly better than all of us assume.”⁷⁶ The gradual improvement of relations was mostly initiated by the North Korean side, which actively pursued rapprochement once signs from Beijing grew friendlier.

On 30 September 1969 the CCP Politburo granted Pyongyang’s request to send a delegation to the Chinese capital for the celebrations of the PRC’s 20th anniversary. The very next day, a high-ranking DPRK delegation led by Choe Yong-gong arrived in Beijing and stood with Mao on top of Tiananmen Gate to review the parade.⁷⁷ Romanian diplomats, who, aside from the Albanians, maintained the best ties with the Chinese embassy in Pyongyang, discussed the visit of this North Korean delegation and its negotiations with Zhou Enlai. They reported that the Chinese Prime Minister was said to have indicated that the PRC would, if necessary, send two million men to Korea to fight side by side with the KPA in case of a war.⁷⁸ According to a North Korean diplomat in Beijing, the DPRK’s relations with the PRC were moving back into their old positive track. He also noted that differences between China and North Korea were minor in comparison to the danger posed by South Korea.⁷⁹ This comparison, which spoke volumes about the former state of DPRK-PRC relations, was also relayed by Kim Il Sung to a Mongolian

⁷⁶ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 26 August 1969. Memorandum on a Conversation with the Acting Ambassador of the CSSR, Comrade Horshenevski, on 20 August 1968. PoA AA, MfAA, C 1025/73.

⁷⁷ Statement by Chen Jian, University of Virginia, 29 July 2003 (Symposium “Uneasy Allies: Fifty Years of China-North Korea Relations,” Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C.).

⁷⁸ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 19 November 1969. Memorandum on a Conversation between Comrade Lochmann, Press Officer, with Comrade Bedige, 2nd Secretary of the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Romania on 7 November 1969. PoA AA, MfAA, C 1025/73; Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 15 January 1970. Memorandum on a Conversation between Comrade Lochmann, Press Officer, with Comrade Bedige, 2nd Secretary of the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Romania in the DPRK on 13 January 1970. PoA AA, MfAA, C 158/75.

⁷⁹ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 10 October 1969. Memorandum on a Club Meeting of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the GDR, Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Mongolia, and Bulgaria on 10 October 1969 in the Embassy of the GDR. PoA AA, MfAA, C 1366/74.

delegation visiting Pyongyang in October 1969. Given the one million people under arms in South Korea, Kim said, the DPRK had to avoid, under all circumstances, having a second enemy behind its back. Therefore, North Korea had been patiently working towards improving its relations with China.⁸⁰

North Korean efforts to normalize relations with Beijing bore fruit sooner than Pyongyang expected. During his visit to Beijing in February 1970, DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Song-ch'ol persuaded Zhou Enlai to travel to Pyongyang—the first foreign trip of a high-ranking PRC official since the isolationist years of the Cultural Revolution. Zhou's visit to North Korea from April 5-7 resulted in a stunning foreign policy success for the PRC. It also pleased the DPRK, for it brought a wide-ranging rapprochement and a return to security and cooperation on its northern border. A bilateral commission was formed to study the disputed border demarcation between the Yalu and Tumen Rivers, to explore the possibility of constructing electric power plants in that region, to increase bilateral trade, and to improve the situation of ethnic minorities on each side.⁸¹ After several meetings between Zhou Enlai and Kim Il Sung, a lengthy official communiqué was finalized. This statement left out the wide-ranging detailed agreements enumerated above, but both sides emphasized commonalities and refrained from mentioning difficult issues, such as relations with the Soviet Union or the rivalry between Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung. In a sharp turnabout, the DPRK acknowledged the “Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution,” now that it appeared to be mostly over. The joint declaration stressed the “anti-imperialist” credentials of

⁸⁰ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 30 October 1969. Memorandum on a Club Meeting of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of the GDR, Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Mongolia, and Bulgaria on 24 October 1969 in the Embassy of the USSR. PoA AA, MfAA, C 1366/74.

⁸¹ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 26 May 1970. Memorandum on a Club Meeting of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Soviet Union, Mongolia, Poland, and Bulgaria on 7 May 1970 in the Embassy of the USSR. PoA AA, MfAA, C 1363/74. According to Soviet diplomats, by 1972 at the latest those border disagreements seemed to have been straightened out satisfactorily for both sides. Most recent Chinese atlases displayed a different borderline between the PRC and the DPRK than outdated Soviet ones based on earlier

Asian socialist countries and revolutionary movements, demanded support for Vietnam's liberation struggle, and included diatribes against common enemies such as the USA and Japan.⁸² The communiqué led the Soviets to become highly suspicious of the emerging intimacy between North Korea and China, and even to speculate about whether Soviet arms shipments to the DPRK might secretly end up with the Chinese, who might later turn them against the USSR.⁸³

The restored friendship between the DPRK and the PRC was based both on mutual willingness to compromise and unrestrained flattery from both sides. Given the situation during the previous decade, this constituted a remarkable rapprochement.⁸⁴ After the unequal relations of the first half of the 1960s, when China maintained the role of dictatorial leader and North Korea of dependent follower, and the chill and hostility during the Cultural Revolution, both countries now displayed surprising pragmatism. China, as the dominant and more strategically conscious partner, went to great lengths to placate the DPRK by pretending that their relationship was a partnership of near equals. For their part, the North Koreans now heralded the Cultural Revolution as a historic breakthrough. Their depictions of Mao Zedong changed from one who threatens the very existence of North Korea to a wise and revered Asian leader. On the Chinese side, the "revisionist" Kim Il Sung was transformed into a reliable Asian friend and great leader

Chinese and Korean maps. Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 17 October 1972. Memorandum on a Conversation with Comrade Archarov, Secretary of the USSR Embassy, on 13 October 1972. PoA AA, MfAA, C 6853.

⁸² Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 14 April 1970. Assessment of Zhou Enlai's Visit in the DPRK between 5 and 7 April 1970. PoA AA, MfAA, G-A 333; Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 14 April 1970. Translation. Joint Communiqué between the Government of the DPRK and the Government of the PRC. PoA AA, MfAA, C 195/74; GDR Foreign Ministry Berlin, Far Eastern Department, Korean Division. 28 April 1970. On the Visit of Zhou Enlai in the DPRK (5 to 7 April 1970). PoA AA, MfAA, C 195/74; Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 28 April 1970. Memorandum on an Information by the Ambassador of the USSR on his Visit with Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Jae Bong on 16 April 1970. PoA AA, MfAA, C 158/75.

⁸³ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 5 May 1970. Memorandum on a Conversation on the Visit of Embassy Officer of the USSR, Comrade Rasgorov, on 27 April 1970. PoA AA, MfAA, C 158/75.

⁸⁴ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 19 November 1970. Information on Some New Aspects in Chinese-Korean Relations. PoA AA, MfAA, G-A 339.

of his people. China might have derided North Korea's "juche" philosophy and its economic failures, but it now officially depicted juche as a historic achievement of the North Korean people. Both sides omitted from joint statements their respective positions towards the Soviet Union, and they joined forces in launching rhetorical polemics against Tokyo and Washington. Without formalizing a pact to prevent the USSR from interfering via Hanoi or Pyongyang, China accepted Kim Il Sung's rhetoric of a "united Asian front" comprised of China, Vietnam, Korea, Cambodia, and Laos.⁸⁵ In so doing, Beijing moved the North Korean leader away from his theory of "small countries as spearheads against imperialism." And contrary to fears within the Soviet socialist camp that a restored Chinese-Korean friendship might induce the latter to "Chinese-style" radical adventurism such as "liberating" South Korea by force, China's new pragmatism and its close military cooperation temporarily calmed the DPRK, moving the conflict on the Korean peninsula towards a more rational search for peaceful solutions.

These developments constituted a blow to the Soviet Union in its fierce conflict with the PRC. In Moscow's eyes, 1970 had seen active political and ideological rapprochement between the DPRK and the PRC in both domestic and foreign policy, and the Soviets expected a major stabilization of relations between Beijing and Pyongyang in all areas the following year.⁸⁶ In the summer of 1971, however, as the 10th anniversary of the DPRK's Friendship Treaties with Moscow and Beijing was being celebrated, the entire geopolitical equation abruptly shifted.

During an extensive Chinese-Korean "Week of Friendship" from 9 to 16 July 1971, while a high-ranking PRC delegation was visiting Pyongyang, a Korean delegation headed by KWP secretary Kim Jung Rin was in Beijing for celebrations of the anniversary, and several

⁸⁵ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 23 July 1970. Memorandum on a Club Meeting of the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Poland, and Mongolia on 17 July 1970 in the Embassy of Bulgaria. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 1363/74.

⁸⁶ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 8 January 1971. Memorandum on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the Embassy of the USSR, Comrade Kurbatov, on 7 January 1971. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 145/75.

delegations were being exchanged between the Sino-Korean border provinces,⁸⁷ President Nixon's National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger secretly visited the Chinese capital for talks with Zhou Enlai. Kissinger left the PRC on 11 July, followed four days later by simultaneous statements from Beijing and Washington announcing the upcoming visit by President Nixon to the PRC "at an appropriate date before May 1972."⁸⁸ North Korea, formerly the aspiring leader in the struggle to dismember and liquidate "U.S. imperialism," had not been informed or consulted on this earthshaking development, nor did its delegation notice that its stay in Beijing coincided with that of the American National Security Adviser. After Kissinger's departure, and before the public announcement of Nixon's trip, Zhou Enlai flew to Hanoi to inform the unconvinced Vietnamese leaders, then continued on 14 July to Pyongyang, where he briefed Kim Il Sung in two meetings lasting seven hours.⁸⁹ Thus, it was merely pro forma when the following day the PRC's Foreign Ministry informed the Vietnamese, the North Koreans, and the Cubans just hours before Beijing's public announcement of the Nixon visit was broadcast on Chinese radio.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 27 July 1971. On the 10th Anniversary of the Ratification of the Chinese-Korean Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 502/75.

⁸⁸ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 27 July 1971. Notes on the 10th Anniversary of the Signing of the "Treaties of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance", DPRK-USSR and DPRK-PRC. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 944/76. On Kissinger's visit see: Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 266-268; Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 733-755.

⁸⁹ Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, p. 269.

⁹⁰ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 7 September 1971. Memorandum on a Conversation with the Acting Ambassador of the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba, Comrade Mora Diaz, on 31 August 1971 in the GDR Embassy. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 504/75.

Effects of the Sino – American Opening, 1971/1972

It took the stunned North Koreans until August 6 to react officially to the Sino-American opening. During a meeting with deposed Cambodian leader Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Kim echoed Mao Zedong's official interpretation, hailing Nixon's upcoming visit to China as a "great victory by the Chinese people and revolutionary peoples worldwide," and as the "march of the defeated" to Beijing.⁹¹ Portraying this development as an American attempt to back away from a dead end political strategy, Kim interpreted the visit as evidence of the accelerating decline of imperialism and the failure of American hostility towards the PRC. Noting South Korean bewilderment over this new twist in U.S. policy, Kim Il Sung went even further, demanding the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Asia, renunciation of the 'Nixon Doctrine,' and an end to American "interference" in the internal affairs of other countries. The DPRK leader praised the anti-imperialist credentials of the PRC, and hoped the latter would not relinquish North Korean interests in upcoming talks with the U.S. Kim also used this speech to propose direct bilateral talks with South Korea regarding reunification and to promote a DPRK approach to the United Nations. Drawing on Kim Il Sung's remarks, on August 8 *Nodong Sinmun* compared Nixon's upcoming visit to China to Washington's diplomatic recognition of the USSR in 1933 and the U.S. signing of the 1953 armistice agreement in Panmunjom.⁹² In a conversation with Hungarian State President Pal Losonczi on 17 September 1971, Kim forecast even greater results from the

⁹¹ Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, p. 273-275.

⁹² Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 18 August 1971. On the DPRK Reaction to the Announcement of the Nixon Visit in the PRC. PoA AA, MfAA, C 944/76.

Nixon visit. ‘If we work it out well, the Americans will have to leave Indochina,’ asserted the North Korean leader.⁹³

Kim Il Sung began enthusiastically to support PRC foreign policy toward the U.S., which in turn led the Chinese government to define the DPRK as Beijing’s primary ally—a striking return to Korea’s traditional role as China’s highest ranking tributary state. In October, all major Chinese newspapers and Radio Beijing published the full text of Kim Il Sung’s remarks at a reception in Pyongyang for Cambodian Prince Sihanouk, when the North Korean leader asserted that

the U.S. would stumble from defeat to defeat. The Americans attempted to isolate China, they occupied Taiwan and continuously threatened the PRC. But China developed into a mighty anti-imperialist revolutionary power in Asia, and the American blockade came to a shameful end. Nixon’s visit to Beijing would now prove the bankruptcy of America’s anti-Chinese policy. Just as the United States came to Panmunjom with a white flag after its defeat in the Korean War, Nixon will head to Beijing. His visit will be that of a loser, not a victor. This will constitute a great triumph for the Chinese people and all revolutionary people worldwide. Now the USA will have to withdraw next from South Korea, Taiwan, Indochina and Japan.⁹⁴

China itself applied a much more pragmatic approach to the Korean problem than Pyongyang’s fiery rhetoric suggested. PRC Deputy Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua, who as Zhou Enlai’s close ally had been one of Henry Kissinger’s important negotiating partners, noted to the Polish ambassador in Beijing in November 1971 that there were major differences between the situation in South Korea and South Vietnam. In the former case, reunification had to be brought about by peaceful means and North Korean negotiating proposals were the right

⁹³ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 11 October 1971. Memorandum on the Visit of the Chairman of the Presidency of the Hungarian People’s Republic, Comrade Losonczi, in the DPRK from 15 to 21 September 1971 according to Information by the Hungarian Ambassador to the Fraternal Ambassadors (1 October 1971). PolA AA, MfAA, C 942/76.

⁹⁴ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 22 October 1971. The Position of the DPRK on the Forthcoming Nixon Visit in the PRC. PolA AA, MfAA, C 944/76.

approach to solve the problem.⁹⁵ China was willing to use its recently acquired seat in the United Nations to further these goals by acting on behalf of Pyongyang's interests in the UN. During one of the rare direct talks between Soviet and Chinese diplomats in Pyongyang, the First Secretary of the PRC Embassy confided to his Russian counterpart that Beijing wanted to propose annulment of the Korean War armistice and dissolution of the United Nations Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK), and support U.N. membership for the DPRK.⁹⁶

In order to allay North Korean fears that Beijing would make a deal with the U.S. on Korea that would be disadvantageous to Pyongyang, the PRC intensified its military cooperation with the DPRK. Chinese advisers and specialists travelled to the DPRK and North Korean officers went to China for training. Moreover, after a lengthy three-week-visit by a delegation of the Korean People's Army (KPA) between 18 August and 7 September, the PRC promised free aid in the form of military hardware.⁹⁷ In January 1972, a Korean delegation comprised mostly of specialists from the Foreign Ministry flew to Beijing to prepare, together with its Chinese counterpart, the Korean aspects of the upcoming talks with Richard Nixon. The North Korean goal was to find a way to use Chinese assistance to secure the withdrawal of American troops from South Korea. Some members of the North Korean delegation remained in the Chinese capital throughout Nixon's visit in late February. Kim Il Sung himself had paid a secret visit to Beijing earlier that month, a trip North Koreans officials denied but Soviet diplomats

⁹⁵ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 16 November 1971. Brief Assessment of the State of Relations between the PRC and the DPRK. PolA AA, MfAA, C 502/75.

⁹⁶ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 18 November 1971. Note on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, Comrade Kurbatov, on 15 November 1971 in the Soviet Embassy. Pol AA, MfAA, C 6853.

⁹⁷ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 21 September 1971. Assessment of the Visit by a Delegation of the KPA, headed by the Member of the Political Committee of the Central Committee of the KWP and Chief of the KPA General Staff, Army General O Chin-u, in the PRC. PolA AA, MfAA, C 944/76.

confirmed.⁹⁸ Assessing all these developments without a hint of sophistication, the Soviet Union now regarded the DPRK as China's first-ranking ally, completely submissive to the guidance of the PRC. Soviet diplomats did not exclude the possibility of a meeting between North Korean representatives and members of Richard Nixon's delegation in Beijing.⁹⁹

When the U.S. President visited the PRC from 21-28 February 1972, nothing of this sort happened; DPRK representatives in Beijing kept their distance from the American visitor.¹⁰⁰ The Chinese side did, however, raise the Korean issue during the negotiations and a statement on it was included in the final communiqué. One day after Richard Nixon left China, the PRC's Xinhua press agency quoted at length from a North Korean letter accusing the U.S. of violating the 1953 armistice agreement by selling "a high-speed combat vessel" to Seoul and encouraging a "fascistization policy" in South Korea.¹⁰¹ Overall, North Korean leaders seemed to be very pleased with Chinese support for their reunification proposal and with Beijing's demand for the dissolution of UNCURK. While the North Korean press hailed the Nixon visit as "a kneefall before the grand Chinese power" and emphasized Pyongyang's "great support from the fraternal Chinese people," the Soviets complained about the narrow perspectives of the DPRK. The North Koreans, according to Moscow, tended to overlook the common interests of the PRC and the U.S., which were clearly directed against the USSR. The DPRK would instead follow a

Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 16 November 1971. Brief Assessment of the State of Relations between the PRC and the DPRK. PolA AA, MfAA, C 502/75.

⁹⁸ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 10 January 1972. Memorandum on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the Embassy of the Soviet Union, Comrade Kurbatov, on 7 January 1972. PolA AA, MfAA, C 944/76.

⁹⁹ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 21 February 1972. Memorandum on a Conversation with the 2nd Secretary of the Embassy of the Soviet Union, Comrade Gorowoj, on 18 February 1972. PolA AA, MfAA, C 6853.

¹⁰⁰ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 10 March 1972. Monthly Report on the Policy of the PRC (February/March 1972), p. 11. PolA AA, MfAA, C 507/72.

¹⁰¹ New York Times, 1 March 1972, p. 17.

pragmatic line and attempt to achieve Korean unification primarily with Chinese support.¹⁰² On his 60th birthday in April 1972, Kim Il Sung received a joint congratulatory telegram from Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, some of his speeches were published in Chinese, and a Kim Il Sung photo exhibit opened in Beijing. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the KPA that same month, the official Chinese press published major articles on the event and a high-ranking PRC delegation went to Pyongyang for the celebrations. The entire PRC leadership, except for the ailing Mao, attended the anniversary reception held by the DPRK ambassador in Beijing.¹⁰³ It appeared that the Chinese had taken the solution of the Korean question into their hands.

Riding on the coattails of the Chinese-American rapprochement, even a North Korean-American rapprochement seemed possible. As a Soviet diplomat in Pyongyang astutely observed in February 1972, the DPRK's anti-Americanism "solely rests on the U.S. presence in South Korea." If things change in this respect, the position of the DPRK vis-a-vis the United States would change as well.¹⁰⁴ "More to be expected from Kim Il Sung," forecast an analysis from the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research on 22 February 1972. "It is quite clear that North Korea is emulating current Chinese policy toward the non-communist world in stressing its peaceful intentions and flexibility of position. Indeed the two are very likely coordinating their efforts."¹⁰⁵ Just two months before Kim Il Sung's 60th birthday, a peaceful solution for the divided Korean peninsula seemed more likely than ever. The American-Chinese rapprochement opened a window of opportunity for Korea's reunification. However, the speed

¹⁰² Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 13 March 1972. Memorandum on a Conversation with the 1st Secretary of the Embassy of the Soviet Union, Comrade Kurbatov, on 10 March 1972. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 6853.

¹⁰³ Embassy of the GDR in the PRC. 4 May 1972. Monthly Report on the Policy of the PRC (April/May 1972), p. 8/9. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 507/72.

¹⁰⁴ Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK. 21 February 1972. Note on a Conversation with the 2nd Secretary of the Soviet Embassy, Comrade Gorowoi, on 18 February 1972. PoIA AA, MfAA, C 6853.

with which Pyongyang and Seoul proceeded in their unification efforts disturbed Washington, Moscow, and Beijing alike, and made the protective superpowers wonder whether their respective clients were prepared to give away the entire store. Within a year, however, all sides involved foreclosed this possibility.

Conclusion

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, launched in the People's Republic of China in 1966, represented the most serious external threat to North Korean leader Kim Il Sung's hold on power since the fallout from Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign in 1956. Kim managed to survive the years between 1966 and 1969 by treading cautiously, avoiding provoking the Chinese by swallowing their slander and remaining passive in the face of their aggressive postures. Even under conditions of outright hostility, however, the PRC never lost its position as the most important foreign partner of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Pyongyang's move toward closer ties to the Soviet Union was undertaken mainly for economic and military advantage. Moscow willingly misread the shift as an overture from an ally in the Sino/Soviet conflict.

Paradoxically, the Chinese preoccupation with internal conflict during the Cultural Revolution freed Kim Il Sung to seek a leadership position in the socialist world. This new ambition resulted not only in efforts to spread his teachings worldwide, but also in renewed 'adventurism' on the Korean peninsula. Inspired by the Vietnamese Communists' struggle to unify their country under nationalist and socialist auspices, Kim Il Sung prepared his people for forthcoming reunification with the South and developed audacious schemes to achieve it. In

¹⁰⁵ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG 59, Senior Interdepartmental Group, 1966-1972, Box 8.

January 1968, the hapless American naval intelligence ship *USS Pueblo* became a pawn in this game, providing the DPRK with a welcome distraction from one of its failed unification plots. It remains doubtful, however, whether the April 1969 shootdown of a U.S. spy plane with thirty-one men on board falls into that same category.

The PRC and the DPRK reached the brink of armed conflict in March 1969, at the same time the Soviets and Chinese were engaged in serious fighting along their border. Six months later the tables turned dramatically when China changed course and subsequently affirmed North Korea as its primary ally in Asia. After years in Beijing's chilly shadow, internal developments in the PRC saved North Korea from having to defend both its northern and southern borders, and China proved again how indispensable it was to the DPRK. Kim Il Sung's patience had paid off. Even the Sino/American rapprochement, which caught Kim Il Sung by surprise, could not destroy the new harmony between Beijing and Pyongyang. To the contrary, it motivated North Korea to move even closer to the PRC and to exploit the profound change in Sino-American relations to embark on a radically different reunification strategy—embracing South Korea from a nationalist vantage point while hoping to drive the Americans off the peninsula.

DOCUMENT APPENDIX

DOCUMENT 1

[Source: MfAA, C 153/75; translated by Karen Riechert]

GDR Embassy in the DPRK, Pyongyang
18 August 1967
Confidential matter (stamped)

Information on some new aspects of the KWP's attitude on internal and external matters

The general evaluation of the position of the KWP, as we and the Foreign Ministry Department in Berlin analyzed it from the Party Conference in October 1966, is still valid.

The assumption we already made in our evaluation of the October Conference, that internal disagreements cannot be excluded, has meanwhile been confirmed. [...] These disagreements probably showed up already before and during the October Conference, however, especially during the preparation of the second plenary session. [...]. At the same time it was noted that in preparation for the 1st of May, during its celebration, and particularly after the second plenary session, certain aspects were stressed more intensively:

1. The personality cult of Kim Il Sung was greatly intensified. [...]
2. The statement of the Party Conference that the primary national task would be reunification of the homeland is now fully asserted.

There is no reference to the development of problems in South Korea, which was still mentioned in the evaluation at the Party Conference. Yi Hyo-sun's remark to the departing Soviet Ambassador Gorchakov, that no one knows when unification will be achieved and everything depends on the development of revolutionary forces in South Korea, was the last one of that kind. Now they only emphasize the need for South Korea's liberation and unification in the current generation under the leadership of Kim Il Sung. More and more often they repeat their readiness

to act on the order of the party and the leader, to destroy the enemy and liberate South Korea. Ideological propaganda addressed to the population for armed liberation of South Korea has increased. At the same time reports in the DPRK press about revolutionary movements and events in South Korea have proliferated. They are portraying a picture of a revolutionary upsurge already in motion. Correspondingly, the comparison of the situation after Johnson's visit in South Korea with Dulles' visit before the outbreak of the Korean War, and the increasing number of incidents at the demarcation line, mostly by groups infiltrating seven to ten kilometers south of the line, are adding to the ever heightening tension.

[...]

Strauss

Acting Ambassador

DOCUMENT 2

[Source: Archive of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVPRF): fond 0102, opis 23, papka 110, delo 3, pp. 93-96. Translated by Sergey Radchenko]

Secret. Copy N3

RECORD OF CONVERSATION

Between A.A. Gromyko and Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK Comrade Pak Song-ch'ol

20 November 1967

In the course of a conversation during a breakfast arranged by A.A. Gromyko in honour of Com. Pak Song-ch'ol, who arrived in Moscow as part of the DPRK party-government delegation on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the October [Revolution], A.A. Gromyko remarked that the invitation to Pak Song-ch'ol to visit the USSR for rest and [medical] treatment remains in force.

Pak Song-ch'ol said that he almost decided to use this invitation last summer, but some events inside the country made him reconsider his plans. At the same time, Pak Song-ch'ol noted that

Com. A.A. Gromyko has visited many countries, but has not yet been to the DPRK, and it would be good if he found an opportunity to visit Pyongyang.

Pak Song-ch'ol then expressed thanks for the Soviet Union's support for the DPRK in the international arena. The parliamentary group of the USSR refused to invite South Korean representatives to the 56th conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Soviet Union did not grant visas to South Korean experts for participation in the international conference of meteorologists in Leningrad. Much work has been done by Soviet representatives in preparation for discussing the "Korean question" at the 22nd session of the UN General Assembly. As a result of the joint efforts of the Soviet Union, the DPRK, and other socialist countries, the number of neutral countries that support proposals of the socialist countries has increased. One should continue to carry out political work in the future in order to make the USA withdraw its forces from South Korea. While the USA continues to occupy South Korea under the UN flag, there are no real opportunities to achieve a peaceful reunification of the country. In case war resumes on the Korean peninsula, and the American imperialists are striving towards this, the USSR will also have to shoulder a heavy burden.

The enemies of the DPRK insistently repeat that after the pull-out of American forces from South Korea, North Korean forces would allegedly attack the South. This is nothing but an attempt to mislead world public opinion, to fool the people. There is no basis for saying that North Korea will attack the South after the pull-out of American forces, that North Korea is trying to solve the reunification problem by military means. The Government of the DPRK repeatedly proposed to cut down forces both in the South and in the North, to conclude a treaty of non-aggression with South Korea after the pull out of American forces, to sit down at the negotiating table and come to terms.

A.A. Gromyko remarked that it is well understood in the Soviet Union that the question of the pull out of American forces from South Korea is not conjecture. It is a question of a prolonged and tense struggle. Should the Korean comrades have new considerations, [new] proposals on the Korean question, they will be taken into account by the Soviet Union.

Pak Song-ch'ol further said that there are currently almost daily military clashes in the vicinity of the demarcation line, provoked by the Americans. The USA is trying to shift responsibility for the heightening of tensions to the North Korean side. We do not think that at the present time, when the Americans are fighting a war in Vietnam, when the consequences of the events in the Middle East have not been liquidated, that the United States will attempt to unleash a new war in Korea. The Americans experienced for themselves the military might of the DPRK during the three-year Korean War in 1950-53.

But the fact is that there remains a tense situation along the demarcation line, which is reminiscent of the events leading to the war in 1950. Recent events suggest that war could be resumed at any time. Separate minor clashes could grow into a major conflict. For example, in the spring of this year, a coastal artillery unit of the DPRK sank a South Korean coast guard vessel that trespassed into North Korean territorial waters. After this, mobilization activities were carried out in the South. Certain steps were taken in the DPRK as well. If an attack from the South occurred, the DPRK would reply with a counter-attack. This would create a dangerous situation.

Some comrades judge the situation approximately this way: the DPRK army is strong, the struggle against the puppet regime is being unveiled in the South, the DPRK has strong allies – the Soviet Union and China. In such circumstances the Americans will hardly attempt to resume the war. One could not say that this is an incorrect assessment. However, one should not forget that the Americans have been in occupation of South Korea for 22 years, they will hardly content themselves with this. They want to conquer the whole of Korea so as to use it afterwards as a platform for attack against the Soviet Union and China.

The Americans are trying to involve Japan in the realization of their plans for conquering Korea. In recent times the Japanese have visited the demarcation line more often. Not too long ago, the Japanese military attaché went there from Seoul. The Americans and the Japanese have several times carried out joint military exercises. They have a concrete joint plan for invading North Korea.

A.A. Gromyko stressed that the Soviet Union does not possess any information regarding the American preparation for war in Korea. But imperialism remains imperialism, and one should always be ready for possible provocations. A.A. Gromyko inquired about the situation with the repatriation of Korean citizens from Japan to the DPRK.

Pak Song-ch'ol replied that about 90 thousand people had been repatriated. The Japanese are trying to pull out of the repatriation agreement. ... [here follows further discussion on repatriation].

In conclusion, Pak Song Ch'ol stressed the necessity of common struggle against imperialism. "We desire peace," he said, "but peace is only possible when the world is rid of aggressors. Under current conditions, peace always remains in danger. The DPRK, the USSR, all socialist countries must commit their efforts to rid the earth of aggressors, in order to develop friendship and unity."

[END OF CONVERSATION]

DOCUMENT 3

[Source: MfAA, G-A 320; translated by Karen Riechert]

The Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Ambassador of the GDR in the DPRK
Pyongyang, 8 December 1967

To:
State Secretary and First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
Comrade Hegen
102 Berlin
Marx-Engels-Platz 2

Stamped: State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 18 December 1967
State Secretary for Foreign Affairs I, 18 December 1967
Office of the Minister, 21 December 1967

Stamped: Confidential Matter

Stamped: Declassified 5 June 1987

Dear Comrade Hegen!

You asked me repeatedly about the current situation at the armistice line and the reason for the increase in incidents. At the same time, it is necessary to answer the question whether the current situation in Korea implies an acute danger of war. Since the experience of aggression in the Middle East provides us with reason to focus on these questions, I have attempted to present my view in this letter by making use of, among others, information from the Polish and Czechoslovak commissions.

There are some differences in the tendencies of the information and opinions from the members of the Czechoslovak and Polish commissions. While the Czechoslovak commission, and especially the ambassador, Comrade Holub, is crediting the aggravation of the situation exclusively to the DPRK, the Polish comrades are expressing the opinion that though the majority of incidents were caused by the DPRK, currently all three parties, that is to say, the DPRK, the U.S., and South Korea, are interested in a tense situation at the armistice line. In my opinion, the estimation of the Polish comrades corresponds more fully to the real situation.

1. On the situation at the armistice line:

- Never, since the end of the Korean War, have there been so many and such severe incidents at the armistice line as in 1967.
- Besides more serious incidents, which left wounded [men] and casualties, mutual exchange of fire by guns and artillery became an almost daily phenomenon at certain parts of the armistice line.
- Incidents at sea are occurring more and more, in the course of which fishing boats are being seized.
- Incidents with casualties and wounded happen almost exclusively on South Korean territory. The U.S. regularly offers its help in investigating the incidents on the spot. Except for one incident, when four soldiers of the KPA [Korean People's Army] were killed, the Korean side did not suggest such help, but instead rejected U.S. suggestions in this respect. (Since 1953, the time of the armistice agreement, there have been only two cases when the Korean side has agreed to inspections on the spot, or has suggested them.)

- The U.S. side argues that the dead, the wounded, and the equipment prove their theory that the incidents were caused by the DPRK (at the same time there is a willingness to hand over the dead).
- The North Korean side is arguing that the incidents at the armistice line have been caused by the U.S., with the caliber and number of projectiles fired onto the territory of the DPRK, recorded statements of agents, and with the old type of weapons allegedly used by the agents (The guns are exclusively of an older type, that is to say, from the time of the Korean War.)
- The composition and attitude of the U.S. Delegation in Panmunjom have changed in comparison to 1966 and early 1967. While until early 1967 the command had been in the hands of officers who saw their duty mainly in tough anticommunist propaganda against the DPRK and the PR of China, the U.S. representatives currently in command are typical high-ranking military cadres of the Pentagon. The Commander of the U.S. side is now Rear-Admiral Smith. He had been commander of an MTB brigade [Schnellbootbrigade]; at that time [his] father had been commander of the entire Pacific fleet; then [he was] vice commander of the operative division of the U.S. Marine Corps and, before his current post in Korea, [he was] liaison officer of the staff of the U.S. Navy at the Committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. forces.
- The U.S. side now negotiates with great prudence and avoids to a large extent any propaganda against the DPRK and the PR China.
- Since 1967 the South Korean side has been represented by high ranking officers of the Tiger-Division.
- While in 1966 and early 1967 the head of the DPRK delegation stood for an objective handling of all incidents and accused the USA of using Panmunjom as a means for anticommunist propaganda, currently the DPRK delegation is focusing on unmasking the role of the USA in Korea and Asia.
- The U.S. has installed a very expensive electronic system along the armistice line in order to prevent incursions into South Korea. The costs for the installation of this system are said to be about 25 million dollars for the area of one division. In the opinion of the Czechoslovak and Polish comrades, this system creates extraordinary difficulties for infiltrating Korean cadres to the South by land. (The installation has been almost completed along the entire line).

- In the past the DPRK has again infiltrated cadres to the South. We cannot evaluate to what extent the USA claim is correct that the number of infiltrated cadres increased after the party conference of October 1966. The Czechoslovak comrades hold the opinion that the assertions of the USA are basically correct in this respect. The Polish comrades say that there has been a certain increase, but certainly not to the extent that has been alleged by U.S. propaganda.
- In my opinion the increasing armed incidents in the southern part of the [armistice] line are also due to more effective security measures by the USA and South Korea than they had in the past. Even in South Korea itself, tightened security measures have been implemented. Seoul has been surrounded by a security zone, street patrols increased and all strategic, military and industrial sites placed under protection.
- The rigid security measures already existing in the DPRK have been intensified. People are not allowed to go more than two kilometers away from their homes without official permission. Also, street patrols have been intensified. According to unconfirmed information, the evacuation of parts of the population of Pyongyang has begun out of military considerations. 200,000 to 300,000 inhabitants are said to be affected (The total number of the population, according to Korean sources, is about one million, according to our estimation it is 800,000 to 900,000).
- For the future it must be expected that the incidents will occur increasingly in the coastal areas and at sea. Incursions of cadres into the South by land will be very difficult in the future, and the DPRK will try to do this by sea.
- The USA and the South Korean side have also taken measures in this respect, and now they employ faster and more modern coastal patrol ships (special motor torpedo boat brigades and radar stations on the coast) in order to secure the sea front.
- In my opinion, the incidents will continue in the future. Their scope and severity will be influenced to a large extent by the current political events.
- As all sides involved respond to any incident with military means, there might be the potential danger of a temporary local conflict. The latter might become more extensive, though, in my opinion, without any of the sides presently involved wanting to start a war.

2. What are the causes of the current incidents and to what extent is there an imminent danger of war in Korea?

A) Attitude of the USA

In order to realize their global strategy, the USA is increasingly utilizing the extremely reactionary South Korean regime for their political and military plans.

- In my opinion the USA is currently interested in a tense situation at the armistice line, but not in an outbreak of war.
- The USA makes the most out of the tensions in order to justify the role of their troops in South Korea and to enable them to act as defenders against the expansion of communism in Asia. This attitude is directly linked to the current politics proclaimed by Johnson that, as in Europe after World War II, the USA has to erect a shield against communism. The USA saved Europe from the expansion of communism, and today the USA and its soldiers accomplish this in the interest of “the free nations of Asia.” The USA attempts at the same time to exploit the tense situation at the armistice line in order to maintain the status of their troops under the flag of the United Nations. Among those nations who formally participate in this contingent of troops, there is increasing resistance to further political and military engagement in Korea 15 years after the armistice. A number of representatives have stated this openly during confidential talks in New York with diplomats of socialist countries.
- The following reasons account, in my opinion, for the fact that the USA is currently not interested in the outbreak of a war in Korea:
 - o The USA is primarily preoccupied in Vietnam
 - o The aim of the USA [is] to increase the discrepancies between the PR China and the Soviet Union. Attacking Korea would immediately touch upon the interests of the Soviet Union as well as of the PR China. War in Korea could force the PR China to seek joint action with the Soviet Union to defend the DPRK and to protect its own interests. In any case, those forces in the PR China fostering the normalization of the relationship with the Soviet Union out of national interests would possibly be emboldened.
 - o The USA cannot currently count on the same international support as in 1950 for an aggressive war against Korea, and the USA is in general very isolated due to the aggression in Vietnam.

b) The Attitude of the South Korean Regime

The South Korean regime is one of the most reactionary of the regimes in Asia whose policies are broadly determined by the USA.

- Despite a certain political and economic stabilization in South Korea, according to the scarce data available to us, there are serious internal conflicts between various groups. There is also opposition to the deployment of troops to South Vietnam.
- The Park Chung Hee regime attempts more and more to educate the entire population in accordance with a bourgeois-nationalistic anticommunist ideology. Currently there is a particularly strong anticommunist movement in South Korea aiming at suppressing any oppositional currents. In order to justify this reactionary anticommunist propaganda, the South Korean side is interested in a tense situation and in the aggravation of incidents.
- Despite certain remarks by the Park Chung Hee regime at official occasions about the reunification of Korea via the United Nations, the real concept of the South Korean regime is to conquer North Korea by military means. Even the Park Chung Hee regime [however] seems to be conscious of the fact that this is currently impossible.
- The USA is eager to maintain and expand South Korea as a crucial strategic base. However, the USA currently cannot risk South Korea unleashing a local war without becoming actively involved.

c) The attitude of the DPRK

- The attitude of the DPRK is expressed in the documents of the Party Conference, the article in *Nodong Sinmun* from 16 November 1967, and partly also in talks with our military delegation.
- The DPRK tries to portray the situation as if an attack by the USA is imminent, in order to justify their positions domestically and externally.
- At the same time the DPRK tries to practice its policy of dealing U.S. imperialism blows from the outside and to convince other socialist countries and leaders of the national freedom movement to adhere to a similar policy. This is also in close correlation with the current policy of Cuba (as far as my material justifies such an opinion).
- According to my handwritten notes, which I took during the three years of my work here, the leadership of the DPRK recognizes three possible solutions to the national question:
 - In the context of a major revolutionary uprising of the people's masses in South Korea;
 - In utilizing a coup d'état by military leaders against Park Chung Hee (and in the context of the temporary disorganization caused by this coup);

- In utilizing an aggravated international situation that committed U.S. forces to such an extent that they cannot support the South Korean regime.

Currently one can assess that the DPRK has totally given up the idea of a peaceful and democratic unification of the country. Also one does not seem to believe any more in the possibility of a broad revolutionary development in South Korea; therefore only the two latter adventurous variations remain, which they seem to be increasingly aiming at.

Despite this opinion, I currently do not believe that the leadership of the DPRK plans any activities for a forceful solution of the national question in the near future. The following reasons may explain my opinion:

- The modernization of the KPA and the mastering of modern arms technology will take another two to five years. It is not possible to predict an exact time frame. On the one hand, the subjective opinions of the military leadership concerning the time needed for mastering modern arms technology cannot be evaluated from our side. On the other hand, the speed of arms deliveries from the Soviet Union will certainly depend on the political attitude of the DPRK, [and] on the assessment of the general situation.

The Korean leadership, especially Kim Il Sung, knows at the same time that a conflict with the USA is currently impossible without major support from the PR China. On the one hand, the willingness to provide such support is questionable in light of the domestic situation in China and the attitude of the Chinese leadership towards the USA, and on the other hand, Kim Il Sung will have to fear that a longer intervention by the PR China in case of a war might lead to his fall from political power.

In summary, I would like to express the following opinion:

The incidents at the armistice line will continue in the future. Their scope and severity will mainly be determined by the political intentions of all three parties involved. Severe incidents will happen in particular when one of the parties involved is interested in an aggravation of the situation. The extremely tense situation does not exclude the option of larger temporary local conflicts. I currently consider an immediate outbreak of war improbable, however I see the potential danger of the outbreak of a future war in Korea, taking into account the aforementioned political attitudes of the DPRK leadership, the Park Chung Hee regime, the

U.S., and also the policy of the Mao faction. Therefore, we have to follow the situation extremely closely. Also for the reasons mentioned, there is, among others, the need to devote the greatest attention to the relations between the GDR and the DPRK, the SED and the KWP, in order to further positive tendencies and to counter those tendencies that are adventurist and dangerous for the socialist world system.

I have insufficient information at my disposal to elaborate on this opinion. For that reason alone a miscalculation cannot be precluded. Notwithstanding that, I thought it would be appropriate to make the attempt and outline my opinion in light of the international situation as well as the situation in Korea.

With socialist wishes

[signed]

Brie

Enclosure

DOCUMENT 4

[Source: MfAA C 1023/73; translated by Karen Riechert]

Information of the Foreign Ministry of the DPRK on 24 January 1968, 9.00 p.m. to 9.40 p.m., for the Ambassadors and Acting Ambassadors of all Socialist Countries accredited to the DPRK

The information was given by Comrade Kim T'ae-bong, Deputy Foreign Minister of the DPRK.

I asked you to come here to inform you on behalf of the government of the DPRK about the invading armed American ship seized by our navy. I would like you to inform your governments about that.

Based on materials received, I want to inform you about the armed spy ship of which you might already have read in the newspaper.

The U.S. imperialists, who try ever more desperately to instigate a new war in Korea, yesterday allowed an armed spy ship to invade the coastal waters of the DPRK, and commit systematically hostile actions (39th degree latitude 17,4'; 127th degree altitude 46,9'). This spy ship was at a distance of 10 miles from the island of Hodo, 7.6 miles from the island of Jodo and 10 miles from another point of the DPRK. This is a bay, which, as you know, according to the principles of international law, belongs to the territorial waters of any state.

This ship, which committed acts of piracy, was seized by us outside the harbor of Wonsan. The equipment of the ship: a fully armed spy ship of approximately 1,000 tons, with a crew of 83, consisting of 6 officers, 75 sailors and two specialists. The two specialists are members of the notorious intelligence agency of the U.S.A. The enemies resisted our countermeasures, consequently one was killed and three were wounded, one of them severely. The spy ship is equipped with one air defense machine gun, dozens of guns, ten thousand rounds of ammunition and hand grenades, radar and other espionage equipment.

As all the facts prove, the ship was assigned to reconnaissance of military objects and coastal defense units. It is therefore an intelligence collecting ship subordinate to the American navy. The enemy itself acknowledges that the ship is equipped with special electronic interception devices for the purpose of reconnaissance of signal and radar stations. There will be more details published by the press.

In January 1967 the enemy allowed patrol boat No. 56 enter our territorial waters, followed by countless provocations on a daily basis. The provocation by the spy ship is the most despicable provocation so far. These machinations have to be strongly condemned. Hereby I would like to finish my remarks and ask you again to inform your governments about this incident.

Question by Gen. Jarck (GDR): How did the government of the DPRK establish the extent of its territorial waters?

Answer: We did not publish anything officially about that. Only for internal matters and for solving technical matters we informed the socialist states that our territorial waters comprise 12

miles. This is not about miles, though, but about the spy ship entering a bay of the DPRK. The distance from the island of Jodo is 7.6. miles.

These are the most evil attacks against our country. Nothing allows the enemy to hide his aggressive acts. This also constitutes a severe violation of the armistice treaty.

Question by the Acting Ambassador of the USSR: Is an official declaration to be expected?

Answer: I think we will express our point of view and publish a declaration. I would like to express my hope that all socialist states will fully support our actions and our perspective, and will condemn unanimously the serious machinations of U.S.A. imperialism.

Question by the acting ambassador of the Peoples' Republic of Bulgaria, Comrade Pavlov: Is there a connection between the incident with the ship and the events in Seoul?

Answer: It is not by accident that the enemy's provocations on sea happened at a time when armed partisans acted in South Korea. The enemies even mobilized divisions and army corps in order to suppress the armed patisans. All that shows us that U.S.A. imperialism is maximizing preparations for another war of aggression. Therefore we are extremely vigilant. According to our information, the U.S.A. imperialists have moved their 7th Fleet in our direction. They are thereby aggravating the situation and the tension is becoming acute.

Thank you very much for you participation and attention.

Minutes taken by translator Li.

Seen by [signed] Jarck

DOCUMENT 5

[Source: MfAA, G-A 360; translated by Karen Riechert]

Embassy of the GDR in the DPRK
Pyongyang, 29 January 1968

MEMORANDUM

of a Conversation with the Ambassadors of the CSSR [Czechoslovak Socialist Republic], Comrade Holub, and of the People's Republic of Poland, Comrade Naperei, on 28 January 1968, from 2.30 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Stamped: Confidential Matter 5/68
Stamped: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 5 February 1968
Stamped: Declassified, 1 October 1987

The meeting took place at the suggestion of the ambassador of the CSSR. Comrade Ambassador Holub informed us that the chairman of the Korean component of the Military Commission had invited the acting head of the Czechoslovak and the Polish component of the Neutral [Nations] Supervisory Commission for a conversation in Kaesong on 27 January 1968. General Pak Chong-guk asked both comrades to pass on the following to the head of the Swiss component of the Neutral [Nations] Commission:

The incursion of the American ship constitutes a violation of the armistice treaty. How we will deal with the ship and the crew is exclusively a matter for the sovereignty of the DPRK. The American imperialists openly invaded the territorial waters of the DPRK and tried to solve the problem by force. But they should apologize, since otherwise we would also use force. If, however, U.S. imperialism attempts to threaten us and to intimidate us with nuclear weapons, then we say that the Korean people are prepared to destroy them in any given moment. If U.S. imperialism uses force, it must realize that it has to accept the consequences that will come from a further aggravation of the situation. It is an empty illusion if the American imperialists believe they can get back the ship and the crew by force. They will miscalculate if they believe they can solve the problem with the government of the DPRK by the use of force. If they use force, we cannot help but answer with armed forces. In this case the American imperialists will get nothing but the dead bodies of their men, who are anyway nothing other than criminals. However, if the U.S. imperialists really want to solve the matter, it is impossible to do so by means of threats and

intimidation. It would be better if they would concede that these criminals are prisoners of war, and if they would ask us to treat them as prisoners of war. The captain and crew admitted they had committed criminal activities. But the government of the DPRK nevertheless treats them in a humane way. The injured got medical attention and the corpse of the person killed while being arrested is still there. All other members of the crew are in good health and encounter no problems whatsoever.

Following this message, which Pak Chong-guk again asked us to pass on to the Swiss representative, he remarked further that if the Americans wish to get details on the crew, they should approach the Korean contingent of the Military Commission directly and not attempt to get this mediated through the Neutral Commission.

The Czechoslovak and Polish acting chairmen (the new chairman of the Polish contingent of the Commission will arrive here on 30 January. The chairman of the Czechoslovak contingent of the Neutral Commission, General Toman, was in Pyongyang at this time.) passed on this message from General Pak Chong-guk – which he later also transmitted in writing - to the chairman of the Swiss component of the Neutral Commission, Mr. Barbei, on 27 January 1968 around 11 p.m. Barbei immediately transmitted this message to the chairman of the American component of the Military Commission, Rear-Admiral Smith. During the subsequent discussion [handwritten addition: between Ambassador Holub, Naperei and myself] the following view was unanimously drafted: Altogether this answer by Pak Chong-guk to the American request to get more details about the injured and the dead, as well as the message by the Chief of Staff of the 8th Army, General Friedman, has to be considered as a positive moment, because it shows a way to establish direct contact between the American and the Korean side. Also the fact that the DPRK declared its willingness to consider the members of the crew of the American ship *Pueblo* as prisoners of war is to be appraised positively, since this excludes [the possibility that] they will have to stand trial as spies. Such a view, on the other hand, implies of course that the USA would have to admit that they violated the armistice treaty.

The Polish ambassador emphasized that he considers this a spark of hope, although he is still viewing the situation as severe. I myself pointed to the fact that the decision of the government of the DPRK to send a delegation to the Security Council conference has to be considered as a

similar spark of hope, since it shows the readiness of the DPRK to alleviate or even to solve the complicated situation by means of talks or negotiations. This also applies in case participation at the Security Council conference will not be possible. Ambassador Holub believes the situation currently has to be assessed, all in all, as follows: As long as there are talks or chances for talks, one cannot speak of an imminent outbreak of armed conflict.

Afterwards Ambassador Holub informed us about information available to him, according to which the American Ambassador in Warsaw has been conducting talks with a Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PR of Poland on the issue of the incident with the American ship *Pueblo*. The same Deputy Foreign Minister met after this conversation with the acting ambassador of the DPRK in the PR of Poland. Comrade Naperei remarked that this information would be correct, but he did not yet have any further details about this conversation at this time.

Afterwards Comrade Naperei informed us that early next week a member of the Politburo of the Romanian Communist Party, Apostol, will be coming to Pyongyang to meet for talks with the KWP leadership. Comrade Holub said he had also heard about this and planned to talk with the local Romanian ambassador, Comrade Popa, about it.

Wrapping it up, it was agreed that Comrade Naperei would inform the Soviet ambassador, and Comrade Jarck the Hungarian ambassador, about the content of the conversation between the Polish and Czechoslovakian comrades in Kaesong and General Pak Chong-guk.

Signed: Jarck

Acting Ambassador

Distribution:

1x State Secretary Hegen

1x Central Committee, Comrade Markowski

1x Ambassador/Secretariate

DOCUMENT 6

[Source: MfAA, C 1091/70; translated by Karen Riechert]

GDR Embassy in the DPRK, Pyongyang; 29 January 1968

Confidential matter [stamped]

Memorandum of Conversation with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of Hungary,
Comrade Kadasch, on 27 January 1968, from 2.00 p.m. to 2.20 p.m.

The conversation took place at the request of the Hungarians immediately after a visit of Ambassador Kadasch to the Deputy Foreign Minister, Ho Suk Tae.

The first secretary of the Soviet Embassy, Comrade Zvetkov, who visited Comrade Jarck at that time, also joined the conversation.

Comrade Kadasch informed us about the following:

Ho Suk Tae had called upon him to come to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at short notice, in order to inform him about a decision of the government of the DPRK. Ho Suk Tae said by way of introduction that he still holds in principle to his personal opinion expressed earlier about the question of the Security Council in the context of the American spy ship. But considering the fact that South Korea intends to join the Security Council conference to attack the DPRK there, and considering the fact that the Security Council wants to discuss not only the incident with the American spy ship *Pueblo*, but also the events in South Korea, the government of the DPRK decided to send a delegation to the Security Council conference.

Ho Suk Tae asked the Hungarian side to do everything within their power to correctly explain during the Security Council conference that the events in South Korea are acts of South Korean partisans. Those are actions of the South Korean population against dictatorship and repression by the Park Chung Hee clique and the American aggressors. Ho Suk Tae went on to say that the communists also support the Negro movement in the U.S. and nobody dares to blame the communists for having instigated that movement.

Concluding, Ho Suk Tae asked the Hungarian ambassador to convey to the Hungarian delegation in New York [his request that they] cooperate closely in all these matters with the Soviet delegation to the U.N.

(Signed)

Jarck

Acting Ambassador

Distribution:

1 x Comrade Schneidewind

1 x Central Committee, Comrade Markowski

1 x Embassy

DOCUMENT 7

[Source: MfAA C1093/70, translated by Karen Riechert]

Excerpt from a Personal Letter of the Acting Ambassador of the GDR in Pyongyang, Comrade Jarck

[Attachment to a letter of Comrade Hegen, GDR Foreign Ministry, to Comrades Ulbricht, Stoph, Honecker, and Mattern; 23 February 1968]

stamped: personal, strictly confidential

[...] First to the events in South Korea, as I believe they will be of greater importance for our future work than the incident with the American spy ship *Pueblo*. Given all the facts that became known here about the events in South Korea, one has to draw the conclusion that it is a carefully planned and long prepared action of the DPRK aiming at the elimination of South Korean President Park Chung Hee. By January 29 twenty-five men had been killed from this group of thirty-one, which had consisted of superbly conditioned and well trained young officers of the Korean People's Army. After his arrest, one of them killed himself and some policemen with a hand grenade. Only one of them was captured alive and gave a statement on the preparation of the attack, the assignments of the group, etc. It can be assumed that there will be serious attempts

undertaken from here to liberate South Korea under the pretext of a coup d'etat. Therefore the recurrence of similiar events can be expected. Thus the tensions, which are also created by other factors, will certainly not diminish, but rather will increase.

Concerning the seizure of the U.S. spy ship, there is in our opinion no direct link to the aforementioned events. The only link, though unproven, might be that they used the invasion of such a ship, which certainly didn't occur for the first time, as a pretext to seize it and divert attention from the events in the South. Such a scenario is taken into consideration at the Soviet embassy, although at the same time it is noted that such an aggravation of the situation, as has happened, had not been expected.

There could hardly be any doubt, by applying the principle of international law that defines a bay as part of the territorial waters of the state bordering that bay, that the ship was seized within the territorial waters of the DPRK. There is no doubt whatsoever that the ship was on a spying mission. The subsequent deployment of the American navy, the increase of American air force units in South Korea, the placing of the South Korean army on alert, and the silence here about the further fate of the ship and the crew created an extremely contentious situation. At the moment, emotions seemed to have cooled down after having been running high, but there is still much risk of an outbreak of armed conflict. Primarily I have in mind the possible failure of all attempts to establish direct contact, or the possibility that direct talks between the USA and the DPRK in Panmunjom or at any other location take a course such that none of the parties involved can give way without losing face.

The question of what the DPRK aimed at with this action in South Korea is extremely important. Was it really about reunifying Korea by these means? If that is the case, and one assumes all military preconditions (nationally and internationally) are already set, then the incident with the *Pueblo* could be a convenient occasion.

The following facts could support the thesis that all those requirements are already in place:

- the correct assumption that the U.S. aggression in Vietnam ties up the majority of the American military potential in Asia
- the beginning of mobilization in the DPRK, which is already ongoing.

These facts are contradictory:

- the DPRK's indication of willingness to hold talks with the USA in Panmunjom and the willingness to send a delegation to the meeting of the Security Council
- that the Soviet arms shipments are not sufficient for a military liberation of South Korea (the opinion of the local Soviet military attaché during a talk with our military attaché).

In this context the attitude of the PRC towards the DPRK is of great importance. There have been indications recently that a certain improvement of relations between the two countries is underway. There are indications within the diplomatic corps that the Romanian comrades disseminated the following opinions of Chinese Acting Ambassador Wang Feng in various conversations:

- China respects the independent policy of the KWP
- the Communist Party of China does not object to the KWP joining the consultative meeting in Budapest
 - economic relations are developing normally. Early in 1968 the PRC will meet the 1967 trade agreement despite its own difficulties. (This is also the opinion of the first secretary of the Czechoslovak embassy, who allegedly has checked numbers that he wants to inform me about.)

A Romanian comrade pointed out to us (on December 16) that Wang Feng told him:

- he doesn't expect the South to attack the North or the North to attack the South
- if war did break out, the PRC would help the Korean people, regardless of whether there had been differences of opinion beforehand.

The Romanian military attaché remarked that the Chinese military attaché told him a few days ago that in his view the situation was good. The Korean people wanted to fight against the USA and the PRC would be willing to support the Korean people with everything they want - weapons and people. One would not pay attention to the differences of opinion in political matters. The Romanian military attaché supposedly also has information that the PRC recently has shipped tanks and guns to the DPRK.

The Czechoslovak comrades reported that for some time the Chinese representatives in Panmunjom had been treated preferentially in terms of protocol. At many joint occasions with the

Korean, Chinese, Czechoslovak and Polish comrades, they now first translate into Chinese and afterwards into Russian. Previously it had been the other way around.

[...]

DOCUMENT 8

[Source: MfAA, C 159/75; translated by Karen Riechert]

SED Central Committee, Department of International Relations

23 April 1968

Highly Confidential (handwritten)

Memorandum

On the Visit of the Party and Government Delegation of the GDR, led by Comrade Prof. Dr. Kurt Hager, with the General Secretary of the KWP and Prime Minister of the DPRK, Comrade Kim Il Sung, on 16 April 1968, 5:00 p.m. to 6:50 p.m.

At the beginning, Comrade Kim Il Sung asked about the well-being of the delegation and the health of Comrade Walter Ulbricht and the other leading comrades of the SED and the government of the GDR. Comrade Hager conveyed the greetings of Comrade Walter Ulbricht and congratulations on the 56th birthday of Comrade Kim Il Sung.

Then Kim Il Sung stated:

We welcome the visit of your delegation to our country and want to thank the GDR government, the Central Committee of the SED, and Comrade Walter Ulbricht in person for sending the delegation. Kim emphasized that the visit of the delegation will contribute to further

consolidation of the relations between our parties and states, since there are many commonalities between our two countries. You live in a divided country and we do as well. Like our country, yours is threatened by imperialism. Both of our countries fight against imperialism, we support the national liberation movement and both countries are building socialism. Although we are quite distant geographically, the relationship between our two countries is a good one. Therefore both of our parties can also work closely together. Our country received great support from you in its most difficult period. Already during the war you accepted orphans and students from our country and you gave us material and moral support of all kinds. In the city of Hamhung you built many residences and a lot of factories. This was an expression of truly internationalist solidarity. Our people will never forget that. I want to seize the opportunity to ask you again to express our thanks for all that to the SED and the government and people of the GDR.

Comrade Hager stressed the commonalities between our two countries as we belong to the socialist camp and are building socialism. He thanked them for their support of the policy of our party and government.

Comrade Kim Il Sung expressed in return his thanks for their support for the struggle of the Korean people for the reunification of the fatherland, against American imperialism and resurgent Japanese militarism. In the negotiations between our delegations, opinions were exchanged and I think you were informed about the situation in our country and our struggle. I only want to emphasize that our countries and parties have many things in common because of our joint membership in the socialist camp. I am convinced we can cooperate well starting from that base. Concerning the development of the Korean revolution, we see the only way to reunify our country as speeding up the development of the North and the strength of revolutionary forces in South Korea, in close conjunction with all socialist countries and anti-imperialist forces. We particularly must consolidate the ties with the GDR, since the GDR defends socialism at its Western outpost, and we do so at the Eastern outpost.

We talk much about self-reliance, and many people misunderstand that. We don't ask, however, for self-reliance outside the socialist camp. We ask for self-reliance in the interests of consolidating the unity of the socialist camp. The self-reliance we stand for lies within the interests of the international alliance and is in accordance with the principles of the declarations

of the Moscow meeting. We ask for self-reliance in the interests of the education of our people. Some countries want us to follow them blindly, but we cannot do that. The line of our party on self-reliance reflects the conditions in our country and is not related to nationalism or national egotism. We must strive to win the middle class in South Korea to achieve unification. Therefore we have to devote special attention to the reeducation of the middle class in our republic. Thus we cannot follow one country and have a cultural revolution here. If we want to bring about unification, we cannot fight against the old professors and intellectuals. We have to transform and unite them in order to have them participate in the revolutionary movement. When we ask for self-reliance, we argue against blind followership of other countries and not against the unity of the socialist camp.

We have quite a few peculiarities, therefore we cannot eliminate the old intellectuals. In South Korea many intellectuals support us. If we suppress them in the North, the intellectuals in South Korea will turn against us. I don't know whether there has been a plot between the Park Chung Hee clique and Bonn, but many South Korean intellectuals have been deported. They support us, and we cannot follow one country and make a cultural revolution. So the emphasis on self-reliance is an action of self-defense. It does not aim at slandering others or coming out against them.

When our neighbor started the Cultural Revolution, the South Korean intellectuals asked us: What will happen to us after reunification? For us there was only one response, namely we will cooperate with the intellectuals. We want to revolutionize them and move together towards communism. Our self-reliance is not directed against the Cultural Revolution. The latter is an internal matter of our neighbor. We will not promote that. Self-reliance is an action of self-defense for the education of the party and the people. Therefore we published the article "Let's Protect Self-Reliance" and talked about it during our party conference in October 1966. Self-reliance is important for the education of the intellectuals and the people in South Korea. In South Korea there are many intellectuals, capitalists and public servants who have not yet given up their illusions about U.S. imperialism. They are also afraid, however, of the USA and thus want to lean on Japan.

We are for self-reliance. It is not directed against the unity of the socialist camp and doesn't mean any interference in the internal matters of other countries. We are in favor of it because it is necessary for the Korean revolution, for the unification of our country, and for the education of our people. We do not want to impose self-reliance on others. We opt for self-reliance because we want to strengthen solidarity with the socialist camp and the national liberation movement. The Korean revolution faces the strongest enemy, namely U.S. imperialism. We want to further solidarity with all revolutionary forces. That is very important for the Korean revolution. I hope you will well understand our position. Self-reliance is no obstacle to unity between our two parties. To the contrary, it will strengthen it.

We fully support your struggle against the resurgence of West German imperialism, against American imperialism and against all imperialists, for the construction of socialism and the overtaking of West Germany. We thank you for supporting our struggle. We will always support you and hope for your support. Under these conditions our relations will develop further.

Therefore we are glad you came to visit us. Last year your military delegation led by Comrade Verner was here. This year we will send a military delegation to the GDR, led by the Chief of the Main Political Administration [of the Korean People's Army]. The exchange of delegations between both countries will increase in the future. This will contribute to a deepening of mutual understanding and of knowing the policy of both parties. So we welcome an exchange of many delegations to consolidate friendship between both [our] parties and countries. Our country is not a big country. Therefore we don't want isolation, but unity. We wish the relations between both parties to develop further. Please forward that also to Comrade Walter Ulbricht and Comrade Willi Stoph.

Comrade Hager expressed thanks for the remarks of Comrade Kim Il Sung and briefly mentioned the creative policy of our party, for instance with regard to the middle class. He thanked him for the explanations on questions concerning the reunification of Korea. He expressed his full agreement with the remarks on the development of bilateral relations. He emphasized how, in addition to our own creative policy, we particularly pay attention to close cooperation with the Soviet Union and the states of the Warsaw Pact as the cornerstone of our policy. Finally Comrade Hager sketched again our position on the convocation of a new communist world conference. He

said that we agreed with Comrade Pak Song Ch'ol on the necessity of unity. But we have different opinions about the next steps needed to achieve it. These differences of opinion, however, are not an obstacle to the development of mutual relations.

Comrade Kim Il Sung said:

This is correct. We are not at all against your position, but understand it very well. We, too, are for the unity of the international communist and workers' movement and the socialist countries. If the socialist camp were really united, we would be a strong power. With the exception of the island of Cuba, all countries are linked geographically. We are one billion people. If the socialist camp were united, it could unfold its power in all areas, not just in political but also in economic terms. The socialist world market could be developed and the socialist camp could display its strength. If the socialist camp were united, it could not only demonstrate its power, but also rally all the young nation states behind it and influence them. We know from our own experience that the unity of the socialist camp and the entire communist worldwide movement is by all means necessary, because there are many problems for us that arise from division. So it is correct that your country is securing peace within the Warsaw Pact. The NATO alliance is in dissolution, which is not bad. But if we weaken the Warsaw Pact, that would be very dangerous for unity. In this respect we fully agree with you. For geographical reasons we cannot participate in the Warsaw Pact, but by our friendship treaties with the Soviet Union and China we are mutually tied. We think our alliances with the Soviet Union and China are very important for us. Therefore one must not destroy them, despite existing differences of opinion. There may be differences, but one has to come together nonetheless. There are big differences of opinion with China, but we want to maintain the alliance with the PRC because it is important for securing peace.

Comrade Pak Song Ch'ol has already talked about our position on the convocation of a world conference. We are not against your participation in the preparation and the conference itself. Looking at our situation, however, we cannot participate yet. The concrete conditions in our country demand cooperation with the Soviet Union and China. However, this does not mean we will follow China even if the Chinese speak out against a conference forever.

More than one million hostile troops face us directly. Therefore we don't want to end the alliance with China since it would mean we would also have enemies at our back. We have reached the

conclusion [that we will] participate in a conference only if everyone participates, but if one country won't be there, we won't either. We have to wait to see how the situation in China develops. Moreover, Vietnam is fighting against U.S. imperialism and we don't want to obstruct its struggle. If there were to be an open split, this wouldn't have a positive impact on the Vietnamese comrades. That not only depends on the Soviet Union and other European socialist countries, but also on China's position. The Chinese and some others want the split now. For them the conference would be a proper opportunity to officially seal the split. With a conference we only display to the enemy the internal situation in our camp. Our party thinks that unity and also discussions between the parties are needed. We ask ourselves, however, whether the time for a conference has already come. We are not against a conference, but think a convocation this year would be too early. We are not against the parties joining in the preparation and participating in the conference itself. Among the socialist countries there are some who have a different opinion about the convocation of the conference in the current year. We think this year is too early for the conference, but we will not slander the participants. We ask you also not to insult us for not participating. There are many common things between us. In some respects our positions differ, but this is no obstacle to the development of our relations.

Currently there are big differences of opinion with the Chinese, but they still say they will fight together with us against U.S. imperialism if that proves necessary. They say our deep differences are of a tactical and not a strategic nature. They slander us as revisionists but we always stay calm. When the Red Guards insult us, the Chinese tell us that the party and government are not responsible. Only if e.g. *People's Daily* [Renmin Ribao] attacks us would they be responsible. Some comrades in the politburo have suggested that we should also organize Red Guards to insult the Chinese, but should not write articles. I am against that. It doesn't work that way. There are big differences of opinion with the Chinese, but unity in actions against U.S. imperialism is maintained. The [friendship] treaty is still valid and in spite of these differences, we wait. The PRC has issued a government declaration on the *Pueblo* case and supported our position. This shows how they stand by the treaty as well as for a united front against imperialism. There are many complicated questions and we are directly confronted by the enemy. So we don't have the option to participate in the conference. China and some others constitute one side, the Soviet Union and all the others the other side. We don't want to participate in a conference where only one side is represented. There are still many against such a conference,

therefore we think the time hasn't yet come. China will not participate, others will do likewise. We cannot participate. Certainly the majority will participate, but if some, who directly fight against U.S. imperialism, are not present, what will be the importance of such a conference? Comrade Ponomarev was here and we told him our opinion. Concerning this question, the many difficulties faced by the Asian parties must be taken into consideration. We are not against your being in favor of this conference, and we will not insult you.

The differences of opinion with China came along with different positions towards the Soviet Union. In March 1965 there was a conference in Moscow. Back then the Chinese comrades said that all participants must be denounced as revisionists. Articles bearing the character of declarations were written, slandering all participants as revisionists. We came out against that. There are also other differences of opinion with China. The Chinese said that the Soviet Union is a policeman just like the USA. We couldn't agree with that, as the Soviet Union will always remain the Soviet Union. The fundamental difference between the Soviet Union and the USA, between socialist and capitalist society, remains, even when the Soviet Union maintains relations with the USA. As you see, there are differences of opinion about the relationship with the Soviet Union.

The Chinese say that Soviet support for Vietnam just seems to be support. But only the Vietnamese comrades can assess that. A third party is not entitled to make judgments. Vietnamese questions have to be solved by the Vietnamese comrades themselves. The Vietnamese party is an autonomous party that has extensive experience in the fight against imperialism. It has developed its own strategy and tactics. They are capable of judging the real character of support. The Vietnamese comrades are very grateful towards the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries for their support.

There have been differences of opinion with the Chinese previously, when they propagated the theory of the "intermediate zone." Certainly one can define the young nation states as an intermediate zone, but when the Chinese declare all capitalist countries except the USA as part of the intermediate zone, even West Germany, we cannot agree with that. On that question they didn't communicate directly with us, but sent Grippa. We cannot understand this Chinese

position and don't know according to which Marxist-Leninist principles they reached that position.

Comrade Hager said that such Marxist-Leninist principles do not exist.

Comrade Kim Il Sung replied: That is correct. There are also other questions, e.g. the question of revolution. We will support every revolution if conditions have matured. However, a revolution without pre-existing conditions is just damaging for the cause of revolution. There are many more questions where we don't agree with them, e.g. India and Indonesia. Therefore they say they have tactical differences of opinion with us, but they want to fight with us against imperialism. We will not destroy our alliance with the Chinese by our own initiative. Relations between China and us, between Vietnam and China are an important question in Asia. We therefore hold the opinion that the European comrades should understand well the conditions we have in Asia and reflect on them thoroughly. You may want to consider all of that when making your decisions. We haven't insulted the Moscow conference and didn't say a word about the Budapest [meeting], and we don't regard it as bad when the comrades come together and have conferences. We ask you to report to Comrade Walter Ulbricht that from Asia maybe only the Indian party might join, though it cannot represent Asia. It is possible the conference will be a European conference, because the Asian parties won't join.

Nevertheless we will continuously strive for the consolidation of the friendship with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, in particular for the friendship between our two parties and countries.
