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Christian F. Ostermann, Series Editor

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by Balázs Szalontai and Sergey Radchenko
August 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. The International Context of the North Korean Nuclear Program, 1953-1988 by Balázs Szalontai	2
II. Nuclear Cooperation between the Soviet Union and North Korea, 1962-63: Evidence from Russian Archives by Sergey Radchenko	24
III. Document Appendix	31

I. The International Context of the North Korean Nuclear Program, 1953-1988

by Balázs Szalontai

The documentary record recently uncovered from archives of North Korea's former allies suggests that the decades-long development of the DPRK's nuclear program was influenced both by the nuclear policies of Pyongyang's opponents—above all, South Korea and the U.S.—and the nuclear programs of its allies—China, the USSR, and the East European Soviet-bloc countries. In the mid-1950s South and North Korean efforts to begin research in nuclear science were almost simultaneous, though the South may have had a slight lead over the North. This competition between Seoul and Pyongyang helps explain why Soviet leaders, who by no means approved of Kim Il Sung's domestic despotism and militant diplomacy, nonetheless provided the DPRK with vital assistance at the initial stage of the North Korean nuclear program. Thus, history of Soviet-North Korean nuclear cooperation can only be understood in the context of the Cold War. From the 1950s on, both superpowers found it politically useful to give nuclear technology to their Third World allies in order to demonstrate their technological superiority and political generosity.

The framework for this competition was established as early as 1953. In March 1953 – half a year after Britain tested its first atomic bomb – the Soviet Union began providing assistance to China to establish nuclear research laboratories. Beijing's First Five-year Plan (1953-1957) declared that the peaceful use of nuclear energy was a crucial task for the country. Subsequently, in December 1953, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower launched his "Atoms for Peace" campaign, through which Washington gave scientific and technological assistance to various non-European countries, including Israel, Taiwan, South Korea, Iraq, Iran, and South Africa. In 1954 Soviet-Chinese nuclear cooperation was extended to the military sphere, and in early 1955 Moscow signed an agreement to supply an atomic reactor to the PRC, which opened in 1956.¹

¹ Peter R. Mounfield, *World Nuclear Power* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991):151; Paul H. B. Godwin, *Development of the Chinese Armed Forces* (Alabama: Air University Press, 1988).
http://www.fas.org/irp/dia/product/prc_ch-11.htm

China's nuclear ambitions may have played a role in persuading Washington to sign an "Atoms for Peace" agreement with Taiwan in 1955. The U.S. also reached a preliminary agreement that year with South Korea on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, which became formal in February 1956. Anxious not to lag behind, in February 1956 the Soviet Union established the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in Dubna in order to facilitate intra-bloc cooperation in the field of nuclear science. The following month Moscow signed a separate agreement with the DPRK on the organization of joint nuclear research. In early 1958 Taiwan signed a contract with General Electric to establish an experimental nuclear reactor, and in December South Korea followed suit by concluding a contract with two American companies to procure a research reactor. In September 1959 the DPRK and the Soviet Union signed a treaty providing Soviet technical assistance for the establishment of a North Korean nuclear research center, which created the basis for Soviet assistance in the construction of an experimental reactor in the DPRK.² In sum, the Chinese nuclear project may have inspired Washington's Far Eastern allies, the Taiwanese program possibly encouraged South Korea, whereas North Korea gained inspiration both from the Chinese and the South Korean example.

The North Korean leadership probably considered this nuclear program quite urgent, and if they did, their fear of being overtaken by other countries, above all, by South Korea, proved justified. The construction of the North Korean research reactor began only in 1962-1963, whereas South Korea and South Vietnam, both of which played crucial roles in Washington's Far Eastern strategy, completed the construction of their experimental reactors in November 1960 and 1963, respectively.³ Moreover, several countries, even some outside of the "Soviet bloc," were given Soviet nuclear assistance years before the DPRK received such help from the Kremlin. Pyongyang must have found that quite irritating, all the more so because one of these countries was Yugoslavia,

² Alexander Zhebin, "A Political History of Soviet-North Korean Nuclear Cooperation," in James Clay Moltz and Alexandre Y. Mansourov, eds., *The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 28-30; "South Korea: Nuclear Chronology, 1950-1979." Nuclear Threat Initiative homepage:

http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Skorea/Nuclear/3045_3046.html; William Ide, "The tracks of Taiwan's nuclear development," Taipei Times October 25, 1999:

<http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/local/archives/1999/10/25/8069/wiki>

³ "South Korea: Nuclear Chronology, 1950-1979." Nuclear Threat Initiative homepage: http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Skorea/Nuclear/3045_3046.html

whose government the North Korean leaders vilified almost as passionately as they did the U.S. and South Korea. Attempting to woo Tito back to the “socialist camp,” in 1956 the Soviets began to build a research reactor in Yugoslavia. By the time Moscow signed a similar agreement with Pyongyang, the Yugoslav reactor was close to completion.⁴ Following French and American nuclear assistance to Israel, in 1957 the USSR concluded a nuclear protocol with the Nasser regime in Egypt, the terms of which included the supply of an experimental reactor.⁵

It is important to note the mental framework that was characteristic of Communist leaders in the late 1950s. These were the years of China’s Great Leap Forward, when the Communist regimes did their best to “catch up with and overtake” not only their capitalist opponents, but also their “fraternal” allies. In 1958-59, proud of the (partly imagined) successes of their own *Ch’ollima* Movement, the DPRK’s version of a Great Leap Forward, certain high-ranking cadres of the Korean Workers Party (KWP) began to boast that North Korea would catch up with Czechoslovakia by 1960 or even by 1959—no mean feat since Czechoslovakia was the most industrialized state of the entire “Communist camp.”⁶ The Czechoslovak leadership, in turn, planned to improve living standards so rapidly as to become the world’s most developed country by 1965.⁷

In the early 1960s, as the following documents unearthed by Sergey Radchenko show, the Chinese military nuclear program further inspired Pyongyang, since it clearly demonstrated the feasibility of nuclear self-reliance. The DPRK similarly gained encouragement from the construction of nuclear power plants in Eastern Europe, a process that had been in turn stimulated by the creation of the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) in 1957. As Tatsujiro Suzuki notes, “the Soviet Union was uneasy about EURATOM since it could strengthen nuclear capability in Western Europe. This East-West rivalry, as well as concern within Western Europe, was the important

⁴ “Yugoslavia: Nuclear Facilities. Research Reactors, Critical and Subcritical Assemblies.” Nuclear Threat Initiative homepage: http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Yugoslavia/Nuclear/3991_4121.html

⁵ “Egypt: Nuclear Chronology, 1950s.” Nuclear Threat Initiative homepage: http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/Egypt/Nuclear/1697_1738.html

⁶ Hungarian National Archives (Hereafter MOL) XIX-J-1-j Korea 1945-1964, 8. doboz, 5/a, 002242/1959.

⁷ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Korea 1945-1964, 4. doboz, 5/a, 006840/1959.

political background to facilitate the establishment of EURATOM. These were the primary reasons for the U.S. to give early support to EURATOM.”⁸

Czechoslovakia and the GDR began to build their first nuclear power plants in 1958 and 1960, respectively. The East German project seems to have been a reaction to the completion of West Germany's first nuclear power plant in 1960. While the construction of the first Czechoslovak plant in Bohunice proceeded slowly and was finished only in 1972, the GDR managed to complete its plant in Rheinsberg in 1966. In that year the Soviet Union signed agreements with Bulgaria and Hungary to build nuclear power plants in those two countries. The East European governments sought to cooperate with each other as well as to receive assistance from Moscow. Hungary, for example, signed agreements “on cooperation in the field of the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes” with the USSR (22 December 1959), Poland (15 January 1960), East Germany (12 March 1960), and finally even with Yugoslavia (December 1965).⁹

Romania was conspicuously absent from the list of states to be provided with Soviet-built nuclear power plants, though Bucharest expressed its desire for such a plant as early as 1965. [Document 13] This omission probably reflected Moscow’s growing dissatisfaction with the independent-minded foreign and economic policies pursued by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and his successor, Nicolae Ceausescu. Soviet non-cooperation proved counterproductive, however, since it induced Romania to turn to Western countries for technical assistance—first to Britain, then to the U.S. and Canada.¹⁰

The North Koreans were well informed about these developments in Eastern Europe. Judging by the timing of their requests for nuclear facilities (February-March and

⁸ Tatsujiro Suzuki, “Lessons from EURATOM for Possible Regional Nuclear Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region (ASIATOM),” in *Asia Pacific Multilateral Nuclear Safety and Non-Proliferation: Exploring the Possibilities*. Ed. Ralph A. Cossa. A Report from the International Working Group on Confidence and Security Building Measures organized by the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific. Honolulu, 1996. http://www.cscap.nucltrans.org/Nuc_Trans/CSCAP/cscap-links/Title_pg.htm

⁹ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Lengyelország, 1967, 63. doboz, 545, 003354/1/1967.

¹⁰ Mounfield, *World Nuclear Power*, 137.

December 1967), they drew inspiration from the growing emphasis the East European regimes were laying on the utilization of nuclear energy. In 1966, the GDR, Hungary, and Bulgaria reached a turning point in nuclear research. A North Korean delegation of atomic experts visited both East European countries where nuclear power plants had been under construction in the mid-1960s. [Documents 15 and 18] The DPRK may also have been inspired by Romania's efforts to obtain nuclear technology. When the USSR and its East European satellites rejected or evaded North Korea's requests for a nuclear power plant in the same way the Soviets had done with Romania, Pyongyang decided to join forces with Bucharest. In 1968, the Romanians and the North Koreans published a joint communique expressing their not-so-veiled disagreement with Moscow's reluctance to provide these two countries with nuclear facilities. [Document 19]

In other respects, however, Pyongyang and Bucharest took different approaches. While the Romanian government ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as early as 1970, the DPRK was unwilling to do so. North Korea's opposition to the NPT worried the Soviet leadership for several reasons. First, it seemed to confirm their suspicions of Kim Il Sung's nuclear ambitions. Second, since it was nearly identical with the Chinese stance, Moscow felt that "the Korean comrades ... actually give veiled support to the Chinese position." The Kremlin tried to convince the North Koreans of the usefulness of the NPT by asking them whether it would be advantageous if Japan, the leading industrial power in Asia, developed nuclear weapons, but this argument fell on deaf ears. [Document 22]

Both by the Soviets and the North Koreans used the bogeyman of Japanese remilitarization to bring the other around to their point of view. While the 1970 announcement of U.S. troop cuts in South Korea was welcomed by KWP leaders, they were also aware of another aspect of President Richard Nixon's disengagement strategy, namely, his insistence that the Japanese government should assume greater responsibility for regional security. Pyongyang was keenly attentive to the potentially negative consequences of a more assertive Japanese foreign and military policy, repeatedly warning the Kremlin that America's partial disengagement from South Korea might be offset by an increase in Japanese economic, political, and military presence in the

southern half of the peninsula. In this context, DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Song-ch'ol warned Soviet General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev in December 1969 that "Japan would be able to have an army of one million and an atomic bomb of its own at any time."

[Document 23]

Such North Korean fears were not entirely unfounded. At a summit held in November 1969 Nixon "linked his offer to remove American nuclear weapons from Okinawa with a broad hint to [Japanese Premier] Sato [Eisaku] that the United States would 'understand' if Japan decided to 'go nuclear.' The president's views echoed remarks Kissinger made to his staff the previous spring."¹¹ The Soviet leaders were also aware of this danger, but, unlike their North Korean comrades, thought that it should be offset by cooperative, rather than confrontational, diplomacy toward Tokyo. **[Documents 22 and 23]**

The Japanese government eventually proved far less inclined to pursue an assertive military policy than the KWP leadership claimed. But Pyongyang increasingly emphasized the nuclear issue. In secret talks with the South in 1972, for example, "Kim Il Sung ... abruptly blurted out that the two Koreas ought to work together to develop nuclear weapons."¹² Since Kim considered the inter-Korean dialogue a useful method to isolate and undermine Park Chung Hee's dictatorship, rather than a way to achieve genuine cooperation between the northern and southern regimes, this dramatic proposal may have been intended to frighten Seoul and/or sound out Park's nuclear plans. The previous year the ROK had begun to build its first nuclear power plant, **[Document 43]** possibly following the initiative of the Taiwanese government, which, shocked by Beijing's nuclear tests, had begun constructing a nuclear power plant in 1969.¹³

By mid-1973, the dialogue between the two Koreas had reached a deadlock, U.S. troop withdrawals were halted, and Park Chung Hee's regime, far from being undermined by domestic opposition, became more repressive than ever. These factors probably

¹¹ Michael Schaller, "The Nixon 'Shocks' and U.S.-Japan Strategic Relations, 1969-74." Washington: National Security Archive, Working Paper No. 2, 1996.

<http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/japan/schaller.htm>

¹² Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, p. 467.

¹³ On the Taiwanese nuclear program, see, among others, Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003): 143.

further reinforced Pyongyang's interest in launching a nuclear program. Many North Korean military officers who had opposed the inter-Korean dialogue from the start, preferring instead a military solution, regarded these unfavorable developments as proof of the correctness of their position. Such discontent must have been quite widespread in military circles, since Kim Il Sung found it necessary to justify his policy of "peaceful unification" at a special meeting organized for the officer corps. [Document 25] In any case, in August 1973 the DPRK signed an agreement with Poland on technical and scientific cooperation that included a provision for three North Korean technical experts to be trained in Poland in the field of nuclear technology. [Document 24]

Yet another factor that may have inspired the North Koreans was China's influence. Following a period of conflict in the late 1960s during the Cultural Revolution, Sino-DPRK relations underwent a rapid improvement. Anxious to demonstrate that they were more generous toward Pyongyang than their Soviet rivals, Chinese leaders hinted that they might in the future give tactical nuclear weapons to the DPRK. [Document 25] Since the Kremlin adamantly refused to provide North Korea with a nuclear power plant, let alone atomic weapons, this promise, even though vague, must have made quite an impression on Kim Il Sung. Beijing most likely never intended to fulfill this promise, but even so, the KWP leadership found it diplomatically useful to allude to the possibility of Sino-North Korean nuclear cooperation. [Document 26]

Finally, the situation created by the 1973-1974 oil crisis played a role. The sudden quadrupling of oil prices increased the interest of both Korean governments in constructing nuclear power plants, but the South, which already had a technological lead over the North, quickly overtook its rival. In the mid-1970s, Park Chung Hee decided to launch a gigantic nuclear project. [Document 43] While Washington consistently blocked South Korean efforts to develop a military nuclear potential, which started in 1969,¹⁴ it did not prevent the ROK from constructing nuclear power plants for civilian purposes. In contrast, the Soviet leadership continued to reject North Korean requests for a nuclear power plant, while at the same time being eager to take advantage of the world

¹⁴ Michael J. Siler, "U.S. Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy in the Northeast Asian Region During the Cold War: The South Korean Case," in *East Asia: An International Quarterly* 16 (Autumn 1998): 41-79.

oil price hike to increase the price of their oil exports. Moscow's allies still received oil at below world market prices, but they had to pay considerably more than before. This unexpected increase in import costs hit Pyongyang quite hard, since the shortage of energy had remained a constant problem in the DPRK since 1958. [Documents 20 and 32] The KWP leadership stubbornly resisted the Kremlin's new oil price policy, and North Korean internal propaganda openly declared that "the Soviet Union exploits Korea by raising prices." [Document 35]

Moreover, nuclear power was regarded as a matter of prestige, not only by the Communist regimes but also by many developing countries. The DPRK thus did not want to lag behind its southern rival in such an important sphere. In January 1977 the Soviets noted that Pyongyang insisted on the construction of a nuclear power plant "for reasons of prestige." As late as February 1985, North Korean Premier Kang Song-san once again told a Soviet deputation that the planned nuclear power plant "was not only of economic but also of political importance. On the one hand, they would like to offset the fact that a nuclear power plant is already in operation in South Korea; on the other hand, [the project] is to enhance the DPRK's economic prestige in foreign eyes." [Documents 35 and 51]

Nor were KWP leaders unaware of Park Chung Hee's repeated attempts to develop a nuclear weapons capability. From 1975 on, they repeatedly raised the issue of South Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions in various international fora, including IAEA meetings and a pro-Pyongyang political conference held in Brussels. [Documents 27, 33, and 37] However, Park's nuclear weapons program, which never came very close to the threshold, was not entirely disadvantageous to the North since it provoked conflict between Seoul and Washington and tarnished South Korea's international reputation. Nonetheless, it was a serious challenge that the DPRK could not afford to underestimate.

To add insult to injury, the Soviets continued to build nuclear power plants in politically loyal East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary throughout the 1970s. Pyongyang therefore felt it was being overtaken both by its southern opponent and by its nominal allies. Whenever a reactor was completed in any of the East European

countries, such as Bohunice VI-1 in Czechoslovakia in 1979 or Paks 1 in Hungary in 1983, the North Koreans promptly asked the country in question for nuclear assistance, only to be rebuffed again and again. [**Documents 42, 47, and 48**] All these developments, combined with the steady progress of North Korean nuclear research, contributed to the heightened interest in building nuclear power plants themselves in the late 1970s. Since the DPRK, unlike Romania, was unable to obtain nuclear technology from Western countries, the North Koreans were left to depend on their own resources to build a reactor.

It is important to note that the reactors the Soviet Union constructed in Eastern Europe were of the so-called VVER (light-water) type, whereas the one the North Korean government built in Yongbyon is a graphite-moderated RBMK reactor. While RBMK reactors are capable of producing very pure plutonium that is optimal for making nuclear weapons, the plutonium produced by VVER reactors is more difficult to use for this purpose. To be sure, the latter may also be used to fabricate a nuclear explosive, but every state that has made atomic bombs to date has preferred the first alternative. Moreover, Soviet-built VVER reactors were dependent on Soviet supplies of fuel. This reflects, first of all, the Soviets' determination to prevent their satellites from developing a nuclear weapons capability, since the USSR controlled all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle in the East European countries. Second, Pyongyang's preference for a graphite-moderated, rather than light-water, reactor, combined with repeated North Korean statements about the desirability of possessing nuclear weapons [**Documents 26, 28, and 36**] as well as the following Russian documents collected by Sergey Radchenko], suggests that the regime's intention was to develop a military capability. As early as 1979 Hungarian diplomats concluded that the DPRK secretly planned to produce nuclear weapons. [**Document 43**]

On the other hand, the actual North Korean production of plutonium, as Cumings points out, remained conspicuously infrequent for a relatively long period, and the reactor was not built underground, as were many important North Korean military

facilities.¹⁵ This suggests that the KWP leadership wanted to acquire a dual nuclear capability, not merely an exclusively military one. In any case, construction of a light-water reactor may not have been a viable option for the DPRK technologically. While graphite-moderated reactors use natural uranium, light-water reactors must be fueled by enriched uranium. At that time, North Korea was not able to solve the complex technical questions of uranium enrichment by itself, and thus would have been dependent on external supplies of fuel. Even if the North Korean leaders had accepted such a situation (their persistent demands for light-water reactors suggest they had), it is doubtful whether the Soviets would have assisted them in fueling a reactor that was built without Moscow's approval. In 1978 the Soviets made it clear that they would not supply nuclear fuel to a research reactor Hungary intended to build for Algeria until the Algerian government signed the NPT.¹⁶

While the Kremlin's suspicions of Kim Il Sung's belligerent intentions undoubtedly played a major role in its consistent rejection of Pyongyang's requests for VVER reactors in the 1960s and 1970s, other factors may also have entered the equation. As noted before, the Soviets were similarly reluctant to build a nuclear power plant for Romania. And when the Vietnamese leaders came forward with such a request in 1983, the Kremlin again said no.¹⁷ It seems that from Moscow's point of view, the only countries entitled to nuclear power plants were those that were both relatively developed technologically (Vietnam was not) and politically loyal and controllable (the DPRK and Romania were not). In the eyes of the CPSU leadership, these factors were at least as important as a country's attitude toward the NPT. Vietnam signed the NPT in 1982, but this action did not make the USSR more willing to fulfill its request for a nuclear power plant. In 1976 the Soviets undertook to build two 440-megawatt nuclear reactors in Cuba,¹⁸ even though Havana stubbornly refused to sign the NPT. [**Document 41**] Since North Korea was anything but a cooperative ally, either in a political or an economic sense, it was quite

¹⁵ Bruce Cumings, *North Korea: Another Country* (New York and London: The New Press, 2003): 55, 60.

¹⁶ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j ENSZ, 1978, 158. doboz, V-73, 004909/2/1978.

¹⁷ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Vietnam, 1983, 125. doboz, 162-503, 005996/1983.

¹⁸ Jonathan Benjamin-Alvarado and Alexander Belkin, "Cuba's Nuclear Power Program and Post-Cold War Pressures," *The Nonproliferation Review* (Winter 1994): 18-26. The actual construction of the first reactor at Juragua started in 1983.

understandable that Moscow refused to assist it in the construction of nuclear power plants.

If KWP leaders really hoped Moscow might build a nuclear power plant for them, they were distinctly unskillful at lobbying. Rather than attempting to gain Soviet sympathy and assure Moscow that they did not wish to develop nuclear weapons, the North Koreans behaved in a provocative way during bilateral negotiations [**Documents 30 and 35**] and adopted a militant posture vis-à-vis Seoul. In 1975 Kim Il Sung, having made a reference to the recent Communist military victories in Indochina, publicly expressed his intention to “liberate” South Korea by force of arms. The North Koreans also hinted that they might ask China to give them tactical nuclear weapons. In 1976 they went so far as to claim that they already had nuclear-tipped missiles. [**Documents 26 and 28**]

To be sure, these aggressive statements did not necessarily signify that Kim Il Sung actually planned to launch a military offensive in 1975-1977. After all, the Korean People’s Army (KPA) could not gain a military victory over the combined U.S.-South Korean forces unless it resorted to a blitzkrieg strategy, which necessitated a surprise attack. Since public threats certainly alarmed both Seoul and Washington, they were incompatible with the aim of launching an unexpected offensive. Moreover, Pyongyang was much less emboldened by the triumph of the Communist forces in Indochina than many foreign observers, including South Korean leaders, believed.¹⁹ The KWP leadership believed that the longer the American military was bogged down in Indochina, the more opportunities the DPRK would have to carry out armed operations against the ROK. For this reason, they opposed U.S.-North Vietnamese negotiations from the very beginning. North Korean diplomatic and press reactions to the 1973 Paris Agreements and to Hanoi’s victory in 1975 were conspicuously cold, to the extent that a Hungarian report of 19 March 1973 spoke of “frosty silence.” High-ranking North Korean cadres

¹⁹ On South Korea’s threat perceptions, see, among others, Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism. The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999): 146-148; Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, pp. 61-63.

frequently told European Communist diplomats that the Americans, having been expelled from Vietnam, were redeploying their forces to South Korea.²⁰

Pyongyang's threatening declarations in 1975/76 seem instead to have been motivated primarily by a desire to draw international attention to the Korean question, highlight the stationing of American atomic weapons in the ROK, expose Park Chung Hee's nuclear weapons program and, possibly, draw both superpowers into multilateral talks over Korea. The North Koreans probably expected the Hungarian diplomats to inform the Soviets about the "confidential" statements made by O Song-gwon and Yi Un-gi, as the Hungarians indeed routinely did whenever they gained some valuable information about North Korean policies.

Provocative North Korean actions were often planned well in advance and were carefully coordinated with diplomatic maneuvers, indicating that KWP leaders were more rational actors than it is sometimes assumed. It appears that they consciously used the nuclear issue for diplomatic purposes as early as the mid-1970s, raising or shelving it as it suited them. Although their interest in constructing a nuclear power plant was genuine, in some cases their demands for such a plant may have been primarily aimed at raising international tension.

Kim Il Sung's threatening statements about the coming "liberation" of South Korea, combined with allusions that Pyongyang might receive tactical nuclear weapons from Beijing, were made during his spectacular visit to China. On 25 January 1977 the North Koreans publicly hinted that they might equip themselves with nuclear weapons. **[Document 36]** This declaration was made while Premier Pak Song-ch'ol was engaged in talks with CPSU leaders in Moscow, during which he once again asked the Kremlin for a nuclear power plant. **[Document 35]** His visit to the Soviet Union began on January 24, the day the Chinese government publicly expressed its support for the DPRK.²¹ The timing and diplomatic context of the 1975 and 1977 declarations suggest that North

²⁰ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1969, 60. doboz, 001359/1969; XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1973, 68. doboz, 10, 003613/3/1973; XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1975, 83. doboz, 1, 00722/6/1975; XIX-J-1-j Vietnam, 1975, 137. doboz, 1, 003148/1975.

²¹ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1977, 78. doboz, 81-1, 00334/4/1977.

Korea wanted to create the impression that its policies enjoyed the support of the Communist giants, and possibly sought to involve them in international negotiations over the Korean question. By declaring Pyongyang's interest in a nuclear program, Pak Song-ch'ol may have intended to alarm the Soviets and warn them that it was dangerous to ignore the Korea problem.

It is also worth investigating why North Korean Deputy Premier Kong Chin-t'ae behaved in an "extremely aggressive, definitely crude and insulting" way during the Soviet-DPRK trade negotiations held in January-February 1976. [Document 30] After all, this attitude hardly enhanced his efforts to get a nuclear power plant from the Kremlin. While the KWP leaders had good reason to be dissatisfied with Moscow's reluctance to give them economic assistance at a time when the North Korean economy was in a serious crisis, their behavior was probably motivated by other factors as well. Namely, in the first half of 1976 Pyongyang took several steps aimed at creating a war scare and attracting international attention. As mentioned earlier, in February two North Korean diplomats claimed that the DPRK already possessed atomic weapons. On April 7 two North Korean tanks provocatively entered the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and remained there for four hours – an act unprecedented since the 1953 armistice.²² These actions culminated in the killing of two American officers in the tree-cutting incident at the DMZ on August 18. That event took place precisely at the time the Non-Aligned Movement held its conference in Colombo, when, at a sudden North Korean request made on August 16, the Korean question was placed on the agenda of the United Nations.²³

Thus, Kong Chin-t'ae's demand for a nuclear power plant, which he repeated in June, [Document 32] was most likely yet another psychological maneuver in Pyongyang's war of nerves, aimed at presenting the DPRK as a recklessly aggressive state. Interestingly enough, the South Korean government knew that the DPRK was "having talks about the construction of nuclear reactors" as early as February 1976, [Document 29] though Kong Chin-t'ae's negotiations supposedly took place in strictest confidence (it was only in

²² (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1976, 83. doboz, 4, 003464/1976.

²³ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1976, 81. doboz, 1, 002934/4/1976.

April that the Soviets finally decided to inform the Hungarian embassy about the issue). While Seoul may have obtained this information through its own intelligence operations, it is also possible that it was deliberately leaked by the North Koreans. It is significant that in October, by which time the “tree-cutting” crisis had passed, the construction of a nuclear power plant was already omitted from the list of urgent questions presented by DPRK Minister of Foreign Trade Kae Un-t’ae. [Document 34]

The KWP leaders apparently calculated that if they provoked an international crisis, they might manage to compel both the U.S. and the Communist giants to deal with the Korea problem. They likely concluded that following the failure of the 1972-1973 inter-Korean talks, this was the only possible way to make the Great Powers abandon their indifferent, status quo-oriented attitude toward the Korean question. In the short run, they were not entirely mistaken. They repeatedly succeeded in eliciting some kind of political reaction – possibly the desired one – from the American government. Following the aggressive statements Kim Il Sung made in China, in June 1975 Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger publicly acknowledged the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in South Korea, declaring that Washington was determined to use these weapons “if circumstances were to require” it.²⁴ Pyongyang had frequently highlighted the stationing of American atomic weapons in the ROK during previous Soviet-DPRK talks, but the North Koreans felt that the Kremlin paid insufficient attention to the issue.

In 1977 Kim Il Sung launched another complex diplomatic operation, and once again succeeded in drawing American attention to Korea. On August 1 the DPRK declared a 50-mile military zone in the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan. This step, which blatantly violated international conventions, baffled and worried the Soviets, who could not find a convincing explanation for it.²⁵ Pyongyang’s action seems to have been related to the upcoming talks, held on 23 September 1977, between Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who had recently announced his intention to withdraw American troops from South Korea. Anxious to place the issue of U.S. troop withdrawals on the agenda of the Carter-Gromyko talks, the KWP leaders apparently

²⁴ Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 257.

²⁵ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1977, 79. doboz, 4, 005136/1977.

calculated that their threat, which was more symbolic than real, would attract the attention of the two superpowers and induce them to discuss the Korean problem. If this was indeed their reasoning, they managed to achieve their aim to a certain extent. Carter indeed found it necessary to mention the issue to Gromyko. “Another region that worries us is Korea,” the U.S. president said. “The introduction by North Korea of the 50-mile zone of the sea borders concerns us. We hope that the Soviet Union will be able to persuade the [*sic*] North Korea to exercise the required restraint in order to prevent unnecessary aggravation in this region.”²⁶

Still, Pyongyang’s various attempts to spread disinformation about its military capabilities and intentions eventually proved unsuccessful and counterproductive. First of all, there is no indication that Hungarian diplomats gave credence to the claims made by O Song-gwon and Yi Un-gi. Second, if the DPRK really wanted to prompt the Soviets to discuss the Korean problem, it failed to elicit this reaction from Moscow. On the contrary, the Kremlin became more unwilling than ever to support North Korea in general and to provide it with a nuclear power plant in particular. Thus, two major objectives of North Korean foreign policy came into conflict. As Hungarian diplomat György Kuti learned from his Soviet colleague, “military considerations” played a prominent role in the Moscow’s rejection of Pyongyang’s renewed request for a nuclear power plant. [**Document 30**]

North Korean reluctance to provide the USSR with data about the operation of its research reactor must have also alarmed the Soviets, [**Document 15**] who were accustomed to maintaining extensive control over the nuclear policies of their East European allies.²⁷ In any case, the Soviets were unwilling to provide the DPRK with offensive weapons, and Moscow’s technical restrictions hindered the North Korean manufacturing of conventional arms. Having gradually realized that Pyongyang was much more willing to seek confrontation with Seoul than vice versa, CPSU leaders were determined not to allow Kim Il Sung to provoke a second Korean War. [**Documents 6,**

²⁶ James G. Hershberg, “U.S.-Soviet Relations and the Turn Toward Confrontation, 1977-1980 – New Russian & East German Documents,” *CWIHP Bulletin* 8-9 (Winter 1996/1997): 105.

²⁷ David R. Marples, *Chernobyl and Nuclear Power in the USSR* (Houndmills and London: The Macmillan Press, 1988): 52; Mounfield, *World Nuclear Power*, pp. 136-137.

17, and 21] Forceful and aggressive demands for a nuclear power plant did not merely hinder the DPRK in getting nuclear technology from the Soviet Union, they also made Moscow increasingly disinclined to represent North Korea's interests in diplomatic negotiations. Pyongyang was thus its own worst enemy.

This does not mean, however, that the North Koreans were never capable of showing tactical flexibility. For instance, the KWP leadership, preparing for the aforementioned negotiations between Carter and Gromyko, did their best to persuade the Soviets to prod the U.S. president to fulfill his promise of withdrawing American troops from the ROK. Anxious to secure Soviet diplomatic support, the North Koreans made every effort to please Moscow in the months preceding the Carter-Gromyko talks. Taking advantage of the Sino-Soviet conflict, they pretended that they had disagreements with China, from which the Soviet diplomats readily drew the reassuring (but completely erroneous) conclusion that Pyongyang at last realized the perfidious nature of Chinese foreign policy.²⁸ They also behaved in an unusually cooperative way during the Soviet-DPRK trade negotiations held on September 1-3. While as late as May they had still insisted that the USSR build a nuclear power plant in North Korea, [**Document 38**] now they temporarily shelved this issue, most probably because they knew all too well how much it irritated Moscow. [**Document 40**] In other words, they temporarily subordinated the nuclear issue to the diplomatic aim of achieving the departure of American troops from South Korea. The nuclear program was therefore only one of the DPRK's major objectives, and not necessarily the most important one. Their diplomatic maneuvers were once again at least partly successful, for Gromyko did raise the issue of U.S. troop withdrawals during his talks with Carter.²⁹

Nor should one conclude that the DPRK did not benefit at all from Soviet nuclear policies. Ironically, the post-1966 Soviet training of Korean Peoples Army officers, originally aimed at lessening Chinese influence, resulted in the North Korean military becoming familiar with the practical aspects of nuclear warfare. [**Documents 14 and 16**]

²⁸ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1977, 78. doboz, 82-1, 004490/1977; XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1977, 78. doboz, 82-1, 004490/1/1977.

²⁹ Hershberg, "U.S.-Soviet Relations and the Turn Toward Confrontation, 1977-1980," p. 107.

Similarly, it was due to the support of the European Communist countries that the DPRK was admitted to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 1974. [**Document 33**] China was not a member of the IAEA, and thus could not assist the North Koreans in this respect. Moscow certainly agreed with Pyongyang that South Korea should be prevented from developing nuclear weapons. This common interest proved stronger than the friction between the two states. For instance, in mid-1978 there were various signs of tension in Soviet-DPRK relations,³⁰ but in August the Soviet IAEA delegation nonetheless expressed its readiness to cooperate with the North Korean representatives against South Korea. [**Documents 27 and 41**]

The North Korean IAEA delegation, for its part, may have refrained from behaving in as openly obstructionist way vis-à-vis the Soviets and their satellites as the Romanian representatives did. “The socialist countries regularly invite the Romanians to the coordinating meetings,” Zoltán Fodor, the Hungarian ambassador in Vienna, reported in September 1978. “They always participate in the meetings, but they oppose the standpoint and proposals of the socialist countries on practically every question.”³¹ While the DPRK maintained close contacts with Romania throughout the 1970s, and the two countries cooperated with each other in the IAEA as well, in these years North Korea apparently found it expedient to keep a low profile in this important international organization. Still, the documents reveal that Soviet-DPRK relations in the IAEA were less than harmonious, and Pyongyang must have been dissatisfied with the Kremlin's consistent support for the NPT. [**Documents 21, 27, 32, and 41**]

North Korea was by no means isolated in its opposition to the NPT. At IAEA meetings held in the 1970s, both superpowers were frequently criticized by Third World countries interested in developing nuclear weapons.³² The list of states the Soviets regarded as potential nuclear “troublemakers” (see **Documents 27 and 41**) was almost identical to the corresponding list prepared by the U.S. State Department. As Mounfield notes, “The USA in particular became disturbed by India’s demonstration of a nuclear

³⁰ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1978, 80. doboz, 81-1, 001703/19/1978.

³¹ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j ENSZ, 1978, 158. doboz, V-73, 004909/1/1978.

³² (MOL) XIX-J-1-j ENSZ, 1978, 158. doboz, V-73, 004909/2/1978.

explosive in 1974, by negotiations between the FRG and Brazil for the sale of enrichment and reprocessing technologies which the US government had forbidden its own industry to export, and by negotiations by France with Pakistan and [South] Korea for the sale of similar technologies.”³³ That is, the two superpowers sought to prevent any new states, including their own allies, from joining the “nuclear club.” Moscow and Washington tacitly agreed with each other that neither the DPRK nor the ROK should be allowed to develop nuclear weapons.

In contrast, the North Koreans drew a distinction between the nuclear programs of friendly and hostile states. On the one hand, they did their best to block Seoul’s nuclear aspirations. On the other hand, they must have been emboldened by the defiant stand of countries such as Pakistan and Egypt, which maintained close relations with the DPRK. China, Pyongyang’s principal ally in the 1970s, consistently rejected the NPT. Yugoslavia, another key state in post-1971 North Korean foreign policy, signed the treaty, but nonetheless worked on a secret military nuclear program.³⁴ While it is not known whether the North Koreans were aware of Tito’s nuclear weapons project, this possibility cannot be excluded. The DPRK received military assistance from Yugoslavia, and later asked Belgrade for nuclear technology. [**Documents 26 and 43**]

As Seoul increasingly overtook Pyongyang in economic development and in the construction of nuclear power plants, [**Document 43 and 44**] KWP leaders found it necessary to moderate their language when asking the Soviets for a nuclear power plant. They apparently had learned that impatient and aggressive demands would not get them very far. Hungarian diplomatic reports noted again and again that the North Koreans “behaved in a correct way, there were no demonstrative gestures” (March 1981), they were “willing to meet all financial expenses of the 37 post-graduate students” to be sent to Czechoslovakia (April 1981), and they “avoided political stock phrases and concentrated on those issues that were actually realizable” (May 1988). [**Documents 45, 46 and 53**] Their increasingly cooperative behavior suggests that in the 1980s, as

³³ Mounfield, *World Nuclear Power*, p. 47.

³⁴ William C. Potter, Djuro Miljanic, and Ivo Slaus, “Tito’s Nuclear Legacy,” *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* 56, No. 2 (March-April 2000): 63-70.

opposed to 1976-1977, they no longer raised the nuclear issue for the purpose of creating a war scare (an aim that did not necessitate the fulfillment of their demand), but were in fact strongly interested in getting a positive reply from the Kremlin.

However, a mere change in Pyongyang's tune would not have been enough to "soften the hearts" of the Soviet leaders. In 1981 the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany still rejected the DPRK's nuclear requests, no matter how cooperatively the North Koreans behaved during the talks. What eventually induced the Kremlin to adopt a more helpful attitude toward Kim Il Sung's nuclear plans was the spectacular improvement in Soviet-DPRK relations in 1984. Facing increasing diplomatic isolation and American pressure, Moscow felt it advisable to reach reconciliation with Pyongyang, even if this required the fulfillment of certain "problematic" North Korean requests. A clear sign of growing Soviet generosity was that while in 1981 the DPRK had in vain asked the USSR for MiG-25 fighter planes,³⁵ now Moscow began to supply the KPA with late-model jet aircraft.

The importance of diplomatic factors was also evident in the field of nuclear cooperation. It is generally believed that the Soviet Union reached an agreement with the DPRK on the construction of a nuclear power plant on 25 December 1985, i.e., only after North Korea joined the NPT on December 12.³⁶ Actually, the Kremlin, anxious to please Kim Il Sung,³⁷ seems to have given its consent to the project, formally or informally, much earlier. Describing the talks that a Soviet planning deputation had in Pyongyang on 4-12 February 1985, a Hungarian diplomatic report stated that "on the basis of a previous unspecified agreement, they practically reached a preliminary agreement on the terms of planning, construction, operation, and payment as well as on legal conditions."

³⁵ (MOL) XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1981, 86. doboz, 81-426, 003214/1981.

³⁶ Alexander Zhebin, "A Political History of Soviet-North Korean Nuclear Cooperation," pp. 32-33.

³⁷ Another possible reason for this change in Moscow's attitude was that North Korea was becoming increasingly capable of building nuclear facilities [Document 44]. The Soviets may have concluded that Pyongyang was determined to go ahead with its nuclear project anyway, and if they got involved in it, they would have more leverage over North Korea than if they continued to reject the DPRK's nuclear requests. Romania, having managed to get Canadian assistance, began to construct a nuclear power plant at Cernavoda in 1980, whereupon in 1982 Moscow signed a contract with Bucharest to build the Moldova nuclear power plant.

[Document 51] In other words, North Korea's signing the NPT was not a precondition of a positive change in Moscow's attitude.

Nevertheless, the Soviets did pressure the KWP leadership to sign the NPT. First of all, they could not afford the sharp international criticism they would have had to face if they gave advanced nuclear technology to a state that refused to join the NPT and repeatedly expressed its desire to develop nuclear weapons. Second, they could not maintain effective political control over Pyongyang's actions, and they knew all too well that any attempt to achieve such control was likely to result in deterioration in their relations.³⁸ For this reason, the Soviets were interested in creating a situation in which Kim Il Sung's hands were tied by as many international agreements as possible.

[Documents 49 and 50]

In the final analysis, the North Korean nuclear program cannot be understood in a vacuum; it must be seen in the context of Cold War competition. Engaged in rivalry both with its South Korean opponent and with its nominal East European allies, the DPRK was determined not to lag behind in such an important sphere as nuclear technology, while at the same time it rejected any attempt to control its nuclear program. This combination was bound to create tension between Pyongyang and Moscow. The stubborn independence of the KWP leaders conflicted with the Kremlin's equally adamant insistence on dominating the political and economic life of its Communist allies. Since Soviet political control over North Korean actions had drastically declined since 1960, Moscow felt compelled to resort to technological obstruction, which, of course, reinforced North Korean resentment.

In fact, the question of political control was one of the principal differences between the North and South Korean nuclear projects. Park Chung Hee, much less eager to initiate a conflict with the North than vice versa, launched his nuclear weapons program mainly because he feared that the ROK might lose U.S. military protection. As Victor D. Cha points out, "Washington's ambivalent response to the three North Korean provocations in

³⁸ In contrast, post-1970 Cuba was a considerably more loyal and controllable ally than North Korea, and thus the Soviet leaders probably thought that constructing a nuclear power plant in Cuba was not particularly risky, regardless of whether Havana signed the NPT.

1968 and 1969 seriously undermined South Korean confidence in American defense commitments.”³⁹ It was thus hardly a coincidence that Park’s efforts to develop nuclear weapons began in late 1969.⁴⁰ Instead of attempting to loosen his ties to the U.S., his foremost aim was to reinforce them. In other words, the South Korean government ultimately preferred American security guarantees to the creation of a nuclear weapons capability. Nor was the ROK in the position of finding a sufficiently powerful alternative ally or becoming self-reliant. While Pyongyang could turn to Beijing if it had conflicts with Moscow (or vice versa), Seoul remained vulnerable to U.S. pressure. As a consequence, South Korea eventually gave up its nuclear aspirations in exchange for continued American military assistance.

In the post-Stalin era the USSR could not dominate the DPRK to a comparable extent, nor did Pyongyang want to accept Soviet control over its policies. While Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee doggedly fought against the withdrawal of U.S. troops from South Korea,⁴¹ Kim Il Sung was, in all probability, happy to see Soviet and Chinese soldiers depart by the late 1950s. In his eyes, nuclear capability was not merely a means of electrical power generation and a diplomatic trump card, but was also a symbol and guarantee of economic, political, and military self-reliance. However, his increasing independence from the Soviet Union proved quite counterproductive. Although Pyongyang’s various provocative actions and threatening statements were as much tools of a carefully calculated and coordinated diplomacy as manifestations of a xenophobic nationalism, CPSU leaders, who could rarely read Kim’s intentions, were unwilling to take risks. Thus, unable to restrain the North Korean dictator, they denied him the kind of advanced nuclear technology that South Korea easily obtained from American corporations. While it is understandable that the DPRK was reluctant to accept the kind of extensive Soviet control over its nuclear program that the East European countries had to endure, the decades-long squabble between Kim Il Sung and the Kremlin eventually benefited Seoul rather than Pyongyang. By the time Soviet leadership finally decided to

³⁹ Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism*, p. 64.

⁴⁰ Siler, “U.S. Nuclear Nonproliferation Policy in the Northeast Asian Region during the Cold War,” pp. 41-79.

⁴¹ Cumings, *Korea’s Place in the Sun*, 445-446.

assist the construction of a nuclear power plant in North Korea, the Cold War was nearly at an end.

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II. Nuclear Cooperation between the Soviet Union and North Korea, 1962-63: Evidence from Russian Archives by Sergey Radchenko

North Korea's nuclear program has been the focus of much scholarly inquiry, but historical accounts of the regime's nuclear exploits are few in number and thin in evidence. The roles the Soviet Union and China played in developing Pyongyang's nuclear capability have been acknowledged in general terms. References to a Soviet nuclear reactor supplied to North Korea in the early 1960's appear in book by Erik Cornell, Bruce Cumings and Bradley K. Martin.⁴² Cheon Seongwhun and Michael J. Mazarr mention a series of exchange agreements between Pyongyang, Moscow and Beijing in the 1950s, providing for training of North Korean nuclear specialists.⁴³ Ted Galen Carpenter points to China's participation in the uranium mining projects in North Korea, while Don Oberdorfer cites on undisclosed sources that claim that North Korea asked for China's assistance in the building of an atomic bomb in the mid-1960s.⁴⁴ James Clay Moltz and Alexander Y. Mansourov offer important details on Soviet participation in the construction of a nuclear research facility at Yongbyon in the 1960's and on the training of North Korean experts at the Soviet research centre in Dubna.⁴⁵

But while these accounts provide many technical details of the Soviet Union's involvement in North Korea's nuclear program, they say little about the underlying political question. Why did Moscow share nuclear know-how of potential military application with an ally it considered trouble-prone and untrustworthy? Soviet

⁴² Erik Cornell, *North Korea Under Communism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002): 140; Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: a Modern History* (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997): 466; Bradley K. Martin, *Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader : North Korea and the Kim Dynasty* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004): 441.

⁴³ Michael J. Mazarr, *North Korea and the Bomb: A Case Study in Nonproliferation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997): 25; Cheon Seongwhun, "North Korea's Nuclear Issue" in Kim Kyoung-Soo et al., *North Korea's Weapons Of Mass Destruction: Problems And Prospects* (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym International Corp., 2004): 31-32.

⁴⁴ Ted Galen Carpenter, Doug Bandow, *The Korean Conundrum: America's Troubled Relations with North and South Korea* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 39; Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, Revised and Updated Edition (New York: Basic Books, 2001): 252-253.

⁴⁵ See, in particular, articles by Georgiy Kaurov, "A Technical History of Soviet-North Korean Nuclear Relations" and Valery Denisov, "Nuclear Institutions and Organizations in North Korea" in James Clay Moltz and Alexandre Y. Mansourov (eds.), *The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia* (New York & London: Routledge, 2000): 15-26.

participation in nuclear research in North Korea actually intensified as political relations between Moscow and Pyongyang soured following the Sino-Soviet split, while the Chinese ‘threat’ redefined Soviet foreign policy priorities in Northeast Asia. Moscow’s mistrust of North Korea’s intentions by the early 1960s and, its consequent reservations about assisting Pyongyang’s nuclear program, are revealed in the following documents obtained from the Russian Foreign Ministry Archive. These records of Soviet Ambassador Vasily Moskovsky’s meetings with North Korean officials, Soviet nuclear scientists and fellow diplomats in Pyongyang 1962-1963, at the time of a dramatic worsening of USSR/DPRK political relations, provide an intimate glimpse into the troubled nuclear cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang.

These documents also reflect the extent of Soviet fear of China in the early 1960s and highlight Moscow’s concerns lest Soviet-North Korean nuclear cooperation benefit Beijing to the detriment of Soviet interests. China had also been an early recipient of Soviet nuclear assistance. Like North Korea, it was a founding member of the Dubna Institute. Soviet geologists had arrived in China as early as 1945 to search for uranium. In 1958 the Soviets built the first experimental nuclear reactor near Beijing, which was a much more powerful installation than the one built in North Korea in the early 1960s. Moscow had routinely provided China with dual-use nuclear technology and even had promised to supply a prototype nuclear bomb in 1957, though Khrushchev later reneged on that promise because of concern that nuclear arms might help Mao translate some of his militant rhetoric into provocative actions that might drag the Soviet Union into a war.⁴⁶ By the early 1960s, as Sino-Soviet relations dramatically deteriorated, China’s potential nuclear weapons capability became a troubling prospect for Moscow. Khrushchev’s refusal to supply a sample A-bomb in 1959 was hardly effective in undermining Beijing’s nuclear weapons program, which was well underway by that time. Nevertheless, the Soviet leadership continued its efforts to prevent China from obtaining nuclear materials or know-how from the Soviet Union or its allies, directly or indirectly.

In this context North Korea presented a particular dilemma. By late 1962 Soviet-North Korean relations soured as Pyongyang joined China in openly criticizing Soviet

⁴⁶ Odd Arne Westad (ed.), *Brothers in Arms: the Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1945-1963* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998): 16-17, 157-159, 205-206.

“revisionism.” The Soviets could not know the extent of North Korea’s military cooperation with China, but it clearly intensified in 1962-63.⁴⁷ Chinese-North Korean nuclear cooperation in the military sphere was one disturbing possibility. The Chinese could perhaps even benefit from North Korea’s uranium deposits, which had been identified with the help [Documents 1-3] of Soviet geological teams first sent to North Korea in November/December 1945 to search for uranium, which Moscow badly needed for the Soviet A-bomb project.⁴⁸ A subsequent report to Stalin from the head of the Soviet atomic project, Igor Kurchatov, lamented the results of the expedition: North Korean ore turned out to be “extremely poor” in its concentration of uranium. The results of additional teams sent to North Korea in the late 1940s were also disappointing.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, by the 1960s enough uranium had been identified in North Korea to alarm the Soviets about its potential use by the Chinese.

Whether or not Beijing actually used DPRK uranium deposits is not now known. In any case, it had its own uranium deposits, also uncovered by Soviet specialists in the 1950s. But the fact that the Soviets were worried about this possibility shows the extent of Moscow’s apprehensiveness about China’s nuclear intentions. Soviet specialists working on uranium mining projects in North Korea told Ambassador Moskovsky in September 1963 that North Koreans were determined to expand the mining of uranium despite the expenses involved; the specialists speculated that uranium ore would then be “supplied to China, since in order to satisfy one’s own internal needs for one’s own atomic reactor, one needs only a very minor amount of the uranium ore.” Moskovsky concluded that “by sending specialists to the DPRK we are helping China, and at the time of the current struggle against the Chinese splitters, one should not do this” [Document 10].

Moskovsky probably exaggerated the likelihood that the North Koreans would collect information for the Chinese nuclear program from the Soviet experts. In any case, pulling these experts out of North Korea would only strain Moscow’s relations with Pyongyang and cause Kim Il Sung to rely even more on China. Khrushchev had already

⁴⁷ Sergey Radchenko, “The Soviet Union and the North Korean seizure of the USS *Pueblo*, Evidence from Russian Archives,” Working Paper #46. Cold War International History Project (April 2005).

⁴⁸ L.D. Ryabev, et al. (eds), *Atomnyi Proekt SSSR: Dokumenty i Materialy*, Vol. 2, Book 2, 394.

⁴⁹ L.D. Ryabev, et al. (eds), *Atomnyi Proekt SSSR: Dokumenty i Materialy*, Vol. 2, Book 1 (Moscow: Nauka-Fizmatlit, VNIIEF, 1999): 88-89, 173-176, 269-277.

come to regret ordering the Soviet experts out of China in 1960. Consequently, Soviet specialists in North Korea were not withdrawn. They were instructed, however, not to tell the North Korean “comrades” more than they had to know [Document 10]. Meanwhile the North Koreans approached other socialist ambassadors with inquiries as to where they could “obtain any kind of information about nuclear weapons and atomic industry.” In August 1963 the East German Ambassador in Pyongyang shared his thoughts with Moskovsky to the effect that these approaches were inspired by the Chinese [Document 9]. Predictably, at that stage the Soviets were more concerned about China’s nuclear ambitions than about the prospect of North Korea obtaining an A-bomb, tending to regard North Korea’s interest in having a nuclear capability as a conspiracy aimed at helping China develop the bomb.

Nonetheless, as these documents reveal, Kim Il Sung was determined to have his own A-bomb. North Korea did not have the capability in the 1960s to use nuclear energy for military purposes, but the intention to do so was certainly there. One issue that worried Moscow was Pyongyang’s staunch opposition to the non-proliferation treaty championed by Khrushchev in 1962. Soviet proposals on non-proliferation that Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko presented to US Secretary of State Dean Rusk on 23 August 1962 contained three points: (1) prohibiting nuclear powers from transferring nuclear weapons or know-how to non-nuclear states; (2) prohibiting non-nuclear states from receiving such weapons or seeking information about their production and (3) prohibiting transfer of nuclear weapons through alliances.⁵⁰ When Moskovsky shared news of this proposal with DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Song Ch’ol on the 24 of August, the North Korean official was distinctly unenthusiastic. Pak was less than enthused. “Who can impose such a treaty on countries which do not have nuclear weapons, but which are perhaps successfully working in this direction?” he asked Moskovsky, referring to China and, possibly to his own country’s tentative plans. Citing US nuclear presence in Asia, Pak Song Ch’ol explained that “their [Washington’s] possession of nuclear weapons, and the lack thereof in our hands, objectively helps them [...] to eternalize their rule. They

⁵⁰ “Editorial Note,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-63*, Vol. V (Soviet Union), Document 225, Online: http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_v/220_229.html, Date accessed: 20 March 2005; Douglas Selvage, “The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation, 1963-1965,” Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 32 (April 2001): 34.

have a large stockpile [of such weapons], and we are to be forbidden even to think about the manufacture of nuclear weapons? I think that in such case the advantage will be on the Americans' side" **[Document 4]**.

Pak's use of the word "we" clearly referred to North Korea, not just to China. The Soviets thus knew that their militant comrades would make the bomb if they could. An independent nuclear weapons capability would help secure North Korea's much-desired self-reliance in the political and military realms. Independence from a Soviet or Chinese "umbrella" would provide greater flexibility in foreign policy.⁵¹ Practical considerations aside, questions of national prestige and Kim Il Sung's personal grandeur were clearly important. The North Koreans were prepared to spend the money it took to build the bomb, despite efforts on the part of the Soviets, and even reportedly the Chinese, to dissuade them from implementing an expensive nuclear program.⁵² A Soviet specialist cautioned the North Koreans that the "economy of the DPRK will not cope with the creation of nuclear weapons," but was assured by the Koreans that "it will cost much less in the DPRK than in other countries. If we tell our workers [...] that we are taking up such a task, they will agree to work free of charge for several years" **[Document 11]**. On another occasion, a North Korean military official suggested in a conversation with the Czechoslovak Ambassador that the Soviets should simply transfer ready-made missiles to North Korea and China – in order to make the regional situation "better and quieter" **[Document 7]**.

Nuclear ambitions expressed in one form or another by various North Korean experts and officials were in stark contrast to the proclaimed state policy of strictly peaceful application of nuclear research. But were these statements simply expressions of individual opinions or reflections of the priorities of the North Korean leadership? It was difficult to say, from the Soviet point of view. Kim Il Sung, for instance, advised his 'fraternal allies' in September 1962 that "all of us have to arm ourselves with patience" (not with nuclear arms), that "we shall accumulate economic wealth, and win time."

⁵¹ Valery Denisov argues that Kim Il Sung's decision to obtain nuclear weapons in the 1970s was motivated in part by his growing suspicion of the intentions of China and the Soviet Union. See Valery Denisov, "Nuclear Institutions and Organizations in North Korea" in James Clay Moltz and Alexandre Y. Mansourov (eds.), *The North Korean Nuclear Program: Security, Strategy, and New Perspectives from Russia*, p. 23.

⁵² Don Oberdorfer writes that China refused to aid North Korea's nuclear weapons program on the grounds that doing so would be too expensive. Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, 253.

[Document 5]⁵³ But Kim's apparent peace-loving attitude did not square with statements by other senior officials. The German ambassador told Moskovsky about an interesting encounter with candidate member of the North Korean Politburo Yi Chu-yon who, in Kim Il Sung's absence, had "expressed the opinion that one cannot do without a war, that now, when the USSR has such powerful means of waging a war as missiles of all ranges, perhaps it would be better not to wait, but to strike the imperialists. In the end, I didn't understand who he [Yi] is and why he had this particular point of view. He is either a person of Chinese orientation or they [the North Korean leaders] had distributed roles among themselves in order to confuse us." **[Document 5]**⁵⁴ Whether Kim Il Sung was cautious and pragmatic or just pretended to be, the Soviet leaders were not inclined to trust him. Moskovsky's diaries show alarm over both the unlikely prospect of Pyongyang's nuclear capability, and North Korea's *intention* to acquire that capability.

At the same time, by assisting the DPRK's peaceful nuclear program, Moscow supplied the North Koreans with information that potentially could be used to build nuclear weapons. Why did the Soviet leadership approve of nuclear cooperation with Pyongyang, despite the possibility that such cooperation could in the long run make North Korea a nuclear power or benefit China's nuclear program? Ideological issues were certainly in the forefront. In the 1950s nuclear power represented, in part, the advantages of socialism. Khrushchev sought to bolster the prestige of the socialist camp by sharing the advantages of nuclear energy with Soviet allies. Moreover, as Moscow's relations with China began to deteriorate, North Korea's strategic importance for the Soviet Union increased. Nuclear cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang was one carrot the Chinese could not match, and thus this cooperation continued despite the worsening of Soviet-North Korean relations from 1962-64. Ideological and strategic considerations thus outweighed the danger of inadvertently helping North Korea, or perhaps China,

⁵³ On Kim Il Sung's attitude towards the problem of Korean reunification in the late 1950s-early 1960s, see Balazs Szalontai, "You Have No Political Line of Your Own, Kim Il Sung and the Soviets, 1953-1964," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 14/15 (Winter 2003-Spring 2004): 95-99.

⁵⁴ DPRK Deputy Premier Yi Chu-yon made particularly militant statements in late 1962, especially while attending East European communist party congresses, where he not only called for a decisive confrontation with the 'imperialists' but also declared that North Korea would ally with China in the Sino-Soviet split. Yi most likely represented Kim Il Sung's views. See Bernd Schaefer, "Weathering the Sino-Soviet Conflict: the GDR and North Korea, 1949-1989," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, Issue 14/15 (Winter 2003-Spring 2004): 30.

obtain nuclear arms. Yet these documents show that the Soviets were acutely aware of this danger.

About the Author:

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III. Document Appendix

Document No. 1

Protocol No. 18 of a meeting of the Special Committee under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, 2 April 1946

[Source: APRF, Fond 93, delo 2/46, listy 62-65. Reprinted in L.D. Ryabev, Atomnyi Proekt SSSR: dokumenty i materialy, vol. 2, book 1 (Moscow-Sarov: Nauka Fizmatlit-VNIIEF, 1999), pp. 88-89. Translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

Moscow, Kremlin

2 April 1946
Top secret
Special dossier

Members of the Special Committee: Coms. Beria L.P., Malenkov G.M., Voznesenskii N.A., Vannikov B.L., Zavenyagin A.P., Kurchatov I.V., Makhnev V.A., Pervukhin M.G.

[...]

V. On sending a geological prospecting party to North Korea

Turn over to comrade Mikoyan for his resolution the question of sending to North Korea a geological prospecting party from the Ministry of Non-ferrous Metallurgy and the Geological Committee under the Council of Ministers of the USSR for prospecting beryllium.

[...]

Document No. 2

Protocol No. 36 of a meeting of the Special Committee under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, 25 April 1947

[Source: APRF, Fond 93, delo 2/47, listy 43-46. Reprinted in L.D. Ryabev, Atomnyi Proekt SSSR: dokumenty i materialy, vol. 2, book 1 (Moscow-Sarov: Nauka Fizmatlit-VNIIEF, 1999), pp. 173-176. Translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

Moscow, Kremlin

25 April 1947
Top secret
Special dossier

Members of the Special Committee: Coms. Beria, Malenkov, Voznesenskii, Zavenyagin, Kurchatov, Makhnev, Pervukhin.

[...]

VIII. On organizing geological prospecting work for rare elements in North Korea and Xinjiang

Accept draft Resolution on this question proposed by cc. Zavenyagin, Malik, Migunov and Malyshev with the following modifications:

- a) Geological prospecting party is to be sent from the Ministry of Geology, and to entrust cc. Zavenyagin and Malyshev to include as members of the party specialists for organizing simultaneous extraction of A-9 [uranium-SR] and B-9 [thorium-SR].
- b) To exclude from the draft proposals concerning organization of prospecting work in Xinjiang, and to entrust cc. Zavenyagin and Lomako to look into this question separately and to offer the Special Committee their suggestions.

Submit to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Union of SSR comrade Stalin I.V. the draft Resolution “on conducting geological prospecting work for rare elements in North Korea”.

Chairman of the Special Committee under the Council of Ministers of the USSR L. Beria

Document No. 3

Protocol No. 61 of a meeting of the Special Committee under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, 12 April 1948

[Source: APRF, Fond 93, delo 2/48, listy 89-100. Reprinted in L.D. Ryabev, Atomnyi Proekt SSSR: dokumenty i materialy, vol. 2, book 1 (Moscow-Sarov: Nauka Fizmatlit-VNIIEF, 1999), pp. 269-277. Translated by Sergey Radchenko.]

Moscow, Kremlin

12 April 1948
Top secret
Special dossier

Members of the Special Committee: Coms. Beria, Malenkov, Voznesenskii, Zavenyagin, Makhnev.

[...]

IX. On prospecting for A-9 [uranium-SR] in North Korea

(cc. Beria, Voznesenskii, Zavenyagin, Malyshev, Lomako, Borisov)

Postpone the discussion of this question, entrust cc. Malyshev, Lomako and Zavenyagin to meticulously discuss once again the expediency of conducting in North Korea

prospecting work for A-9 and to submit their proposals for discussion by the S[pecial] C[ommittee] in two weeks' time.

[...]

Chairman of the Special Committee under the Council of Ministers of the USSR L. Beria

Document No. 4

Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Song Ch'ol

24 August 1962

[Source: AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 18, papka 93, delo 5, listy 22-23. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Sergey Radchenko]

In accordance with instructions, [I] visited Minister of Foreign Affairs comrade Pak Song Ch'ol and informed him about the question of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Pak Song Ch'ol thanked [me] for the information and expressed the following considerations:

First, the control question has been raised again. One cannot rule out the possibility that the USA has already sold the secrets of the manufacture of nuclear weapons to the F[ederal] R[epublic] of G[ermany], and then showed an 'initiative' by calling for a treaty by which the Soviet Union would not be able to do the same thing with regard to other socialist countries.

Second, who can impose such a treaty on countries that do not have nuclear weapons, but are perhaps successfully working in that direction? Recently, said Pak Song Ch'ol, I think this spring, I read a small report by the A[ssociated] P[ress] that expressed a supposition to the effect that the Chinese comrades, for instance, are successfully working in this direction. I do not know from which sources this information originated, but I think – why, indeed, wouldn't the Chinese comrades work on this?

The Americans hold on to Taiwan, to South Korea and South Vietnam, blackmail the people with their nuclear weapons, and, with their help, rule on these continents and do not intend to leave. Their possession of nuclear weapons, and the lack thereof in our hands, objectively helps them, therefore, to eternalize their rule. They have a large stockpile, and we are to be forbidden even to think about the manufacture of nuclear weapons? I think that in such case the advantage will be on the Americans' side.

Document No. 5
Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and
German Ambassador Schneidewind
20 September 1962

[Source: AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 18, papka 93, delo 5, listy 65-66. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Sergey Radchenko]

[I] visited Ambassador of the GDR Comrade Schneidewind. I was interested in the results of the visit of the party-government delegation of the GDR to the DPRK (11-19 September of this year). [...]

[According to Schneidewind] the delegation was received by comrade Kim Il Sung on 17 September. [...] As the Ambassador explained, comrade Kim Il Sung, having characterized the international situation as troublesome and deteriorating, drew the conclusion that all of us have to arm ourselves with patience so as not to let the imperialists provoke a war in Germany, because of Berlin, or in the Far East, because of South Korea or Taiwan. [...]

Competition with the West in creating material wealth is not an easy task and demands labour and time. We know, said Kim Il Sung, that American forces will not leave the South any time soon, and one must have patience and time [to tolerate] that. We have those, we shall accumulate economic wealth, and win time. We do not need a war.

[...] The comrades who accompanied us – Yi Chu-yon [and others] – on the road, during rest and at receptions, the ambassador said, expressed the opinion that one cannot do without a war, that now, when the USSR has such powerful means of waging war as missiles of all ranges, perhaps it would be better not to wait, but to strike the imperialists. Other Korean comrades who accompanied us also insistently advocated a military resolution of all contradictions between capitalism and socialism. [...]

I thought, Schneidewind said, how does comrade Yi Chu-yon, candidate member of the Politburo, feel during this conversation, when he insisted on the opposite, portraying the military way as the quickest way to reach our common goal. I looked at him, but he was listening to his leader without any expression. In the end, I didn't understand who he was and why he had this particular point of view. He is either a person of Chinese orientation or they had distributed roles among themselves in order to confuse us.

Document No. 6
Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
15 February 1963

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 6. doboz, 5/d, 0011/RT/1963. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

The December session of the KWP [Korean Workers Party] Central Committee passed a resolution to reinforce the defense of the country. According to the resolution, a strong defense system must be established in the whole country, the population must be armed, and the country must be kept in a state of mobilization.

From what I hear, large-scale work is going on throughout the country; not only entrenchments but also air-raid shelters for the population are being built in the mountains. As the Soviet Ambassador informed me, Kim Il Sung explained to him in a conversation that the geographical conditions of the country (mountainous terrain) give a certain advantage to them in case of an atomic war, for the mountains ward off the explosions to a substantial extent, and a lot of such bombs would be needed to wreak large-scale destruction in the country. The construction of these air-raid shelters is presumably related to this theory.

The Czechoslovak ambassador informed me that the Koreans propagated a theory that cited the South Vietnamese events as an example. In that country, there is essentially a war against the Diem government and the American imperialist troops, and, as is well known, the partisan units have succeeded in winning over more and more territory from the influence of the Diem puppet government. In spite of all this, the Americans make no attempt to use atomic bombs. Does anything support the assumption that the Americans would act otherwise in case of a South Korean war, then? It is obvious that there is nothing to support such an assumption.

Czechoslovak Ambassador Comrade Moravec also told me that at the dinner party held by Deputy Foreign Minister Kim T'ae-hui [...], Major General Ch'ang Chong-hwan, the Korean representative on the Panmunjom Armistice Commission, approached him after dinner and put the following question to him: "What would you do if some day the enemy took one of the two rooms of your flat?" Comrade Moravec replied, "Whatever happens, I would resort to methods that did not run the risk of destroying the whole building or the whole city [...]." Thereupon [Major] General Ch'ang threw a cigarette-box he had in his hand on the table, and left him standing. [...]

I had a conversation with Soviet Ambassador Comrade Moskovsky about these issues. He told me the following: Recently he paid a visit to CC Vice-Chairman Pak Kum-ch'ol, to whom he forwarded a telegram from the competent Soviet authorities that invited several persons for a vacation in the Soviet Union. During his visit he asked Pak Kum-ch'ol what his opinion was of the fact [...] that Park Chung Hee and the South Korean military leaders recently had a talk with Meloy, the commander of the "UN troops," about the defense of South Korea. In the view of the CC Vice-Chairman, for the time being no adventurist military preparations were to be expected because of the following two reasons: 1) The transfer of power to civilian authorities was going on, that is, they were putting other clothes on the Fascist dictatorship, and they were busy with that. 2) The South Korean economic situation was difficult, and it was inconceivable

under the circumstances that they would make serious preparations to pursue adventurist aims.

The CC Vice-Chairman also expounded their viewpoint concerning South Korea. After Syngman Rhee had been driven away, when Chang Myon was in power, but even as late as the beginning of last year, their view on the South Korean situation was that a successful opposition to the Fascist dictatorship, led by the students and the intelligentsia, was possible. By now it has become obvious that there is no chance of it, and Park Chung Hee has even succeeded in improving the country's economic situation to a certain extent. In these circumstances one cannot negotiate with the Fascist dictatorship on peaceful unification, and the process of the country's unification drags on. [...]

With regard to the resolution of the CC, Comrade Moskovsky also thinks that arming the population and keeping it in a state of mobilization is a rather unusual measure in peacetime. The economic situation of both North Korea and China is quite difficult, they have a lot of problems. Under the circumstances a military action is hardly to be expected from them. Or on the contrary? "Would their economic difficulties possibly plunge them into some adventure?" Comrade Moskovsky asked. It is not easy to say yes or no to such questions. The first sentence of the resolution of the December plenum begins as follows: The development of the international situation is favorable to the Korean revolution. However, the remaining part of the resolution tries to refute that, while Pak Kum-ch'ol said they were not threatened by any southern adventurist provocation. If they look upon the situation in that light, [...] why are these unusual defense measures needed?

[...]

József Kovács
(ambassador)

Document No. 7

Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and Czechoslovak Ambassador Moravec 15 April 1963

[Source: AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 19, papka 97, delo 4, list 140. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Sergey Radchenko]

[I] received the Czechoslovak Ambassador Comrade Moravec at his request. [...] The Czechoslovak Ambassador told me in the course of the conversation that he had recently returned from Panmunjom. General Chang was not in Panmunjom, and he was received by a Korean colonel filling in for General Chang, together with General Hill. [...] Comrade Moravec told the colonel that the Soviet Union does not ask small countries to provide any aid in the production of expensive nuclear weapons, and that the Soviet people still [...] firmly protect the interest of the socialist countries.

The colonel replied that he knows that the Soviet Union has powerful missiles, that probably these missiles are also stationed in the Far East, but it would be better and quieter if the Soviet Union gave such missiles to the DPRK and to the Chinese.

Document No. 8
Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
27 May 1963

[Source: XIX-J-1-k Korea, 5. doboz, 5/f, 1/25/17-1/1963. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

On 23 May [...] we visited the museum in Pyongyang that was built to commemorate the 1950-53 Korean War. [...] an interesting conversation occurred between me [István Garajszki] and the political officer who accompanied us. The latter declared that not even a hydrogen bomb could do damage to such fortifications that had been hollowed into rocks. Thereupon I remarked that the deeper caverns could indeed save those who stayed there in the moment of the explosion, but on the surface everything would be destroyed, and thereafter for a long time people could not leave the caverns because of the radioactive pollution. The officer replied that the people staying in the caverns would be provided with everything that they needed, and the Americans could not devastate the entire country anyway. Therefore „on the order of Comrade Kim Il Sung, we built a network of caverns of this type in the entire country.” When I remarked that two or three hydrogen bombs would be sufficient to destroy an area the size of the DPRK, the officer became embarrassed, and declared “*Comrade Kim Il Sung told us that we won the first war by means of our rock-caverns, and we would also win the second one with their help!*” [emphasis in the original] Understandably, I dropped the subject after that. [...]

Károly Fendler
 deputy ambassador

Document No. 9
Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and
the German Ambassador
26 August 1963

[Source: AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 19, papka 97, delo 5, list 93. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Sergey Radchenko]

[I] received the GDR Ambassador at his request. [The ambassador] said that the Koreans, apparently on Chinese instructions, are asking whether they could obtain any kind of information about nuclear weapons and the atomic industry from German universities and research institutes. [...]

Document No. 10
Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and
Soviet specialists in North Korea
27 September 1963

[Source: AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 19, papka 97, delo 5, listy 161-162. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Sergey Radchenko]

[I] invited Soviet specialists comrades Konstantinov V.M. and Syromyatnikov B.N., who study uranium ore in the DPRK, for a talk at the Embassy. [...]

The Soviet specialists said that the Korean side insistently tries to obtain information about the deposits and quality of the uranium ore mined in the Soviet Union. But our comrades have been instructed on this account, and know how to evade answering such questions.

Our specialists reported that the Korean uranium ore is not rich and is very scarce. The mining and processing of such ore will be extremely expensive for the Koreans. But from conversations with the Korean specialists they learned that the Koreans, despite all odds, want to develop the mining of uranium ore on a broad scale. In all probability, comrades said, uranium ore mined in the DPRK will be supplied to China, since in order to satisfy one's own internal needs for one's own atomic reactor, one needs a very minor amount of uranium ore.

Our comrades are trying to express a thought to the Koreans to the effect that it would be much easier for the economy of the DPRK to satisfy all internal needs by means of purchasing a small amount of the necessary processed "product."

The Koreans replied to this by saying that they must extract uranium ore in large quantities.

I think that by sending specialists to the DPRK from the Soviet Union we are helping China, and at the time of the current struggle against the Chinese splitters, one should not do this.

Document No. 11**Conversation between Soviet Ambassador in North Korea Vasily Moskovsky and Soviet specialists in North Korea****16 October 1963**

[Source: AVPRF, fond 0102, opis 19, papka 97, delo 5, list 185. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Sergey Radchenko]

[I] had a talk with the Soviet specialists who are conducting research on uranium ores in the laboratories of the mining institute in Pyongyang. One of them, Comrade B.N. Syromyatnikov, said that he recently had a conversation with a Korean engineer who had studied in the Soviet Union. [...] The Korean [...] asked [...] a question: In the opinion of our specialists, can the Koreans create an atomic bomb? Upon hearing the reply to the effect that the economy of the DPRK cannot cope with the creation of nuclear weapons, the Korean said that it would cost much less in the DPRK than in other countries. If we tell our workers, he declared, that we are taking up such a task, they will agree to work free of charge for several years. [...]

Document No. 12**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
11 January 1964**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 5. doboz, 5/bc, 0015/RT/1964. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

On 10 January 1964 I invited Comrades Soviet Ambassador Moskovsky and Romanian Ambassador Bodnaras, and their wives, to dinner. During the conversation that followed the dinner, Comrade Moskovsky told me the following facts about the problems for the Soviet Union that had arisen in years past regarding the interpretation of the Korean political situation and perspectives.

[...]

Comrade Moskovsky told me that [...] [in 1963] Korean officials had demanded fingerprints from the Soviet technical experts who worked on the construction of a radio station, an experimental nuclear reactor, and a weaving mill (!) that were being built with Soviet assistance and co-operation, and they made them fill out a form of 72 questions, in which they had to describe their circle of relatives and friends in detail, with addresses! A Korean “colleague” told one of the technical experts, “if we cannot get you for some reason, we will get your relatives; this is why it [the questionnaire] is needed!”

[...]

József Kovács
(ambassador)

Document No. 13
Report, Embassy of Hungary in Romania to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 4
January 1967.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Románia, 1967, 80. doboz, 128, 00822/1967. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

In the framework of its 10-year electrification plan, Romania set itself the task of constructing an electric power plant based on atomic energy by 1975. However, the talks that [Romania] had with the USSR and with various Western concerns on the purchase of a nuclear power plant have remained unsuccessful up to now. Last year the Romanian side declared that the prices included in the global tender made by the British Atomic Energy Authority were too high, the conditions offered regarding credit repayment (8 years) were disadvantageous, and the dispatch of a commission charged with supervising the operation of the power plant was unacceptable. [...]

According to the information available to us, a Romanian delegation headed by Minister of Metallurgical Industry Ion Marinescu that visited Britain last May once again inquired about the possibilities of importing a nuclear power plant, and this time it asked for a detailed tender. *In early November the Atomic Energy Authority sent a delegation of experts to Bucharest, which had talks on the delivery of a power plant* [emphasis in the original] with Minister of Machine-building Industry Mihai Marinescu and with the members of a commission established for this purpose. As a result of the discussions, the complete tender of the concern arrived as early as November. According to the information available for us, *the tender is about the delivery of two 550-megawatt* [emphasis in the original] nuclear power plants. The delivery of the equipment, which is to be exported in the framework of a 10-year loan, would begin in the first half of 1968, and [the plant] would be opened at the end of 1973 [emphasis in the original]. [...]

The Romanian side is expected to respond in a short time.

József Vince
 ambassador

Document No. 14
Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
10 March 1967

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1967, 60. doboz, 40, 002128/1967. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Comrade [Károly] Fendler recently informed Colonel Latyshev, a subordinate of the Soviet military attaché, about the contacts between the Hungarian and Korean People's Armies. Then, at our request, Comrade Latyshev gave the following information about the organizational structure, manpower, and armament of the Korean People's Army: [...]

According to Soviet estimates, the manpower of the People's Army is approx. 500,000-550,000, of which the land army numbers 400,000, the air force and air defense 45,000, and the navy 17,000. The manpower of the armed police and the troops of the Ministry of Public Security is approx. 100,000. (The USA and South Korea estimate the manpower of the Korean People's Army at approx. 300,000-350,000.)

[...]

Military equipment:

tanks and assault guns

670

field guns

3,500

mortars

approx. 4,000

antitank guns

2,000

missile launchers

75

airplanes

336

of which fighter planes

250

bombers

50

military vessels

160

[...]

Until about 1966, the DPRK's military concept was based on the experiences gained in the anti-Japanese guerrilla struggles of the 1930s and the Patriotic War of 1950-53. Their views were influenced by the strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare; they followed primarily Chinese military views. They did not study missiles, nuclear weapons, or the experiences of other armies.

In 1966 they started to study the experiences gained by the armies of the fraternal countries, primarily the Soviet Army. They introduced the study of military experiences involving missiles and nuclear weapons, under the circumstances of both offensive and defensive struggles.

[...]

The manpower of the South Korean troops is approx. 700,000, of which the manpower of the land army is 660,000, the manpower of the air force and air defense is 30,000, and that of the navy is 17,000.

[...]

tanks and assault guns

800

field guns

approx. 2,000

mortars

approx. 4,000

antitank guns
8,000
fighter planes
approx. 230
bombers
40
transport planes and helicopters
200
military vessels
40
missile launchers
84

The 8th U.S. Army, whose manpower is 60,000, is also stationed in South Korea.

[...]

In conclusion, Comrade Latyshev remarked that none of the two sides had yet reached the stage of complete preparedness, but both were intensely preparing. He also mentioned that the DPRK manufactured carbines, submachine guns, machine guns, mortars, and certain light arms by itself. They have a few small-scale service stations. [...]

István Kádas
(ambassador)

Document No. 15
Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
13 March 1967

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1967, 61. doboz, 5, 002126/1967. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

As a result of the incognito visit that Comrade Kim Il Sung made to Moscow at the end of last year, a high-level Korean delegation headed by Kim Il, [who is] a member of the Presidium of the Political Committee, a secretary of the Central Committee, and the first deputy of the premier, visited the Soviet Union from 13 February to 3 March. Other members of the delegation were Yi Chong-ok, [who is] a Political Committee member, a deputy premier, and the chairman of the Academy of Sciences; Deputy Minister of Defense O Chin-u, a deputy member of the Political Committee; O Tong-uk, a Central Committee member and the chairman of the Commission of Technical Development; and others.

The delegation was received by L. Brezhnev and A. Kosygin, while the head of the Soviet delegation was First Deputy Premier Mazurov.[...]

The Soviet side rejected the Korean request for the delivery of *a nuclear power plant* [emphasis in the original] (the experimental nuclear reactor that had been established with Soviet assistance was opened approximately one and a half years ago, and since then the Soviet comrades hardly have any data about its operation).

[...]

István Kádas
(ambassador)

Document No. 16
Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
8 May 1967

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1967, 60. doboz, 40, 002128/1/1967. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

In the course of the preparations for the visit to Korea by the Hungarian military delegation headed by Comrade [Minister of Defense Lajos] Czinege, in recent weeks we also consulted the Czechoslovak, Polish, Romanian, and GDR military attachés accredited to Pyongyang. [...]

Lieutenant-Colonel Goch, the Czechoslovak military attaché, pointed out that as a result of the adoption of faulty Chinese views, in recent years the development of the Korean People's Army came to a standstill, and the Korean comrades did not pay attention to the development of modern military technology and military studies. In his view, the standard of the People's Army was approximately 10-12 years behind modern requirements. Both he and other military attachés emphasized that the new political line of the Korean Workers' Party, reinforced also by the party conference held last fall, manifests itself more and more positively in the military and political field as well since 1966. The Korean comrades started to modernize the army and acquire up-to-date arms. [...]

Every military attaché pointed out that the general backwardness of technical standards and cadres in the country constituted a serious problem in modernizing the army and adequately acquiring [the use of] the new arms. In the view of the Czechoslovak military attaché, they will need at least 5-6 years to make any serious achievements.

The Romanian military attaché pointed out that it was very sensible that the Soviet Union provided the DPRK with adequate modern arms, and one should also evaluate such Korean demands positively. Due to low technical standards, however, the armaments, including modern arms, get spoiled quickly, and the Koreans cannot handle them adequately yet. Comrade Voicu remarked that it was said that the Soviet Union did not pour modern arms [into North Korea] to the extent that the Koreans asked for but instead— very rightly – it sent technical experts along with the continuous supplies in order to teach and train local experts. Comrade Voicu emphasized that this was a very reasonable measure, for no matter how many arms were here, they were not of much use if they could not handle them adequately and ruined them.

[...]

The military attachés said that recently the People's Army started to conduct military exercises under the circumstances of nuclear war as well. Previously they had been of the opinion that the use of atomic weapons was not effective under the natural conditions of Korea. Nevertheless, it seems that the opinions and experiences of others [i.e., of the Soviets] have induced the Korean comrades to modify their position in this field, too. In the view of Comrade Goch, however, civil defense is still lagging behind; in essence, the population has not been prepared yet for the contingency of a nuclear attack.

Comrade Voicu said that in keeping with the positive changes that had become obvious since last year, the Korean comrades have paid increased attention to coastal and

anti-aircraft defense. They already defend Pyongyang with missiles, and a substantial military force is stationed near the city. By the way, the bulk of the army is stationed along the Demilitarized Zone: the 1st Army in the west and the 2nd Army in the east.

The military attachés pointed out that the strength of the armed forces was very high in the DPRK; it was approx. 600,000 including the public security forces. The Korean comrades refer to South Korea so as to justify this strength, which otherwise constitutes a very heavy burden for the national economy. Deputy Premier Kim Kwang-hyop told the departing Soviet Ambassador and the Hungarian trade union delegation that the country had a serious labor shortage because of that, and this also played a role in the fact that they had to prolong the Seven-year Plan.

[...]

István Kádas
(ambassador)

Document No. 17
Report, Embassy of Hungary in the Soviet Union to the Hungarian Foreign
Ministry
25 November 1967.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1967, 61. doboz, 5, 002126/3/1967. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

According to information received from the competent department of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, several signs indicate that Sino-Korean relations continue to worsen. Among these signs, we mention first of all that recently new pamphlets were published in Beijing that contain a sharp attack on the Korean Workers' Party and Kim Il Sung himself, threatening the leader of the Korean Workers' Party that the Korean people would take vengeance on him for his revisionist policy. The estrangement in their relations was also indicated by, for instance, the circumstances under which the latest Chinese holiday was celebrated in the DPRK. At the reception at the Chinese Embassy, the level of representation on the Koreans' part was very low, the telegram of congratulations the Korean leaders sent to the Chinese was very cold, and no festive mass meetings took place in the country on the occasion of the Chinese national holiday. According to the information available to our [Soviet] comrades, the Chinese Chargé d'Affaires in Pyongyang complains that his opportunities to maintain contacts are very limited.

[...]

As is well-known, Comrade Brezhnev received Comrade Ch'oe Yong-gon during his stay here [in Moscow, during the celebrations of 7th November]. Comrade Brezhnev raised two groups of issues at this meeting. On the one hand, the problem of an international Communist meeting; on the other hand, the issue of the tension between North and South Korea along the demilitarized zone. [...]

Basically the Soviet Union does not accept the position of the DPRK with regard to the cause of the tension along the demilitarized zone. It thinks – and gives expression to this vis-à-vis the Korean comrades too – that the United States does not intend to increase tension in this region, and that nothing points to the conclusion that [the U.S.] really aims

at starting a new Korean War. It is obvious that the various factors of the international situation of the USA, such as the Vietnam War, do not make the prospect of a new Asian war attractive for the United States.

On the basis of the evidence available to it – among others, the statements made by the Czechoslovak and Polish members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission – the Soviet Union has concluded that the majority of the incidents occurring along the demilitarized zone are initiated by the DPRK.

The Soviets, on their part, expound to our Korean comrades that they understand the necessity of the DPRK's struggle for the unification of the country. They support this struggle, but they are of the opinion that one should pay due regard to the concrete Korean and international conditions of the actual period when choosing the means and methods of the struggle. Therefore the Soviet side doubts that armed struggle is an appropriate method for the restoration of the unity of Korea.

For instance, in a military sense it would be, in all probability, inappropriate to conclude that the numerical superiority the DPRK's army has over the South Korean and American armies stationed in South Korea, and the essential militarization of the country, would render it possible for the DPRK to carry out successful military actions. Besides, the Soviet Union also tries to caution the DPRK against possible ill-considered actions by confining the military assistance it gives to that country to the supply of defensive arms. But the Korean comrades may make the mistake of not taking the nature and characteristics of modern warfare into consideration to a sufficient extent.

[...]

József Oláh
(chargé d'affaires)

Document No. 18
Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
29 February 1968

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1968, 58. doboz, 5, 001871/1968. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Recently, the GDR chargé d'affaires ad interim in Pyongyang informed our embassy about the visit of a delegation of Korean nuclear experts to the GDR, which took place 4-12 December 1967, and about the discussions they had there. [...]

The three-member Korean delegation was led by the vice-chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of the DPRK. The other members of the delegation were a departmental head of the Commission and the head of a major department of the Institute for Research on Atomic Energy. The host of the Korean delegation was the GDR State Planning Commission. During its stay there, the delegation visited several industrial plants, mines, institutes of higher education, and several research institutes related to the field [of nuclear science].

In the course of the final discussions between the hosts and the Korean delegation held on 12 December, the Korean side raised the following issues:

- The DPRK would like to sign an agreement with the GDR in the field of nuclear research. The delegation inquires about the possibility of signing such an agreement and about the opinion of the GDR.
- The DPRK would like to obtain equipment needed for the construction of a nuclear power plant from the German side.
- It asks the GDR to share the experiences gained in the operation of nuclear reactors with it.
- Purchase of equipment needed for producing radioactive isotopes from the GDR.
- They ask for the sharing of the experiences that the Germans gained in the field of radiation protection.
- They propose the mutual exchange of nuclear scientists.
- In the field of nuclear research the Korean side is ready to send trainees to the GDR.
- The DPRK would like to purchase the following from the GDR:
 - instruments measuring radioactive isotopes
 - measuring instruments used in nuclear physics
 - certain secret equipment used in nuclear research
 - microfilms or copies of articles that were published on nuclear research in Western scientific journals.

The German side gave the following reply to the proposals of the Korean delegation:

- As far as possible, the GDR is ready to cooperate with the Korean side in the field proposed by the latter.
- On the other hand, it is not in a position to make wide-ranging cooperation in every field of the peaceful utilization of atomic energy since the GDR also cooperates with several socialist countries, above all with the Soviet Union. Although the signing of a possible agreement seems realistic, they ask the Korean comrades to appeal simultaneously to the countries that cooperate with the GDR.
- The German side acknowledges the verbal request of the Korean delegation, but only as information, for it asks [the North Koreans] to make their proposals on the government level in the form of a written request or to include the whole issue in the agreement on scientific and technical cooperation.
- The German comrades strongly emphasized that the DPRK should appeal to the Soviet Union, because they [the East Germans] could enter into negotiations [with North Korea] only if the latter [the USSR] agrees with it. For instance, they can receive trainees only if the DPRK sends their scheme of work in advance. They [the East Germans] will decide on this basis whether it is possible to receive them.
- The GDR is ready to send a delegation of experts to the DPRK or receive one from that country. They ask that in such cases, the delegations should be given authorization by their governments.

[...]

Korean delegations of nuclear experts had visited Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union for a similar purpose, the German chargé d'affaires ad interim said.

István Kádas
(ambassador)

Document No. 19
Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
29 February 1968

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1968, 58. doboz, 2, 001872/1968. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

On his own initiative, on 8 February Comrade Romanian Ambassador Popa visited me in order to inform me about the visit of the Romanian party delegation headed by Comrade Apostol to Korea. [...]

The Romanian party delegation arrived in Pyongyang at the invitation of the KWP. The Romanian delegation was headed by Comrade Apostol, while the Korean one was led by Comrade Kim Kwang-hyop. (Comrade Ambassador [Popa] did not mention which side had initiated the visit.)

[...]

The two sides agreed that relations between the two parties, governments, and peoples were progressing well. [...] The two sides emphasized that they would make further efforts to improve their relations.

[...]

The two delegations informed each other about their achievements in the field of socialist construction. With regard to this issue, the Romanian side pointed out that every socialist country should apply the methods of socialist construction independently, in accordance with its own conditions. Firm action must be taken against servility, the mechanical imitation of the construction methods and experiences of other countries is unacceptable. The Romanian side informed the Korean delegation about the Romanian party conference held in December.

[...]

The Romanian side expounded its views about the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. Both sides are of the opinion that the big countries that have nuclear capacity should ensure that the small countries would also be able to utilize atomic energy for peaceful purposes. The small countries should not suffer a loss as a consequence of the treaty.

[...]

István Kádas
 (ambassador)

Document No. 20
Report on the 27 March-2 April 1968 session of the Hungarian-Korean Commission
of Technical and Scientific Cooperation, 16 April 1968.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1968, 58. doboz, 5, 001364/3/1968. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

[...]

Although by now they have built a great number of hydroelectric power plants [...], the DPRK is struggling with considerable energy problems. For the sake of conserving energy, workers in the production plants take their day off on a staggered schedule rather than on the same day of the week [...].

Taking into consideration that the construction of thermal power stations necessitates less investment than the building of hydroelectric power plants, recently they made plans for constructing thermal power stations in order to solve their energy problems. Thermal power plants use anthracite for heating, of which they [the North Koreans] have huge reserves. True, it is more expensive to generate electric power this way, but – due to the scarcity of investment resources – at present they cannot do anything else [if they want] to find a quick solution to the serious power shortage.

[...]

Dr. Ervin Jávör

Chairman of the Hungarian-Korean Commission of Technical and Scientific Cooperation

Document No. 21

**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
3 June 1968**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1968, 57. doboz, 1, 002815/1968. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

[...]

In the last 2-3 weeks the Romanian Ambassador and he ([Second Secretary Isidor] Urian) met Vietnamese comrades as many as three times. The head of the local NLF [National Liberation Front of South Vietnam] representation and his deputy summarized their opinion of the situation in Korea roughly as follows: the DPRK had missed the opportune moment; it seems that now they once again shelved the issue of liberating South Korea through armed struggle for quite a while. In addition to having missed the opportune moment, the reason for this is either that they have become aware of the balance of power between South and North [Korea] or that the Korean comrades have realized that for the time being the USA really does not want a new Vietnam in Korea; in general, and particularly since the *Pueblo* incident, there are intense defense preparations in the DPRK, and they take all contingencies into consideration; the army of the DPRK is being modernized; they already manufacture automobiles, tanks, and various light and heavy arms, including missiles, during which the Korean comrades are greatly hindered by the fact that the Soviet comrades do not provide them with all the documents that they need; for instance, this is why Korean tank production is still unable to solve the technical questions related to [the manufacture of] stabilizers for tank guns.

[...]

István Kádas
(ambassador)

Document No. 22
Report, Embassy of Hungary in the Soviet Union to the Hungarian Foreign
Ministry
12 November 1969.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1969, 59. doboz, 1, 001607/4/1969. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Comrade Jenő Sebestyén, our new ambassador in Pyongyang, spent a short time in Moscow on his way to his post. During his stay here, on 10th this month, he [...] visited Comrade O.V. Okonishnikov, [...] who had worked in Korea as a counselor, and Comrade V.I. Likhachev, the head of the Foreign Ministry's Far Eastern Department. [...]

The Soviet comrades emphasized that on the part of the Soviet Union as well as the other socialist countries that hold correct views, patient and persistent persuasion was needed to get the Korean position closer to our common position on the big issues of international politics. This task was not an easy one; they cited the Soviet-Korean debate over the nuclear nonproliferation treaty as an example. The Soviet side asked the Korean comrades whether they thought that it would be a good thing if, for instance, Japan – which possesses the required industrial and technical capacity – obtained nuclear weapons. In this concrete case the Korean comrades naturally acknowledged that nuclear nonproliferation was justified, but in general they did not (by which they actually give veiled support to the Chinese position)[...]

[signature]
 ambassador

Document No. 23
Memorandum, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign
Ministry, 27 January 1970.

On 19 January 1970, N.G. Sudarikov, the Soviet ambassador in Pyongyang, visited our embassy and provided us with the following information about the issue [i.e., the visit of North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Song-ch'ol in the Soviet Union on 8-16 December 1969]:

[...]

Pak Song-ch'ol spoke in a firm voice about how it was becoming increasingly probable that the Sato government would resort to adventurist decisions and actions. He described its policies as an aggressive militarist policy aimed at ensuring Japan's dominant position in Asia [in general] and in South Korea [in particular]. He said that Japan wanted to be the gendarme of Asia, and this was proven not just by the plans but also by the actual actions of the Sato government. The latest Sato-Nixon meeting already took place in such a spirit. Japan would be able to have an army of one million and an atomic bomb of its own at any time.

In reply to that, Comrade Brezhnev expounded the Soviet standpoint on the anti-imperialist struggle in detail, saying that the Soviet side paid great attention to every front

of the worldwide anti-imperialist struggle, during which they took care *not to under- or overestimate any front of this struggle* [emphasis in the original]. For instance, they paid great attention to the European, Middle Eastern, and Vietnamese fronts of the anti-imperialist struggle, and they did not ignore the dangers inherent in Japan either. The latest Sato-Nixon meeting had attracted the attention of the Soviet side as well. The Soviet press also expressed [these concerns]. (*Pravda* carried an article entitled “Dangerous Conspiracy” about this subject during Pak Song-ch’ol’s stay in Moscow, but already before that there had been Soviet publications about this issue.) At the same time, Comrade Brezhnev openly gave Pak Song-ch’ol to understand that the Soviet Union did not share the DPRK’s opinion regarding the relationship with Japan, and this did not result from any relaxation of Soviet vigilance. The Soviet Union saw the dangerous tendencies in Japan at least as well as the DPRK. [...]

It seemed that Pak Song-ch’ol accepted the reply and explanation he had received.

Lajos Karsai

Document No. 24

Memorandum, Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in North Korea to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade, 11 September 1973.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1973, 69. doboz, 81-54, 004396/1973. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

[On September 7,] Comrade [Polish Commercial Counselor J.] Kluczynski informed me about the following issues: [...] The Polish-Korean intergovernmental scientific and technical subcommittee held its 2nd session on August 8-13 in Pyongyang. The protocol of the session was signed on August 13 by Deputy Minister of Scientific and Technical Development and Higher Education M. Kazmierczuk, the Polish chairman of the subcommittee, on the Polish side and Deputy Minister of International Economic Relations Yi Gi-son, the Korean chairman of the subcommittee, on the Korean side. In the protocol they specified the fields of scientific and technical cooperation in 1973-1974. Namely, they scheduled to receive technical experts in the following fields:

The Korean side will receive Polish technical experts in:

pharmaceutical industry	1 person	14 days
optimalization in coal mining	3 persons	14 days
machine-building	3 persons	14 days
Metallurgy	3 persons	14 days

The Polish side will receive [North Korean] technical experts in:

designing and construction of harbors	4 persons	1 year
flax processing	3 persons	14 days
production of electronic components	[no data]	[no data]
safety issues in mining	6 persons	2 months
designing and production of mining machines	10 persons	4 months
designing and production of gas turbines	5 persons	14 days
research and designing of nuclear reactors	3 persons	4 months

[...]

István Suhajda
commercial counselor

Document No. 25

Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 22 November 1973.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1973, 69. doboz, 81-20, 00804/7/1973. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Le Dong, the DRV ambassador in Pyongyang, recently had a conversation with the GDR ambassador in Pyongyang. Considering the importance of the conversation, on November 10, at a joint shooting party, Comrade Everhartz informed [the diplomats of] the “seven” [members of the Soviet bloc] in detail.

[...]

The situation created by [the joint statement made by North and South Korea] last July 4 caused problems in the *Korean People's Army* [emphasis in the original]. Many high-ranking [military] leaders disagreed, and still disagree, with the [policy] line of peaceful unification; they see no way out other than a new military action. One year later, these leaders feel that they were proven right when the dialogue [between North and South Korea] reached a crisis. In order to fully enforce the party's policy, immediately after the September plenum, 22,000 officers were called to a military *aktif* [special meeting] that discussed [these issues] for several days. Kim Il Sung's main aim was to underline the correctness of the policy hitherto pursued and to call attention to the changes, i.e., to the fact that the country faced a new situation and was at a crossroads: either it would be unified or there would be two Koreas. Kim Il Sung made a speech at the *aktif* and took a stand in favor of the line of peaceful national unification.

[...]

Although contact was established between North and South, this occurred just when *Sino-Korean military cooperation* [emphasis in the original] became more intense. According to information available to the Vietnamese, many secret high-ranking Chinese military delegations visited the DPRK, and the Chinese made substantial military promises during these discussions. China promised to provide the DPRK with types of military equipment that were hitherto unavailable to it. There was also some talk that the

DPRK might also receive tactical nuclear weapons in the future. The Chinese side already provided [the DPRK] with the means to establish a defensive missile system.

[...]

János Taraba
acting ambassador

Document No. 26

Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry 30 July 1975

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1975, 83. doboz, 81-10, 002835/8/1975. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Kim Il Sung, the general secretary of the KWP and the president of the DPRK, made official visits to

- China (on 18-26 April 1975)
- Romania (on 22-26 May 1975)
- Algeria (between 26 May and 2 June 1975)
- Mauritania (from 30 May to 1 June 1975)
- Bulgaria (on 2-5 June 1975) and
- Yugoslavia (on 5-9 June 1975)

as the head of a party and government delegation. After his visit to China, he also wanted to visit the Soviet Union in the second half of May, but the date he proposed did not suit the Soviet leaders. He also asked to be received in Prague, but the date did not suit [the Czechoslovak leadership] either. His intention to visit Moscow is an important political fact for two reasons. On the one hand, it shows that the DPRK continues to pursue a so-called policy of maintaining a balance of power between the Chinese party and our parties; on the other hand, we should take this intention into consideration while evaluating his trips to China, Europe, and Africa. [...]

We know from Soviet and Chinese sources (the DRV ambassador to Pyongyang informed us about the conversation that he had had with the Chinese ambassador to Pyongyang) that – primarily in China – Kim Il Sung considered the possibility of a military solution. According to the Chinese ambassador, the DPRK wants to create the kind of military situation in South Korea that came into being in South Vietnam before the victory. Taking advantage of the riots against the dictatorial regime of Park Chung Hee, and invited by certain South Korean [political] forces, the DPRK would have given military assistance if it had not been dissuaded from doing so in time.

This dissuasion obviously began as early as [Kim Il Sung's visit] in Beijing, for it is well-known that – primarily in Asia – China holds back and opposes any kind of armed struggle that might shake the position of the USA in Asia. A new Korean War would not be merely a war between North and South [Korea]. With this end in view, during the Korean party and government delegation's stay in Beijing, the Chinese side strongly emphasized the importance of the peaceful unification of Korea [...]. For his part, Kim Il Sung said nothing, or hardly anything, about his own proposals to find a peaceful solution. On the contrary, he declared that if a revolution flared up in South Korea, the

DPRK could not remain indifferent; it would give active assistance to the South Korean people. And if the enemy started a war, it would be met with a crushing repulse. In such a war the DPRK could lose only the cease-fire line, but it might achieve the unification of the country, he said.

[...]

Of the six visits, the ones made to China and Yugoslavia were also important in regard to the military equipment and military technology made available to the DPRK. China provides the People's Army of the DPRK with many kinds of military equipment and arms. The possibility of giving certain tactical nuclear weapons [to North Korea] in order to offset the nuclear forces in South Korea also came into consideration. A deputy minister of the People's Armed Forces in Pyongyang, who on 11 June received the Hungarian military [officers who arrived in North Korea for] vacationing, alluded to that. Yugoslavia helps [the DPRK] primarily in the field of naval forces.

[...]

Dr János Taraba
chargé d'affaires ad interim

Document No. 27
Memorandum, Hungarian Foreign Ministry
26 August 1975

[Source: XIX-J-1-j ENSZ, 1975, 159. doboz, V-730, 004711/1975. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

The socialist countries' fraternal coordinating meeting in regard to the 19th general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (henceforth IAEA) was held on 18-22 August 1975, at the invitation of the Polish Foreign Ministry.

The following states participated in the coordinating meeting: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, German Democratic Republic, the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Belorussia, Romania, and the representative of the COMECON [Council for Mutual Economic Assistance] Secretariat.

[...]

In the course of the coordinating meeting, the fraternal delegations reached an agreement about the following [several items on the conference's agenda, such as items number 7, 8, 9, and 12, were not discussed at the meeting]:

1) They agreed that they would express their protest if a Chilean, Israeli, or South Korean citizen was proposed for any of the posts of vice-chairmen of the General Commission.

Of the socialist countries, they would support the nomination of Poland, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia.

[...]

6) During the discussion of the annual report, the Soviet delegate said that in the speech he was to make at the general assembly, he would analyze in detail

– the results of the Geneva conference [and]

– the Helsinki declaration,

for the duties of the IAEA had increased as a consequence of the aforesaid [conferences], and these [conferences] played a very substantial role in world politics.

The Soviet delegate would go into the issue of making the IAEA safeguards system more effective. Namely, it should be applied to nuclear equipment, materials, and technologies alike. This would mean that the states that had not joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty (henceforth NPT) would not get technological equipment and nuclear materials unless they subordinated their nuclear activity to the IAEA safeguards system.

They would do their best to prevent the IAEA from assisting Chile, South Korea, and Israel. He asked for a firm attitude with regard to the issue of technical assistance, namely, that it should be made available only to those countries that had signed the NPT, for otherwise the operation of the safeguards system would become ineffective.

The bilateral agreements, such as the one signed by the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany] and Brazil, or the one signed by France and South Korea, had created an alarming situation, for in this way certain countries that remained outside the NPT could also obtain the full cycle of nuclear technology. One should achieve the result that complete nuclear technology be held by regional centers [rather than by individual countries], Comrade Arkadiev said.

The participants in the coordinating meeting found the budget too high. The Romanian and Korean delegates declared that they did not support the proposed increase.

10) The Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria announced that they would increase their financial contribution.

11) The delegates discussed the cooperation between COMECON and the IAEA, in which the DPRK, the DRV, and Yugoslavia also participated, and evaluated it positively. [...]

14) The session also dealt with the election of new members of the governing council. The mandates of Bulgaria and Hungary would expire this year, and Poland and Yugoslavia would be nominated for their places. The Soviet delegate went into the issue of admitting the countries of the Far East into the governing council. He pointed out that hitherto the Philippines had had a so-called “floating” status, but now it applied for the place vacated by South Korea, without coordinating [its action] with the region. On the other hand, Mongolia, Kampuchea, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea had not yet been members of the governing council. Of the latter, the Soviet representative proposed the DPRK, rather than the Philippines. However, the representative of the DPRK announced – after a consultation – that he did not aspire to membership in the governing council. He explained this by the fact that France had signed a nuclear agreement with South Korea, which, he declared, was dangerous for the DPRK.

[...]

Gyula Szombathelyi

[section head of the Major Department of International Organizations of the Foreign Ministry]

Document No. 28
Memorandum, Hungarian Foreign Ministry
16 February 1976

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1976, 83. doboz, 6, 002134/1976. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Before the Hungarian health delegation headed by Comrade Medve visited Korea, I received O Song-gwon, the third secretary of the Korean Embassy, and Yi Un-gi, the Korean deputy military attaché, and asked them for information about the situation in Korea. At that time we agreed to meet again after the visit of the delegation. This occurred on 13 February 1976.

[...]

In their opinion, Korea cannot be unified in a peaceful way. They [the North Koreans] are prepared for war. If a war occurs in Korea, it will be waged with nuclear weapons, rather than conventional ones. The DPRK is prepared for such a contingency: the country has been turned into a system of fortifications, important factories have been moved underground (for instance, recently they relocated the steelworks in Kangson), and airfields, harbors, and other military facilities have been established in the subterranean cave networks. The Pyongyang subway is connected with several branch tunnels, which are currently closed but in case of emergency they are able to place the population of Pyongyang there.

By now the DPRK also has nuclear warheads and carrier missiles, which are targeted at the big cities of South Korea and Japan, such as Seoul, Tokyo, and Nagasaki, as well as local military bases such as Okinawa. When I asked whether the Korean People's Army had received the nuclear warheads from China, they replied that they had developed them unaided through experimentation, and they had manufactured them by themselves.

[...]

István Garajszki

Document No. 29
Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
18 February 1976

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1976, 82. doboz, 4, 001570/1976. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Jewdoszczuk, the second highest ranking diplomat of the Polish Embassy, told the heads of the fraternal eight [embassies] the information that they had received from the Polish members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission. That information summarizes the opinion the South Korean regime has about the military situation and the intentions of the DPRK.

[...]

According to the data of the Far Eastern Institute in Seoul, the DPRK spent 60, 165, 135, and 140 million dollars on the purchase of arms in 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1973

respectively. During this time the manpower of the army underwent the following changes: it was 438,000 in 1970, 450,000 in 1971, 460,000 in 1972, and 470,000 in 1973. That is, military preparations continued in the period of [North-South] dialogue as well. The army of the DPRK has 1,100 T-55 tanks and a substantial number of surface-to-surface missiles. The DPRK ordered a substantial amount of diving suits and facilities in Japan. [...]. The number of MiG fighter planes is 200, but they also have Su-7 [fighter-] bombers.

At present the DPRK wants to construct nuclear reactors, and is having talks about this issue in order to become capable of producing atomic weapons in the future.

[...]

Ferenc Szabó
ambassador

Document No. 30

Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry 15 April 1976

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1976, 82. doboz, 5, 00854/2/1976. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Comrade György Kuti was given detailed information by his Soviet colleague [...] about one of the most important items on the agenda of the Soviet-Korean intergovernmental economic negotiations that took place in Moscow in late January and early February 1976, namely, the utilization of the new Soviet investment and development loan between 1976 and 1980, and also about the repayment of the accumulated [North Korean] debts, the conduct of the DPRK negotiating delegation, and other related issues.

[...]

The DPRK side also made a request for the construction of a nuclear power plant. For various reasons – primarily military considerations and the amount of the investment – the Soviet side declared that this [request] was now inopportune and proposed to come back to it only in the course of the next [five-year] plan. The Korean side was very reluctant to accept this Soviet decision and the rejection of a few other investment demands.

Particularly in the course of the negotiations over credit, but also on other issues, [...] the head of the Korean delegation – Deputy Premier Kang Chin-t’ae – behaved in an extremely aggressive way, definitely crude and insulting in certain statements vis-a-vis his Soviet counterpart, Deputy Premier Arkhipov. He declared several times that if the Soviet Union was unwilling to make “appropriate” allowances for the “front-line situation” of the DPRK, and did not comply entirely with the Korean requests, the DPRK would be compelled to suspend its economic relations with the Soviet Union.

It was only after his visit to Comrade Kosygin that Kang Chin-t’ae changed his conduct, and thus it became possible to sign the agreements. Comrade Kosygin, among others, firmly rebuked him, declaring that the Soviet Union did not accept ultimatums.

Ferenc Szabó
ambassador

Document No. 31**Telegram, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry,
25 June 1976**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1976, 82. doboz, 5, 00854/5/1976. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

At the 13th session of the Soviet-Korean Intergovernmental Economic Commission, held in Moscow in the first half of June, Comrade Novikov asked Kang Chin-t'ae to ensure that the DPRK put an end to the delay that once again occurred in its commercial deliveries (approx. 20%).

[...] The Soviet Union cannot deliver a nuclear power plant to the DPRK in the new five-year plan [1976-80] either, for it has long-term commitments [to construct such plants elsewhere]. For the time being the Soviet Union also failed to give its consent to the extension of the agreement on lumbering in Siberia by 3 years, because there are ecological surveys in progress [in these areas].

Ferenc Szabó
ambassador

Document No. 32**Memorandum, Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in
Pyongyang to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade
9 August 1976**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1976, 82. doboz, 5, 00170/7/1976. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Comrade Gnidenko [the Soviet deputy commercial counselor] gave the following information:

1.) Preliminary information about the 13th session of the Intergovernmental Consultative Commission:

The 13th session of the Commission was held 8-11 June 1976 in Moscow. The minutes of the session were signed by Deputy Premiers I.T. Novikov on the Soviet side and Kang Chin-t'ae on the Korean side.

At the session the Korean side attempted to evade the questions related to foreign trade, for that was a thorny issue for it. However, the Soviet side [...] managed to ensure that due stress was laid at this session of the Commission on the discussion of the commercial relations between the two countries.

Soviet Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade Grishin, as well as the sectoral ministers, who made speeches at the session, raised the issue that in 1976 Korean shipments had substantially decreased in comparison with the same period of earlier years; the [DPRK's] failure to deliver the raw materials that were planned to be imported from Korea caused stoppages in the operation of important Soviet industrial plants, seriously jeopardizing the continuity of production.

In response to the raising of these questions by the Soviets, the Korean side made promises to make up for its underfulfillments in the second half of the year [...] The Korean side stated its demand for a nuclear power plant [...].

The Soviet side declared that it was unable to deliver a nuclear power plant in the near future, for its production capacity was already being utilized to fulfill other demands on which a decision had been taken earlier.

[...]

The situation that has developed [in the DPRK] prompted the Branch Office of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Trade in Pyongyang to make more thorough inquiries. [...]

– The scantiness of rainfall [in 1975 and 1976] produced a substantial effect on the production of electrical energy (in the estimation of the Soviets, hydroelectric power plants constitute 50% of the present power generation capacity), that is, there was no way to utilize the capacity of the hydroelectric power stations, and they could not generate as much energy as planned.

[...]

István Suhajda
commercial counselor

Document No. 33

Memorandum, Hungarian National Commission of Atomic Energy to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry

31 August 1976

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1976, 82. doboz, 4, 004522/8/1976. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

On the occasion of the socialist coordinating meeting in Minsk that preceded the General Assembly of the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency], on 26 August 1976, late in the evening, Pak Hon-ch'ol, the head of the DPRK delegation, as well as the representative of the DPRK Foreign Ministry visited me, and described various incidents that had occurred on the South Korean border. [...]

They also informed me that the Technical Assistance program of the IAEA planned to deliver a complete reprocessing plant for the Far Eastern region. The plant is to be established in South Korea, since this region [South Korea] has the most developed technical base.

Their request was that the socialist countries should assist them in preventing the establishment of this plant in South Korea, and if such a plant were established at all in the Far Eastern region, then it should be given to the Philippines.

[...]

Having given me a few small gifts, they once again said thanks for the very valuable advice they had received from the Hungarian delegation at the coordinating meeting held in Székesfehérvár in 1974. As a result of [this advice], at the general assembly the DPRK obtained IAEA membership without any difficulty.

[...]

Dr. György Osztrovszki
[chairman of the National Commission of Atomic Energy]

Document No. 34**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
8 December 1976**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1976, 82. doboz, 5, 00854/6/1976. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

In February 1976, at the time of the session of the Soviet-Korean Intergovernmental Economic, Technical, and Scientific Consultative Commission, [Deputy Premier] Kang Chin-t'ae, the head of the Korean delegation, handed a letter from Pak Song-ch'ol to Comrade Kosygin. There were three concrete requests in the letter:

- 1) The 1973 agreement on the component supply of the set of rollers in the Kim Ch'aek industrial combine should be modified. [...]
- 2) Four additional blocs, each with an output of 100,000 kw, should be built at the thermal power plant in Pukch'ong.
- 3) The Soviet Union should construct a nuclear power plant in the DPRK.

The Soviet side did not give a concrete reply to the letter. At the session of the commission, the Soviet negotiating delegation took a stand on the extension of Pukch'ong and on the construction of the nuclear power plant by [declaring] that they could not discuss these two issues before the 1980s.

Returning from his tour in Africa, in October DPRK Minister of Foreign Trade Kae Un-t'ae broke up his journey in Moscow. During official discussions, he declared that the Korean side was waiting for a concrete reply to Pak Song-ch'ol's letter. On this occasion, the construction of a nuclear power plant was already missing from the list of urgent questions. Kae Un-t'ae was given a promise that an official reply would be sent as soon as possible.

As directed by the center, the Soviet chargé d'affaires ad interim sought an audience with Deputy Premier Kang Chin-t'ae, who received him on 12 November. The chargé d'affaires gave him the verbal reply of Comrade Kosygin. (After careful consideration, they decided not to reply in writing.) Their reply was that the Soviet Union was still unable to deal with the extension of the Pukch'ong thermal power plant before 1980 and also insisted on keeping the original agreement with regard to the issue of supplying Kim Ch'aek with components. [...]

Kang Chin-t'ae was very dissatisfied with the reply.

On 13 November Kae Un-t'ae asked for an appointment with the Soviet chargé d'affaires. He said that the DPRK was in a difficult economic situation and needed immediate assistance from the socialist countries, including the Soviet Union. His concrete request was the following: 200,000 metric tons of oil and 150,000 metric tons of coking coal, as early as this year. (On the basis of the intergovernmental protocol that is in force, this year the Soviet Union supplies the DPRK with slightly more than 1 million metric tons of oil and 1.2 million metric tons of coking coal. By 1 November they completed over 70% of the shipments, and by the end of the year they will send the whole amount without interruptions.) The chargé d'affaires acknowledged the request, and promised to forward it without delay. In the opinion of the Soviet diplomat who told me this information, there is very little likelihood of fulfilling the request. To his knowledge, in the case of Korea the Soviet Union will not satisfy unexpected demands in

the future either. Exceptions can be made only in very justified cases. The Soviet side also takes every possible opportunity to make the Korean side understand that it is the COMECON countries that have priority when [the Soviets] decide on unexpected demands.

[...]

Ferenc Szabó
ambassador

Document No. 35

Telegram, Embassy of Hungary in the Soviet Union to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 20 January 1977

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1977, 78. doboz, 81-1, 00334/3/1977. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

[The Soviets] are still expecting to discuss primarily economic issues during the visit of Pak Song'-ch'ol here [...]

It causes great difficulty that

1) The DPRK intends to relieve its serious economic situation by not (not) fulfilling its obligations, which were set down in the long-term trade agreement and in the agreement on the exchange of goods this year, with regard to the export of goods that are saleable on non-socialist markets as well, and at the same time it constantly insists on the uninterrupted and punctual fulfillment of Soviet export obligations. By the way, in 1976 the Soviet Union also fulfilled its export obligations, whereas Korean exports, in contrast to an obligation of 216 million rubles, were only 90 million. Since a substantial part of Korean exports is used for provisioning the Soviet Far East, failures in their delivery always cause considerable difficulties, mainly in production (cement, fire-resistant bricks, etc.), because [such goods] cannot be supplied from other sources without substantial delays. The Korean side will probably attempt to convert the deficit resulting from [the underfulfillments of] 1976 into a Soviet credit.

2) The Korean side is strongly opposed to the application of the price policy that is in operation in the COMECON, including the raising of the price of any Soviet export article. In 1976 the Soviet side did not manage to achieve the COMECON price level in its relations with Korea, nor do they expect [to achieve it] in 1977.

3) The Korean side constantly announces new demands (in addition to the agreements), and impatiently presses for their fulfillment. They repeatedly and very emphatically urge, at every level, that Soviet shipments of crude oil be increased to two million metric tons per annum (the Soviets suppose that they intend to sell the processed petroleum derivatives in capitalist markets). For reasons of prestige, they ask the Soviet Union to build a nuclear power plant for them (the five-year agreement did not include this either). They disregard the Soviet replies, according to which they [the Soviets] are unable to deliver loss-making articles over the quantity specified in the plan.

According to the information available to the Soviets, in [North Korean] domestic propaganda these problems are presented as the causes of the [DPRK's] economic difficulties (the Soviet Union exploits Korea by raising prices, it refuses to deliver the goods needed for economic development, because it prefers to sell them to the capitalists, etc.).

-Marjai-16-

Document No. 36
Memorandum, Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 16 February 1977.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1977, 78. doboz, 81-2, 001197/1/1977. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

On February 14, at his request, I received Czechoslovak First Secretary Lehocky. Referring to instructions received from his center [the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry], he informed me that in the view of their embassy in Pyongyang, the declaration made by the DPRK on January 25 and its four-point proposal had an extremely threatening tone. For example, it describes the situation on the Korean peninsula as if it might directly lead to the outbreak of a global nuclear war. The declaration also includes a veiled reference to the fact that the DPRK is equipping itself with nuclear weapons.

The government of the DPRK launched an international campaign to gain support for its proposals. In the opinion of the Czechoslovaks, the Korean side will ask the [governments of the] socialist countries to make official statements supporting the four-point declaration.

The Czechoslovak side could hardly fulfill a request of such nature.

Comrade Lehocky inquired about the Hungarian standpoint and the steps that we had taken, or planned to take, with regard to this issue.

I said that we had not noticed any fundamentally new element in the tone and contents of the declaration. The DPRK's initiative was motivated by the intention to respond to the newest "proposal" of the South Korean regime (that the two Koreas should conclude a non-aggression pact, in tandem with which the American troops would be withdrawn) and sound out the Carter administration's plans for Korea.

I informed him that Comrade Deputy [Foreign] Minister Házi had already received the DPRK ambassador in Budapest. During their conversation, he informed him [the ambassador] that the declaration had been described in detail in the Hungarian press, with positive comments, right after its publication. He repeatedly assured him that we support their struggle for the peaceful and democratic unification of Korea. The DPRK ambassador did not ask [the Hungarian government] to make an official statement.

András Forgács

Document No. 37
Report, Embassy of Hungary in Belgium to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 3 March 1977.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1977, 78. doboz, 2, 00673/2/1977. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

The World Conference for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (Conference mondiale pour la Réunification pacifique de la Corée) held its meeting in Brussels on 21-22 February 1977. In addition to the leading functionaries of the Belgian Socialist Party and the Communist Party of Belgium, Christian Democratic public figures also participated in

the Belgian preparatory commission that undertook to organize the conference. The members of the international supporting commission were the following: Ratsiraka, president of the Malagasy Republic [Republic of Madagascar]; Eyadéma, president of the Republic of Togo; Kérékou, president of the People's Republic of Benin; Narita Tomomi, chairperson of the Japan Socialist Party; Minobe, governor of Tokyo; Carrillo, general secretary of the Communist Party of Spain; Rómulo [Escobar Bethancourt], rector of the University of Panama and special adviser to the head of state.

[...]

The government of the DPRK was represented at the meeting by Minister of Education Kim Sun-gi, who headed a delegation of a few persons.

[...]

After two days of discussion, the participants in the conference adopted a resolution that had been prepared by a drafting committee. The introduction to the resolution notes that the conference intends to mobilize world public opinion, particularly public opinion in the West European countries and North America, which is poorly informed about the Korean question; it wants to call attention to the tragic situation of this nation, which was divided against its will, and to the threats to peace that result from this division.

The adopted resolution demands, among others, the following:

[...]

4.) It calls attention to the danger of stationing American nuclear forces in South Korea and demands their immediate withdrawal.

5.) It regards the increasing cooperation of certain states with the Seoul regime in the military and nuclear field, which enables this regime to increase its armament capacity and create a military nuclear potential, as deeply disquieting, and therefore it calls upon every state to cease providing the Seoul regime with patents and technical and financial assistance [that can be used] for the establishment of defense factories.

[...]

József Vince
ambassador

Document No. 38

Telegram, Embassy of Hungary in the Soviet Union to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 18 May 1977.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1977, 79. doboz, 81-5, 003363/1977. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

According to the reply of the leading MID [Soviet Foreign Ministry] official competent [to deal with such affairs], one can perceive a slow progress in Soviet-North Korean relations since the visit of Pak Song-ch'ol in Moscow. The economic agreements are being put into effect. The Koreans have not yet given up their request for the construction of a nuclear power plant, which the Soviet side cannot fulfill. They demand the supply of an extremely great volume of arms, and the Soviet Union will partly fulfill [this demand]. During the exchange of goods this year, the Korean side has once again

resorted to its usual methods; their export arrears for the first quarter of the year are substantial.

The Korean side urges the visit of a Soviet delegation led by [Politburo member Kiril] Mazurov to Korea, which would then be followed by an official visit by Kim Il Sung to the Soviet Union. The Soviet side will fulfill this request, but in all likelihood the delegation will be led by another PB [Politburo] member, rather than the ailing Mazurov.

The evaluation of the Soviet side is that Sino-Korean relations have become cooler in the period of the new Chinese leadership.

-Marjai-179-

Document No. 39
Report, Permanent Mission of Hungary to the International Organizations in Vienna
to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
3 November 1977

[Source: XIX-J-1-j ENSZ, 1977, 154. doboz, V-73, 005665/1977. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has a representation in Vienna, headed by Comrade Yi Won-bom. Its competence covers not only Austria but also Czechoslovakia. It is obvious that the small, 3-person representation is seriously overloaded with [maintaining] bilateral relations. They cannot participate in every fraternal discussion related to the IAEA. Usually they do so only on the occasion of major IAEA events, e.g., before important board-meetings or general assemblies. On such occasions Comrade Dr. Ch'oe Hak-gun, the director of a major department of the DPRK National Commission of Atomic Energy, usually visits Vienna.

Considering that the employees of the DPRK representation have language problems as well – they know only German – on the occasion of friendly conversations, we repeatedly offered to help them with anything or inform them about anything. We repeated that [offer] several times during socialist receptions.

Their statements revealed that they are not sufficiently familiar with international organizations, and thus, understandably, it is difficult for them to ask questions.

On the basis of these facts, all I can propose in reply to your instruction is that the DPRK should upgrade its representation by engaging an employee who would deal with UN organizations and socialist coordination and who would be sufficiently competent linguistically. On the grounds of your request, we will naturally assist them in this issue as much as possible.

Zoltán Fodor
 ambassador

Document No. 40**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 21 November 1977.**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1977, 79. doboz, 5, 006140/1977. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

The program [the 14th session of the Soviet-Korean Intergovernmental Economic, Technical, and Scientific Consultative Commission] took place in Pyongyang 1-3 September 1977. Both negotiating delegations were led by the heads of the commission, namely, by Deputy Premiers Arkhipov and Kong Chin-t'ae. Premier Pak Song-ch'ol received the Soviet delegation before its departure.

A Soviet diplomat, who, as an expert, had been a member of the delegation, gave detailed information about the work of the session and the content of the signed protocol.

[...]

At the request of the Koreans, on this occasion they did not deal with either the general situation of credit repayment or the fulfillment of the protocol on the exchange of goods between the two states this year.

(This year the Korean side has fulfilled approx. 60 percent [of its commercial obligations], which is a substantial leap forward in comparison with the 40 percent of last year.)

For its part, the Soviet side requested that the seven-year plan of long-term cooperation that had been proposed by the Korean side should not be discussed. According to the Soviet reply, this should be discussed later and on a higher level.

The Korean side also accepted the Soviet standpoint that there was no sense in "digging up" those questions that had been considered temporarily closed since (and as a consequence of) Pak Song-ch'ol's visit in Moscow this January (e.g., the construction of a nuclear power plant, new large credits, and so on), and it respected it always.

[...]

In sum, on this occasion both sides were satisfied with the results and atmosphere of the negotiations. The Soviet evaluation [of the session] is that now the Korean partner behaved in a basically correct way; it readily and sincerely acknowledged its omissions whenever it was necessary to do so; it asked for, and received, assistance on a matter of principle and on the basis of comradeship.

Ferenc Szabó
ambassador

Document No. 41
Report, Hungarian National Atomic Energy Commission to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 30 August 1978.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j ENSZ, 1978, 158. doboz, V-73, 004909/1978. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Dear Comrade Kőmives!

For your information, I am happy to send you the attached report on the socialist coordinating meeting held in [East] Berlin on 15-17 August 1978 with regard to the 22nd general conference of International Atomic Energy Agency, which is to be held this September.

With comradely greetings,
 Dr. György Osztrovski
 [vice-chairman of the Hungarian National Atomic Energy Commission]

Appendix

Report

on the coordinating meeting of the representatives of the socialist countries with regard to the 22nd general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency

[...]

The head of the Soviet delegation *declared that it was appropriate to call attention to the resolutions adopted by the UN meeting on disarmament, and to use these positive resolutions for the reinforcement of non-proliferation and the safeguards system* [emphasis in the original] and for the assertion of the political line of the socialist countries. The general conference [of the IAEA] should call upon the countries that had not yet joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty to join it. It is particularly important [to achieve] accession of countries that possess an actual nuclear potential (Argentina, Brazil, India, and Pakistan) or belong to zones of [international] tension (Zaire, Egypt, South Africa). [...]

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea announced that it would make a speech at the general conference *against approving the mandates of South Korea, Chile, and South Africa* [emphasis in the original]. Romania and Cuba also agreed to that. The Soviet side announced that they would make a speech against South Korea and Chile and give support to the Korean proposal with regard to South Africa.

[...]

The delegations generally agreed that the member states of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, i.e., *the countries committed to the exclusively peaceful use* [of nuclear energy], *should be given preference in technical assistance* [emphasis in the original]. However, the representative of Cuba stated that his country disagreed with the declaration of this principle, since, due to its special situation (the immediate vicinity of the United States and the existence of an [American] military base at Guantanamo), it could not afford to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

[...]

Document No. 42**Telegram, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
17 February 1979**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1979, 81. doboz, 81-5, 001583/1979. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

The Czechoslovak ambassador said that on 12 February the Korean secretary of the Korean-Czechoslovak Intergovernmental Economic, Technical, and Scientific Consultative Commission officially told the first secretary of the Czechoslovak Embassy that the DPRK asked Czechoslovakia to:

- 1) deliver uranium-mining equipment to the DPRK
- 2) construct a 440-megawatt nuclear power plant in the DPRK. (I heard from the Soviet ambassador that the DPRK has two important uranium quarries. In one of these two places, the uranium content of the ore is 0.26 percent, while in the other it is 0.086 percent.)

Ferenc Szabó
ambassador

Document No. 43**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
23 February 1979**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Dél-Korea, 1979, 81. doboz, 82-5, 002289/1979. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

[...]

The construction of the first [South Korean] nuclear power plant began in March 1971 in Kori, near Pusan, and was completed in May 1978. The nuclear reactor and the turbines were put in their final place in October 1974, and the first shipment of enriched uranium, with which the test operation was started, arrived in Kori in June 1975.

However, this is just the beginning, for the South Korean government prepared a long-range plan to construct additional nuclear power plants by 2000. The first stage of this [plan] will last until 1986, by which time 6 additional [nuclear power plants] (one per year) will be built. By 1986 the amount of investment will be 156 billion won and 174 million US\$. The most important investors are the American Westinghouse Electric Corp., ITT, the British GEC, various French companies, and, of course, several South Korean enterprises, such as the newly created Korea Nuclear Energy Co.

[...]

With the nuclear power plant in Kori included, the output of electric power generation in South Korea reached 6.59 million kw. With the completion and activation of the sixth nuclear power plant, in 1986 its output will reach 20 million kw. By the end of 1986 they want to complete and operate 7 nuclear power plants, 5 hydroelectric power stations, 24

thermal power stations, and an ebb and flow power plant. 26 nuclear power plants will be built by 2000 [...].

If we compare the output of electric power generation that South Korea plans to reach by the end of 1986 with that of the DPRK (since the DPRK will also complete its 7-year plan by that time), the South Korean output is about three times that of the DPRK. This may explain why, from this year on, but also earlier, the DPRK strongly urged the socialist countries – for instance, Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and China – to provide it with equipment for nuclear power plants or even to build a nuclear power plant. It tries to make up for its lag behind South Korea in this way, with the hidden intention that later it may become capable of producing an atomic bomb.

Ferenc Szabó
ambassador

Document No. 44

**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
22 May 1979**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Dél-Korea, 1979, 81. doboz, 82-5, 003675/1979. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

[...]

Assisted by the USA, the [South Korean] defense industry, with the exception of those weapons whose production needs great technological precision, is developing rapidly. South Korea started to manufacture guided missiles. A successful test of the latter took place last September. In 1980 they will start to manufacture the electronic equipment of arms and airplanes. Recently, in the 22 December 1978 issue of *The Washington Post*, American journalists Roland Evans and Robert Novak pointed out that “South Korea already possesses the technological documentation needed for the independent production of nuclear weapons.”

[...]

Ferenc Szabó
ambassador

Document No. 45

**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 12
March 1981.**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1981, 86. doboz, 103, 002477/1981. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Having returned from the congress of the CPSU, Comrade Soviet Ambassador informed me about, among others, the following:

[...]

The Korean Workers' Party's delegation to the congress was headed by Premier Yi Chong-ok, a Politburo member. The other members of the delegation were Kim Yong-nam, a Politburo member and CC secretary; CC member Kang Hui-won, the secretary in charge of North Hamgyong province; deputy CC member Kil Chae-gyong, the deputy head of the CC Department of International Relations; and deputy CC member Kong Hui-gyon, the DPRK ambassador to Moscow. The accompanying staff was composed of fourteen persons.

The discussions with the KWP delegation took place in a friendly atmosphere. They behaved in a correct way, there were no demonstrative gestures. (At the congress the Korean delegates also rose from their seats during the welcome of the Cambodian delegation, though they did not join the applause.)

[...]

Comrade Tikhonov received the entire delegation and had talks with it. The friendly discussions covered mainly economic issues. The Korean side requested that the Soviet side should speed up the reconstruction of the Kim Ch'aek metal combine and extend the enterprise, whose present capacity is one million metric tons, to a capacity of 4.1 million metric tons by 1985. The Soviet side referred the request to the level of experts, i.e., it promised to deal with the issue.

At the request of the Koreans, they [the Soviets] agreed that of the previously extended credit of 700 million rubles, which was to be repaid by 1985, 400 million rubles would be repaid after 1985. However, the Soviet side stipulated that after 1985 the Korean side should pay an interest rate of 4 percent instead of the previous 2 percent. This surprised the Korean delegation, but the Soviet side justified its request by referring to the actual value of the credits that had been given in the sixties. The Korean side expressed its readiness to cooperate in the exploitation of coking coal in Siberia.

The bilateral agreement on lumbering in the Far Eastern districts of Siberia will expire in March 1982. At the request of the Korean side, the Soviet side will give its consent to the extension of the agreement, probably under the present conditions.

The Korean side also submitted requests for special technology. Comrade Tikhonov promised that the competent authorities would examine the Korean request.

The premier of the DPRK also raised the issue of the DPRK's request for the delivery of a nuclear power plant. The Soviet side let them know that this was a complicated request belonging to the category of long-term planning. It also described the conditions under which [the Soviet Union] was cooperating with Czechoslovakia and other European socialist countries in this field, namely, that the beneficiaries [of the cooperation] also had to contribute to such investments. The Korean side could not give any genuine answer to this.

With regard to the political aspects of the discussions between the two premiers, there was a substantial difference between the messages of the two sides. Comrade Tikhonov, among others, outlined the so-called "hot spots" in international relations, of which he dwelt on the Southeast Asian region, China's hegemonic aspirations, and the dangerous character [of these Chinese aspirations]. He expressed that the policy the DPRK was pursuing in Southeast Asia was incomprehensible to the Soviet Union. The DPRK's behavior toward Sihanouk was similarly incomprehensible. He also expressed his disapproval that a book by Sihanouk that contained abusive comments about the Soviet Union had been published in foreign languages in the DPRK. (According to information

received from Soviet diplomats in Pyongyang, Sihanouk's book has not been on sale in Pyongyang since March 6.) Yi Chong-ok and the Korean delegation pretended not to have heard of the existence of such a book. The Korean side also tried to explain the essence of the visit by Sihanouk and his surroundings in Pyongyang by claiming that this was merely [a manifestation of North Korean] hospitality. [It tried to justify it by saying] that the leaders of the DPRK were grateful to Sihanouk because he had been the first head of state who broke off diplomatic relations with South Korea.

The political information given by the Korean side did not cover the international situation. It was confined to a description of their own situation and an analysis of bilateral relations.

[...]

Sándor Etre
ambassador

Document No. 46
Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 30 April 1981.

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1981, 86. doboz, 72, 003729/1981. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

In this report of ours, we summarize the pieces of information we received from GDR and Czechoslovak diplomats about the visit of a Korean delegation of higher education to Czechoslovakia and the GDR:

The Korean delegation that visited both countries was headed by Han Gi-hwan, the vice-chairman of the Commission of Education. With regard to him, it is worth mentioning that he had studied at Prague Technical University, has a good command of Czech, and knows the Czechoslovak institutes of higher education extremely well. He graduated in technological studies. Perhaps this is why the [institutes] the delegation visited in both Czechoslovakia and the GDR were, almost exclusively, technical universities and colleges.

In both countries the aim of the visit was similar to the purpose of the delegation that had visited Hungary: i.e., in brief, they need technical experts who graduated from institutes of higher education and are familiar with modern technology in order to fulfill the economic targets approved at the 6th KWP Congress, and toward this goal they asked the Czechoslovaks to receive 37 post-graduate students in such technical fields whose subjects mostly belong to the category of state secrets. To mention only a few of the most important ones: microelectronics, laser technology, nuclear physics, enrichment facilities, reactive engine technology, protection of nuclear reactors, electronic equipment of nuclear reactors, isotope separation, and so on.

The aforesaid reveal that the Koreans are concerned mainly about the subject of nuclear energy and they are interested in every question related to it. This interest is not a recent one. For instance, last year they sent 5 post-graduate students [to Czechoslovakia] in the field of nuclear physics, with a concrete program that the Czechs were compelled

to reject because of the strictly confidential nature of the field. Thus, the Korean side was forced to recall its candidates for postgraduate studies.

It is characteristic of their [intense] interest [in nuclear energy] that the Korean side would be willing to meet all financial expenses of the 37 post-graduate students. This would also include one year of language learning and 3 years of probation. The Koreans wanted to send half of the post-graduate students as early as February 1981 and the other half in September. The Czechoslovak side rejected this request, saying that they would be absolutely unable to receive post-graduate students this year, and that it would be similarly impossible next year unless it was included in the work plan of cultural cooperation that was to be signed.

In the GDR, the Korean delegation similarly visited technical universities and colleges. They asked the Germans to receive 17 post-graduate students and 41 trainees as early as this September. The GDR was also unwilling to receive them so urgently, saying that due to language and other problems, they would not be able to receive the postgraduate students this year. In order to solve the language problems, two German instructors are to be sent to the DPRK, who will prepare the Korean sponsored students during 3 months of intensive language training. The other problem, about which the Germans did not speak to the Koreans, was similar to that of the Czechoslovaks. Namely, the Koreans asked for receptiveness in fields that are also partly confidential. For instance, microelectronics, optical electronics, laser technology, cybernetics, the technique of chemical and physical analysis, nuclear physics, photogrammetry, non-ferrous metallurgy, and so on.

It is worth mentioning that the Korean side asked the GDR to set up a high-capacity observatory that they want to establish on the Korean-Chinese border. The Germans rejected their request. The German comrades proposed to the Koreans to send post-graduate students to the field of social sciences as well, but the Koreans did not respond to that.

Having compared the experiences of the [North Korean] visits to the three socialist countries (HPR [Hungarian People's Republic], GDR, Czechoslovakia) and discussed it with the Czechoslovak and GDR diplomats, we may reach the following conclusions:

- In order to achieve its economic objectives, it is absolutely necessary for the DPRK to have a supply of highly qualified technical experts. Their effort to achieve this aim is understandable even if they overestimate the opportunities of the fraternal countries and [underestimate] the latter's difficulties with regard to the reception of postgraduate students.
- On the other hand, they do not have a technical and technological basis – particularly in the case of nuclear technology, microelectronics, laser technology, and so on – that would explain the training of technical experts in these fields. This raises a question: in which fields and for which purposes will the Korean technical experts who are to acquire such skills use their knowledge?

Sándor Etre
ambassador

Document No. 47**Memorandum, Hungarian Academy of Sciences to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
7 March 1983**

[Source: XIX-J-1-k Korea, 1983, 73. doboz, 81-73, 2856/1983. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

At the recent session of the governmental representatives to the United Institute for Nuclear Research (Dubna, 1-3 March 1983), Professor Ch'oe Hak-gun, the representative of the Democratic Republic of Korea and the chairman of the National Atomic Energy Commission, told me the following information in a private conversation, asking me to forward it to the competent Hungarian authorities:

Through official diplomatic channels, the DPRK will ask Hungary to receive Korean experts for training in the field of operating and managing a nuclear power plant [in Paks] as part of the cooperation between the two countries, since the DPRK will soon start building its first nuclear power plant.

István Láng
Hungarian government representative
to the United Institute for Nuclear Research

Document No. 48**Letter, Hungarian Foreign Ministry to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences
6 April 1983**

[Source: XIX-J-1-k Korea, 1983, 73. doboz, 81-73, 2856/1983. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Dear Comrade Láng!

The letter [...] you sent to Comrade Deputy [Foreign] Minister Vencel Házi was forwarded to me, as I am competent to deal with this. The Foreign Ministry's position on the subject of the letter is that the Hungarian nuclear power plant is being built on the basis of Soviet documents and with direct Soviet support; its machinery is also largely Soviet made. For some time it will be operated with the support of Soviet experts, as the training of Hungarian experts has just gotten underway. That is, these objective conditions prevent us from fulfilling the request of the DPRK. In case of a possible [official] request, we may advise them to submit their request directly to the competent Soviet authorities.

With comradely greetings,
Ferenc Szabó
head of the [4th Regional] Major Department

Document No. 49**Memorandum, Branch Office of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade in
Pyongyang to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Trade
28 July 1983**

[Source: XIX-J-1-k Korea, 1983, 73. doboz, 81-51, 5607/1983. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

Comrade V.A. Marushkin, the economic counselor of the Soviet Embassy, gave me the following information about the subject [the 18th session of the Soviet-Korean Intergovernmental Economic, Technical, and Scientific Consultative Commission]:

The session of the Commission was held in Pyongyang, and the minutes were signed on 18 May 1983 by Deputy Premier N.V. Talizin on the Soviet side and Deputy Premier Kae Ung-t'ae on the Korean side.

[...]

The Koreans proposed that [Soviet-DPRK] cooperation should be extended to the field of space telecommunications and space research. The Soviet side said that this was possible only if the government of the DPRK joined the relevant international agreement.

[...]

Imre Rudi
commercial counselor

Document No. 50**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry
4 August 1983**

[Source: XIX-J-1-j Korea, 1983, 78. doboz, 81-40, 004628/1983. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

The Embassy of Bulgaria in Pyongyang was instructed by its Center [in Sophia] to inquire whether Korea might join the 1963 [nuclear test-ban] treaty [...].

With regard to this issue, the ambassador was received at the Foreign Ministry's Department of Treaties and Legal Issues, while the second highest-ranking diplomat [of the embassy] was received at the Atomic Energy Commission. The Bulgarian side referred to the fact that a substantial number of states had signed the treaty and to the favorable political-psychological effect of the DPRK's possible joining, which could be successfully used for propagandizing Pyongyang's peaceful aspirations.

In both places [the North Korean officials] showed understanding towards the Bulgarian arguments, but they evaded giving an unequivocal and final answer. As an explanation, they mentioned that as long as the United States stored atomic weapons and weapons of mass destruction on South Korean soil, there was no objective ground for the DPRK to join the treaty.

Urged by the Bulgarians, the Korean side promised to continue studying the issue.

Ferenc Rátkai
chargé d'affaires ad interim

Document No. 51
Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 9 March 1985.

[Source: XIX-J-1-k Korea, 1985, 76. doboz, 81-532, 2745/1985. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

As I already reported by telegram, from February 4 to 12 a GOSPLAN [Soviet National Planning Office] deputation led by a head of department had negotiations in Pyongyang. Their discussions covered primarily the nuclear power plant to be built with Soviet cooperation. Premier Kang Song-san emphasized to the deputation that the project to be built was not only of economic but also of political importance. On the one hand, they would like to offset the fact that a nuclear power plant is already in operation in South Korea; on the other hand, [the project] is to enhance the DPRK's economic prestige in foreign eyes. Their conceptions will be made final during the talks that he [Kang] is due to have in Moscow this spring.

On the basis of a previous unspecified agreement, they practically reached a preliminary agreement on the terms of planning, construction, operation, and payment as well as on legal conditions. With regard to the terms of payment, the interest rate on the credit of 2 billion dollars that the Soviet side is supposed to give has not yet been specified. The Korean side tries to insist on the previous rate of 2 percent, whereas the Soviet side proposes an agreement on 4 to 6 per cent. The Korean minister of foreign trade had talks about this issue in Moscow, and [the two sides] are expected to reach a final agreement during the visit of the [North Korean] premier. The Korean side will contribute to the investment costs with the same amount of money.

The selection of the construction site, in accordance with the relevant international standards, is in progress, and, according to the Soviet side, it may last as long as two years. The Koreans selected six sites, which are now being geologically and seismographically located by land and air. The industrial area of Hamhung, situated on the coast of the Sea of Japan and equipped with proper infrastructure, seems to be the most probable site. The prospective length of construction time constitutes a problem. The Korean side would like to complete the construction [of the nuclear power plant] in five years, whereas the Soviet experts estimate that it will take 10 to 12 years.

Plans are prepared by the Soviet side; this is facilitated by the fact that a [nuclear] power plant of a similar capacity was already built in Cuba. The reactor, the blocks, the safety zone, and the supply units will be built by Soviet experts. For 5 years after their completion, all these facilities will be operated under the guidance of Soviet experts. The other related units, the external and biological safety zone, and the supply units will be built by the Korean side.

An agreement was reached that equipment of COMECON origin would be procured, with Soviet cooperation, by the Korean side, while convertible equipment would be ordered and paid for by the Soviet side, to the account of the Koreans.

The Korean side accepted that the construction and future operation of the power plant would be in accordance with the standards of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and, of course, that organization would be able to enforce its right to conduct inspections.

The leaders of the Korean work brigades will have to undergo further vocational training in the Soviet Union before the start of construction.

[North Korean] geological surveys for uranium ore will be speeded up with Soviet cooperation; the initial results are encouraging, but for a certain time the Soviet Union will provide the power plant with enriched uranium.

At his request, Comrade [Ferenc] Rátkai was informed about the aforementioned issues by the 1st secretary of the Soviet embassy, who is dealing with questions of economic policy.

Dr. János Taraba
ambassador

Document No. 52

Excerpt from the Report on the Visit by Erich Honecker to the DPRK, 18-21 October 1986

[Source: Foundation Archive of the Parties and Mass Organizations in the Federal Archive [Berlin] (SAPMO-BA), DY 30, 2460. Translated by Grace Leonard. The full text was published in CWHIP Bulletin 14/15, Issue 14/15, pp. 65-68]

[in the course of a far-ranging discussion with GDR leader Erich Honecker, whom Kim Il Sung referred to as his “best friend”]

As to the situation in South Korea, Comrade Kim Il Sung stated that the anti-American mood has grown even more among the population and in religious circles. But no rapid change in relations among the powers is to be expected.

The US rejected proposals made by the DPRK for reducing tensions on the Korean peninsula because it [would] lose its reason for remaining in South Korea if the initiatives were realized.

Comrade Kim Il Sung affirmed that the DPRK does not intend to attack South Korea, nor could it. More than 1,000 US nuclear warheads are stored in South Korea, ostensibly for defense, and it would take only two of them to destroy the DPRK. The DPRK supports the proposals made by Comrade Gorbachev in Vladivostok and Reykjavik. Many problems could not be solved with South Korea. Progress in relations between the Soviet Union and the US would also help resolve the Korea problem.

[...]

Document No. 53**Report, Embassy of Hungary in North Korea to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 30 May 1988.**

[Source: XIX-J-1-k Korea, 1988, 58. doboz, 81-5, 5654/1988. Obtained and translated for CWIHP by Balazs Szalontai]

The 22nd session of the Soviet-Korean Intergovernmental Economic, Technical, and Scientific [Consultative] Commission took place in Pyongyang from April 25 to May 3. The large group of Soviet experts arrived in the Korean capital a week before, while the head of the Soviet commission, First Deputy Premier V. S. Murakhovsky, the chairman of Agroprom, arrived on April 25. Kim Il Sung also received the delegation. [...]

At the meetings of the commission, [the participants] concentrated on the important questions, while the details were dealt with by the various subcommittees. The Korean side placed particular emphasis on the construction of the nuclear power plant, pressing that production by its first block should start by the end of the third Seven-Year Plan (1993). The Soviet side pointed out that the selection of the site was still in progress, for which the Korean side was to blame. The observation of international geological norms and safety requirements must be the sole standard; the Soviet side cannot depart from these! Thus, the protocol recorded that there was a difference of opinion between the two sides.

Nor was an agreement reached on the second stage of the reconstruction of the steel-works in Ch'ongjin. In the view of the Soviet side, the doubling of the present annual capacity of 1.2 million metric tons was not realistic for the time being, and, in spite of the Korean request, [the Soviet side] did not undertake to deliver the equipment this year.

[...]

The Soviet evaluation [of the talks] is that so far this was the most realistic session of the commission. [The North Koreans] avoided political stock phrases and concentrated on those issues that were actually realizable. They abandoned their previous principle, according to which the protocol had to record the unanimous opinion of both sides. The principle of mutuality prevailed to a substantially greater extent than before. Both sides were well prepared for the negotiations.

Ferenc Rátkai
chargé d'affaires