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Hungarian Foreign Ministry memorandum on the military-political situation in the Korean peninsula in 1973

[no date]

Military-political situation in the Korean peninsula in 1973

The military-political situation in the Korean peninsula remained relatively stable in the year of 1973 as a result of the general tendency to ease international tension – and within this the resolution of the Vietnam conflict and the gradual easing of the Middle East crisis.

No serious incident or other worrisome event took place close to the demarcation line or the demilitarized zone. Some rather insignificant incidents that did take place in the region at times were all discussed at the meetings of the Military Ceasefire Committee at the initiative of one of the parties and the opposing parties were content with warning the other that any violation of the ceasefire agreement was not to be tolerated.

Another factor playing a role in the relative stabilization of the situation is that dialog continued during this period too between the North and the South in the form of negotiations between Red Cross organizations as well as coordination committees, although these talks did not bring any concrete results either for the North or for the South. The reason for the extremely modest results and the protracted nature of the talks was that although in their joint communiqué issued on June 4, 1972 the North and the South undertook an obligation to cooperate in the peaceful unification of the country, the two parties had different goals in mind. In regard to the unification of the country the leaders of DPRK followed a line of policy aiming at the “revolutionization” of the South Korean society on the one hand, and they wished to use these talks for strengthening and widening their international positions on the other. The government of South Korea established contacts with the North most likely with the intention to eliminate the danger of a military intervention on the part of DPRK and get decisive advantage over the North in a political, military and economic sense alike. A further goal was to stabilize the dictatorial regime of Pak Chong Hi.

The “results” of the negotiations convinced the governments of DPRK and South Korea that the peaceful unification of the country could not be achieved in a short time; it would require a long, historic time. This, however, contradicts the basic position of DPRK’s government which says “the unification of the homeland brooks no delay whatsoever.”

The inflexible and maximalist position of DPRK, attempting to achieve concessions in the negotiations that South Korea would obviously not be willing to make /ensuring full democracy, invalidating anti-communist laws, broad-range exchange of people, withdrawal of the American troops, etc./, and the endeavor of the South Korean side to use the situation in the Korean peninsula to resolve their internal problems and consolidate their regime showed

that neither of the two parties expected any significant results from the negotiations, so they did not make any concessions.

As is well-known, in his statement of June 23, 1973 Pak Chong Hi declared that South Korea would no longer oppose the concurrent accession of North and South Korea to UN. This statement demonstrated that the South Korean leadership no longer believed in the possibility of peaceful unification that would be advantageous to South Korea, so it showed some readiness to modify its relations with North Korea along the lines of peaceful coexistence; that is, to maintain the current status quo in the Korean peninsula. At the same time, it also wanted to ensure the necessary legal and moral conditions for keeping the American troops stationed in South Korea.

This statement was like a cold shower to the leaders of DPRK, for North Korea made every effort it could to prevent the division of the country, the establishment of “two Koreas”, and to make sure that the American troops were withdrawn from South Korea. They were also shocked because after the joint communiqué of the North and the South they cherished ardent hopes of being able to unify the country. Kim Il Sung considers the unification of Korea as one of the major goals of his life.

Pak Chong Hi’s statement also strengthened the view of those in DPRK who did not believe in the peaceful, democratic unification of the country. This view is widespread especially in military circles in DPRK. When talking with diplomats, some military officers insist that the South Korean government is not willing to promote peaceful unification, so it is not worth conducting negotiations with the South. They maintain that the only way to resolve the issue is a military solution, and its timing depends on when the situation will be fit for it in South Korea. If a revolutionary situation were to evolve in the South, DPRK troops could enter South Korea by right of providing assistance, and the problem of unification would then be solved. North Korean military leaders believe that South Korea could be invaded quickly because at the moment DPRK has a much stronger land force and air force than the South and the fighting spirit and ideological preparedness of the DPRK army is much better. Military officials believe that in case a war breaks out DPRK would have military advantage over the South also because reserves and other kinds of assistance can be supplied for DPRK on land, while arms, ammunition and other war supplies must be shipped to South Korea on sea or by air. Taking all this into consideration the general staff of the Korean People’s Army worked out a plan of establishing a “fenced-off ring” around the Korean peninsula on sea and in air to prevent the shipment of war supplies for South Korean by the Americans. This military operation also anticipates that once military action begins the South Korean people will launch an active military campaign against Pak Chong Hi’s regime.

Due to the rigid attitude of the two parties the negotiations between the North and the South came to a deadlock both in the coordination committee and between Red Cross organizations, and only lower level meetings were held that discussed the possibility of further negotiations at higher levels. Serious talks were not resumed at either of the two main fronts.

As a reaction to Pak Chong Hi' statement Kim Il Sung submitted a proposal in five points concerning the peaceful unification of the country:

1. In the interest of improving the relations between the North and the South and promoting the peaceful unification of the homeland the most important task today is to eliminate military opposition and tension between the North and the South.
2. Multifaceted cooperation and exchanges should be achieved between the northern and the southern regions of Korea in the fields of politics, culture, economy and military matters to promote the unification of the country and improve relations between the North and the South.
3. To accomplish the unification of the country in a way that meets the needs and demands of our people the different social classes of the North and the South should all participate in the general, patriotic work of unifying the homeland. In his explanation attached to this point Kim Il Sung makes reference to the need for establishing a Great National Assembly comprising representatives of the North and the South.
4. In regard to bringing forward the unification of the country it is of utmost importance to establish a confederation of the North and the South as a unified state.
5. We have to prevent breaking our country into two Koreas for good by maintaining its division and we believe that the North and the South should make progress together in the field of foreign relations too. In his explanation to this point Kim Il Sung opposed any machination aimed at the establishment of two Koreas and stated that he was against the admission of the North and the South separately to UN. He also added that this could take place only after the establishment of the confederation as a new, unified state under the name of the Federal Republic of Koryo.

In his conversation with Comrade Todor Zhivkov Kim Il Sung confidentially told the Bulgarian leader that the call for the establishment of the confederation was nothing else but a political slogan that was meant to put pressure on the South Korean regime so they could win the support of the people of South Korea.

To put some pressure on Seoul, the government of DPRK also used the conflict that broke out in September 1973 between Japan and South Korea when Kim De Chun was kidnapped as well as some actions of South Korean students and other people against the government. At that time DPRK launched a broad propaganda campaign to discredit Pak Chong Hi's regime and disintegrate the South Korean society from the inside.

In his speech delivered on October 28, 1973 Kim Il Sung called upon all Korean fellow countrymen living all over the world to go to a patriotic battle against the permanent division of the country.

The relatively moderate tone of the agitprop of DPRK towards South Korea changed in the second half of 1973 and North Korea launched direct attacks on Pak Chong Hi, the "traitor of the country", the "dissident", the "murderer" and his regime.

It is quite possible that the hastily compiled five points concerning the unification of the country – which were totally unsuitable for negotiating with the South – were meant by the DPRK leadership to gain time in the struggle for unification so it could work out some new methods.

The failure of the first phase of the negotiations with the South prompted the leaders of DPRK to make some corrections in their unification proposals.

The meeting of the vice chairmen of the coordination committee held on January 30 this year discussed the issue of the reorganization of the coordination committee.

At the first meeting the representative of the South raised a proposal to increase the strength of the committee to ten, to which the representative of the North submitted a counterproposal to raise not only the number of members in the committee /including representatives of some 60-70 social and political organizations and representatives of Koreans living abroad/ but the level of representation as well, involving prime ministers, ministers, leaders of political parties and social organizations, universities, and other competent people. The representative of DPRK also demanded that members of the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency should not be granted the right to participate in the work of the committee.

At this meeting the South Korean party submitted a proposal to conclude a non-aggression pact between the North and the South. This proposal was flatly rejected by the northern party, stressing that such an agreement would make the division of the country permanent, and the commanding rights of the South Korean army lay with the high command of the US troops and not with the South Korean authorities anyhow.

At the meeting of the vice chairmen of the coordination committee on February 27 this year in Panmunjon the South Korean party rejected the proposal of the North concerning the reorganization of the committee and kept on repeating its own position. As an answer, the northern party proposed that if the southern party was not willing to agree to the reorganization of the committee, a consultative council of the North and the South should be set up in addition to and independent of the coordination committee. This council should include representatives of political parties, social organizations and various layers of the population, which in the view of the northern party would make it possible to represent the interest and intention of broad layers of society.

At the 5th conference of the vice presidents of the coordination committee held on March 27 this year the northern party accused South Korea of violating the principle of independent unification stated in the joint proclamation of the North and the South by insisting on keeping the US troops stationed in South Korea and by accepting growing support from Japanese militarist forces. At the same time the South also violated the principle of peaceful unification because it created a warlike atmosphere and increased tension between the North and the South. In addition, it violated the principle of great national consolidation too, because it went on with its anti-communist campaign and introduced oppressive measures against the people of South Korea.

The northern party established that Pak Chong Hi's statement made on June 23, 1973 concerning the concurrent accession of the two Koreas to UN was the declaration of a permanent division of the country as well as the rejection of dialog.

At this meeting the representative of DPRK defended the new line of policy advocated by DPRK which was aimed at concluding a peace treaty with the USA through direct negotiations. As is well-known, this proposal was made at the March session of the Supreme People's Assembly of DPRK this year. With respect to this proposal the representative of DPRK argued that the USA had full control over the political, economic, cultural and even military life of South Korea, and this is why the peace treaty should be signed with the USA as one of the parties signing the ceasefire agreement.

With this proposal DPRK rejected the principle of independence set forth in the joint proclamation of June 4, 1972, which stated that unification should be accomplished by the Koreans themselves without any external intervention.

The negotiations between the North and the South have not produced any significant results for either party up to this day either in the coordination committee or between Red Cross organizations. Practically speaking, they have come to a deadlock and the negotiating partners have become paralyzed. In the opinion of some diplomats of socialist countries the rigidity of the dialog –among other things – was also due to the position of the US and Japan concerning the issue of unification. The US, Japan and some Western European countries, as parties not having an interest in the unification of Korea, wished to maintain the status quo in the Korean peninsula and criticized the fascist methods and terrorist measures of Pak Chong Hi in the media concerning the kidnapping of Kim De Chun, and by doing some they encouraged, in some sense, the government of DPRK to reject negotiations with the fascist regime of Pak Chong Hi. The similar position of the Japanese Socialist Party was further encouragement in this respect. The leadership of JSP, probably after having coordinated its position with the government of DPRK, came out in support of Kim De Chun to replace the compromised Pak Chong Hi in power, although the former was also an anti-communist.

It has to be noted here that the proposals of DPRK concerning the peaceful unification of the country found better response in the world than the position of South Korea. This is shown by the fact that DPRK's proposals were supported by the 4th conference of the non-allied countries in Algeria as well as by the World Congress on Peace held in Moscow. The Soviet Union, the socialist countries and several non-allied countries played a key role in getting DPRK's position accepted worldwide and the government of DPRK made every effort to capitalize on it.

In 1973 DPRK entered into diplomatic relations with several Western European, African and Asian countries. It paid special attention to developing its relations with capitalist countries too. It entered into diplomatic relations with several countries that had already had such relations with South Korea. These countries also included the Scandinavian states. Between the period of January 1, 1973 and May 15, 1974 DPRK

entered into diplomatic relations with 21 countries, and at the moment it maintains such a relationship altogether with 69 countries.

The leaders of DPRK took steps to develop DPRK's relations with Japan, and in 1973, and then in March this year, it put out feelers to see if similar relations could be established with the US, with not much success though.

One important result of the dialog between the North and the South was that a government delegation of DPRK participated in the debate of the Korean issue at the 28th General Assembly of UN as a party equal to South Korea. In compliance with the resolution of the General Assembly the "United Nations Committee for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea", UNCURK was dissolved, which was seen in DPRK as one of the obstacles in the way of unifying the country.

At a crucial moment in the debate of the Korean issue the USA and other western countries made use of the inconsistent and unprincipled attitude of the DPRK delegation to achieve a compromise in the resolution. The compromise was made possible by the collusion of the USA and the People's Republic of China.

Now DPRK will have to decide whether to raise the Korea issue again in UN or to continue the negotiations with the South, putting ample pressure on it, or to try to approach the USA, seeking its support and consent.

Recently DPRK has made no secret of its intention to join UN as a full member. However, the leaders of DPRK will most likely need some more time to revise its program and principles of unification so it can create the necessary moral and psychological conditions in the country.

The fact that DPRK had already established diplomatic relations with several countries that also recognize South Korea and that in several international organizations North Korea had accustomed itself to the idea of joining UN concurrently with the South created an international situation that might lead to the recognition of two sovereign nations in the Korean peninsula. After having recognized the independent sovereignty of the North and the South several countries showed willingness to support the accession of DPRK and South Korea to UN.

In the year of 1973 the bilateral relations of DPRK and PRC improved further. It was especially at the end of 1973 when noticeable rapprochement could be observed in the foreign policy of DPRK towards China. The broadening of cooperation between DPRK and China was further facilitated by some changes in the foreign policy of China in the international battleground, the increase of its influence and role in international matters and by the fact that both parties keep silent about existing differences of opinion in dealing with the other. In 1973 significant development took place between the two countries in the field of military relations too. According to news coming from diplomatic circles in Pyongyang, and also based on personal observations, several Chinese military

delegations and representatives of the ministry of the interior have recently visited DPRK, of which there were no reports in the press.

Making use of the successes of China in foreign politics DPRK accepts the assistance of China in establishing diplomatic relations with countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America too.

Trade and economic relations have also developed considerably between DPRK and China. Total turnover in the exchange of goods amounted to 210 million rubles in 1973, showing a 10.5% increase as compared to 1972. The turnover in the exchange of goods with the Soviet Union during the same period decreased by 4% as a result of a dip in Soviet exports. China's share in the total foreign trade of DPRK in 1973 came up to 21.4%.

In 1973 DPRK significantly increased its trade relations with capitalist countries and the turnover with these countries now - including the turnover with China - amounts to over 50% of its total foreign trade turnover.

Recently there has been some rapprochement between DPRK and China in ideological matters too. DPRK practically has the same position as China concerning the principle of peaceful coexistence. This is shown by the fact that Chu En Lay's speech made at the 10th Congress of CCP was published in DPRK in full. Statements made in DPRK such as "what the superpowers say about disarmament is nothing but mere words, intended to deceive nations" are quite similar to official statement heard in China.

A position similar to that of China is reflected in Kim Il Sung's speech delivered on October 28, 1973, in which he did not formally reject the Leninist principle of peaceful coexistence though, but he criticized it sharply, saying that "we should not let the imperialists deceive us by talking about fake peace."

The government of DPRK has the same position as China concerning the ban on nuclear arms too.

According to the opinion of some diplomats of socialist countries the seemingly peace-oriented policy of DPRK, the statements of its leaders on endorsing the attempts to ease tension, on advocating peace, on supporting the reduction of armed forces and the independent and peaceful unification of the country are all part of a propaganda campaign targeting foreign countries.

The facts show that the leaders of DPRK have not given up their long-term strategy formulated by the 5th Congress of CWP in November 1970 that included "the armament of the whole population and the transformation of the entire country into a fortification", and they continue to seek ways of unifying the country, not excluding the possibility of an armed conflict.

At present the strength of the armed forces of DPRK amounts to two million and six hundred seventy thousand people. Of this total number one million and four hundred fifty thousand people serve in the worker-peasant's Red Guard and seven hundred fifty thousand in the Red Youth Guard.

DPRK's armed forces have 800 fighter planes, including 598 modern jet fighters, 320 men-of-war, including Wasp-type and Mosquito-type rocket-launcher vessels, 1,180 tanks and 200 other armored vehicles, 50 "Szam-2" anti-aircraft guns and 6 thousand other guns of various types.

DPRK continues to allocate huge amounts of money to military spending, much more than what is included in its official data. According to official communication 16.7% of the state budget was spent on military expenditure in 1973.

Since the end of 1973 there has been an increasingly stronger propaganda in DPRK on the danger of war. Leaders resumed talking about the need to further increase the strength of the military forces, increase the level of offensive armament and strengthen the power and fighting morale of the army, the worker-peasant's Red Guard and the red Youth Guard.

Despite statements on peace, according to which DPRK advocates the easing of tension on the Korean peninsula, in October 1973 Kim Il Sung issued an order to complete the military preparedness of the Korean People's Army. After this the same topic regularly recurred in statements of several Korean leaders. For instance, at a mass meeting organized in honor of a Bulgarian party and state delegation lead by Comrade Todor Zhivkov in Pyongyang on October 28, 1973 Kim Il Sung – among other things – said the following: "We believe that we should not dismiss the fight against imperialism and progress towards capitulation under the pretext of peace. We should not try to achieve security by making an unprincipled compromise with imperialism. We should not deceive ourselves by the fake peace offered to us and we should continue to increase vigilance against the aggressive machinations of the imperialists."

When outlining the political line of DPRK for 1974 in his new year's speech Kim Il Sung stressed that "like in the previous year, we should make every effort to improve the defensive capability of our country. Commanders and soldiers of the people's army and the guards should be armed with the Juche ideas of our party, continue to work energetically for reaching the required level of military preparedness and maintain vigilance and a state of alert."

At the ceremony held on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the worker-peasant's Red Guard – the revolutionary armed force of KCP – the Korean leadership repeatedly directed the attention of the people to the need for increasing political and military preparedness. These statements were immediately charged upon by the South Korean press, stressing that "Pyongyang can hardly deny the ambiguity of its policy if it does not stop increasing its military arsenal, which is more of an offensive than a defensive type."

Recently there have been several calls issued “for the armament of the entire nation, the need for gaining military knowledge and participating in military exercises and maneuvers”, “for the establishment of a general defense system that is strategically strong and comprises the entire country”, “for strengthening our defense capabilities with the help of the party and the whole nation so we can speed up preparations for the war together”, etc.

In accordance with the military line elaborated by the 5th Congress of KCP a lot of attention was devoted in 1973, like before, to the development of military industry and the completion of different underground defense facilities, military air and marine bases, rocket launcher sites, patrol posts and roads. Like in the previous years, the large-scale moral and military preparation of the people for the war continued in 1973 too. To this end, regular training sessions and military maneuvers were held all over the country this year, involving the entire population, men and women, elderly people and school children alike. Restrictions on the citizens and foreigners to travel in the country were maintained. Since October 1973 the surveillance of foreigners by the state security authorities of DPRK has noticeably increased.

The large network of intelligence training schools continues its programs in the whole country. These schools train intelligence agents to be sent to South Korea and other countries too.

By the end of 1973 the internal situation in South Korea has become rather complicated, despite the “extraordinary measures” of the Pak Chon Hi government. Since December 1971 the country has practically been living in a state of emergency.

In the October of 1973 some student movements broke out, demanding democratic and human rights, the dissolution of the Central Intelligence Agency and investigations into the kidnapping of Kim De Chun in Tokyo. The student movements were joined by legal parties and groups related to them too. To some extent these parties have regained their influence over the people after the transformation of the state structure of South Korea at the beginning of 1973.

In December 1973 there were several important changes in the South Korean government. Several ministers, among them Li Hu Rak, chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, were replaced.

There was a strong movement emerging in the country with the goal to reform the constitution and a campaign was launched to collect one million signatures endorsing the goal to invalidate the so-called “October reform constitution.” All the important opposition forces participated in this campaign.

In an attempt to crack down on the movement of students and other layers of the society the South Korean administration announced “extraordinary measures” on January 8, 1974 that banned any criticism of the so-called October reform constitution. Any

violation of these measures had the consequence of imprisonment of up to ten years. Special military courts were set up to convict people who violated the “extraordinary measures.” On April 3, 1974 Pak Chon Hi’s so-called “extraordinary measure No. 4” was published that held out the prospect of extremely severe punishment, including the death penalty, for those who got engaged in any anti-government activity.

To further stabilize the internal situation, the South Korean authorities introduced several different political and economic measures. The South Korean propaganda constantly stresses that an attack by the North is a real danger to the country.

The measures introduced by the Pak Chon Hi regime demonstrate that priority has been given to the consolidation of the internal situation. As a result of the “extraordinary measures” and other measures introduced by the Pak Chon Hi government, the internal situation has recently become somewhat consolidated and opposition activities on the part of the people have decreased. However, one can not say at all that the situation fully stabilized in South Korea; the possibility of further riots against the government can not be excluded.

In its foreign affairs activities the South Korean government took Pak Chon Hi’s statement issued on June 23, 1973 as a starting point, which envisaged the admission of the two Koreas to UN, further consolidation of relations with its allies and seeking new ways of establishing non-political relations with the socialist countries.

Following this statement of Pak Chon Hi, the confrontation between South Korea and DPRK became more intense again. Both parties renewed their propaganda campaign against the other.

There were several incidents taking place at the end of 1973 in the region close to the demarcation line, around five islands on the Yellow Sea. On February 15, 1974 DPRK’s patrol vessels sank a South Korean ship and captured another one.

In the midst of constant incidents between the South and the North relations between South Korea and the USA developed very actively. Several high-ranking delegations were exchanged by the two parties. In September 1973 representatives of Seoul and the USA held a conference on issues of security where the American party confirmed its readiness to meet its obligations concerning the modernization of the South Korean army and to extend the time of stationing its troops on South Korean land.

The relations of South Korea with Japan, which had grown worse after the kidnapping of Kim De Chun, got normal again by the end of 1973. The foreign relations of the country with the European capitalist countries and states of the third world also improved considerably.

In 1973 South Korea changed its pro-Israel policy in the Middle Eastern issue and stated that it would endorse the position of Arab countries that Israel should withdraw its troops from all the occupied Arab territories.

In January 1974 South Korea had diplomatic relations with 91 nations of the world.

Similarly to North Korea, South Korea also devoted a lot of attention during 1973 to develop its defense capabilities. To this end, it further developed its military industry, built new defense facilities, marine and air force bases, renewed the old ones and modernized strategic roads.

In the framework of a military aid package South Korea continued to receive various military equipment, vehicles, fighter planes, warships, long-range guns, missiles, etc. from the USA.

The Pak Chon Hi government considers the army as the main pillar of the regime, so it made great efforts to modernize its armament and openly increase its preparedness on the basis of anti-communist political principles.

To increase the preparedness of the armed forces, the national defense reserve troops, the military police forces and the population, South Korea regularly holds military maneuvers for its army and its citizens. Especially many such maneuvers were held in the fall of 1973 and the spring of 1974. The largest military air defense maneuvers took place on March 15, 1974, involving altogether 8 million people of 35 cities and 122 regional seats.

There is a comprehensive network of intelligence training schools operating in the country, training spies to be deployed in North Korea and other countries.

Considering that the relation between the North and the South does not make the peaceful unification of the country realistic, there is some reason to suppose that in the future both DPRK and South Korea will do their best to find the best methods to develop their military potential, ensure superiority over the other party, strengthen the internal situation of their respective countries and the power of their leaders, extend their international relations as far as possible and weaken the other party's position internally and internationally.

The pessimism of the leaders of DPRK concerning the dialog with the South is demonstrated by the proposal submitted to the US Congress by the Supreme People's Assembly of DPRK to conduct direct negotiations on working out a peace treaty.

Despite political and diplomatic confrontation, it seems that for the time being both the North and the South show some interest in maintaining bilateral relations.

In the present internal and international situation DPRK is unlikely to launch an open military offensive on South Korea. For such a move it would need the support of its allies /the Soviet Union and China/ or at least a definitive promise by one of them, and it seems that none of them is willing to make such a promise for the moment.

For various reasons the superpowers, with their own interests in mind, try to maintain the present status quo in the Korean peninsula.

Apparently China does not wish to complicate the development of its relations with the USA and as is well-known, it does not have any objection to keeping the US troops stationed in South Korea.

The USA, in the spirit of Nixon's statement that peace should be maintained on the basis of recognizing the realities of the situation, also endorses the stabilization of the situation in this region of the world.

As has been stated by Foreign Secretary Slesinger on March 3, 1974, for the time being the USA does not intend to withdraw its troops from South Korea.

The trade and economic interests of Japan also favor stabilization and the normalization of the situation in the Korean peninsula.

As the situation in the Korean peninsula is still rather complex, there is serious antagonism between the North and the South, both Kim Il Sung and Pak Chon Hi cherish their own personal ambitions, the negotiations between the North and the South have come to a deadlock and for the moment there is no realistic perspective for a peaceful unification of the two countries, it is quite likely that tension will increase in the Korean peninsula in the near future, especially at the demarcation line that separates North and South or in the region of coastal waters.

Thus, the Korean peninsula continues to be a potential "hotbed" where the interests and rights of the Soviet Union, the USA, China and Japan may come into conflict at any time.