

June 18, 1975

Information on the Talks between Kim Il Sung and Todor Zhivkov

Citation:

"Information on the Talks between Kim Il Sung and Todor Zhivkov", June 18, 1975, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office, Berlin (PoIA AA), MfAA, C 294/78. Obtained and Translated by for NKIDP by Bernd Schaefer. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/114282>

Summary:

Todor Zhivkov summarizes his official and private talks about Korean unification with Kim Il Sung during Kim's visit to Bulgaria in June 1975.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Leon Levy Foundation

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

GDR Embassy to the People's Republic of Bulgaria
Sofia, 18 June 1975

To: Member of Politburo and Secretary of SED Central Committee, Comrade Hermann Axen
Berlin

Dear Comrade Axen!

Enclosed I forward the original and two copies of a translation of "Information for the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party about the Talks between Comrades Todor Zhivkov and Kim Il Sung during the Visit of the DPRK Party and Government Delegation to Bulgaria from 2 to 5 June 1975".

This material was handed over by Comrade Tellalov to the ambassadors of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and to me on 17 June to forward to our party leaderships and governments. It is also still supposed to be shared with the Mongolian and Cuban comrades.

[. . .]

With socialist greetings
Wenning
[GDR Ambassador]

Enclosure

CC:

1x Central Committee, Department IV, Comrade Markowski
1x Foreign Ministry, Comrade Minister Fischer
1x Foreign Ministry, Comrade State Secretary Dr. Krolkowski

Working Translation

For Personal Information only, highly confidential!

About the Talks between Comrades Todor Zhivkov and Kim Il Sung during the Visit of the DPRK Party and Government Delegation to Bulgaria (2 to 5 June 1975)

During the official talks between the party and government delegations of the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the DPRK, and in private talks between Comrades Todor Shivkov and Kim Il Sung, a wide range of questions were discussed and positions of both countries outlined.

I. Questions discussed during official meetings of both delegations

[. . .]

2. [Kim Il Sung:] For Korean Unification

The second issue we are working on is strengthening the revolutionary movement in South Korea, the struggle for the withdrawal of foreign troops from South Korea, and the creation of conditions for peaceful unification of the country.

a. The movement for democratization of the society and the unification of the fatherland is growing in South Korea and very active. A deficit is the lacking active participation of workers and peasants in this movement. The intelligentsia are unable to deeply penetrate the village and the working class and exert respective influence. This is a result of the heavy repression in South Korea. The struggle for democratization of South Korean society is still highly active. In the past, as well as in the current year, the students were uprising for mass struggle. Educational institutions were closed down, a major part of students were drafted into the army, and another part ended up in prisons. That is the situation in South Korea.

b. We were forced to freeze peaceful dialogue with South Korea since they insist on creating two Koreas. This means in fact the eternal division of Korea. Such happened on instructions from the U.S. and Japan. By demanding the creation of two Koreas they aimed at shutting down the talks. We think we cannot achieve any results by talking to them. Moreover: What benefit would we have from talking to the dictator [Park Chung Hee] in a situation where the South Korean people are actively against him?

c. We are against creating two Koreas. The United States is attempting to turn South Korea into an American base. That is why they insist on petrifying the division. Japan has identical goals. The Japanese strive at maintaining the South Korean territory as a market for their goods and define the DMZ at the 38th parallel for the fight against communism. They claim, in light of the changed situation in Indochina, we will attack the South as well. In this context they make noise and continue to agitate against us. As a result, compared to previous years, the tension has increased. In South Korea they have begun an anti-communist campaign with new forms and frequently talk about a war with the DPRK.

d. Kissinger and the U.S. Defense Secretary repeat over and over again that they will not tolerate in South Korea what happened in Indochina and will continue their commitments. There are additional troop deployments in South Korea. Obviously, the Americans cannot achieve anything anymore. Their forces are spread out over many countries. This leads to the assumption that they cannot fight successfully any longer. Yet they are still imperialists.

e. We have to increase our vigilance and combat readiness. If they attack us, we are ready to fight them. However, we will never attack first. We even intend to have talks about a peaceful unification of the country in case there will be a democratic change in [South Korean] leadership. We have not refrained from using the slogan of the peaceful unification of the fatherland. We continue to insist on the three principles to achieve unification, namely autonomously, without foreign interference, in peaceful ways, and independently from ideological differences.

f. In the context of increasing the fight of the Korean people for unification, we deem

it necessary that ever more peoples from different countries in the world will raise their voice for the withdrawal of American forces from South Korea.

[. . .]

II. Issues discussed in private talks between Comrades Todor Zhivkov and Kim Il Sung

Comrades Todor Zhivkov and Kim Il Sung talked to each other in Varna for about three hours. They also talked while traveling there [from Sofia]. The following topics were discussed in these talks:

[. . .]

6. On Korean Unification

Comrade Kim Il Sung stated, after the U.S. defeat in Indochina, attention of the world is now focusing on the Korean question. Western news agencies would relentlessly report the DPRK will attack South Korea-- inspired by the Vietnamese victory. This is directed by the Americans and the South Korean puppets to increase repression against patriotic and democratic forces that fight for the democratization of society [in South Korea] and the unification of the fatherland.

The South Korean army (760,000 men) is stronger than the DPRK forces (500,000). The number of American forces was increased by 4,000, and now amounts to 42,000 troops. With only 16 million people and a shortage of workers in the DPRK, it will be very difficult to recruit and mobilize even more young people for the army. Also, the U.S. forces have equipment superior to North Korea's army.

Talking in more detail about the situation in South Korea, Kim stated the DPRK maintains relations with the New Democratic Party. It forms together with the Party of Democratic Unification and the Social-democratic Party the People's Front for the Unification of Korea. Religious leaders are also members of the People's Front, advocating democratization of society and Korean unification. Yet, mostly representatives of the middle class are part of the People's Front. Their relation with workers and peasants, as well as their influence among them, is still weak.

The Marxist party in South Korea, the Revolutionary Unification Party, is weak in numbers. It has about 3,000 members. They have centralized leadership and centralized leadership structures in the provinces. They have representatives in several factories but they are illegal and their activities are much impaired. Making active efforts among workers and peasants, and fighting openly against Park Chung Hee, would result in the liquidation of its leaders. Therefore, we have instructed the members of the Revolutionary Party to join the ranks of the legal opposition parties and increase their influence from there under the workers and peasants.

An important force in the struggle of the South Korean people for the democratization of society and Korean unification are the students that organize mass demonstrations against Park Chung Hee. All these forces are fighting an active struggle. Kim underlined that the de facto score between the forces fighting for Korean unification and those advocating the eternal division of the country and the creation of two Koreas is 2:1 in favor of the former when including the DPRK into the count.

Comrade Kim Il Sung explained that there are low-level contacts between DPRK and U.S. representatives in Panmunjeom. The Americans declared that U.S. forces will leave South Korean territory if the DPRK makes an official statement not to invade South Korea. The DPRK has frequently made such declarations, yet there are still American forces in South Korea.

There are two options to achieve the unification of Korea: either peacefully with diplomacy or by military means. Kim stated the DPRK continues to be committed to the first option and has not given up the slogan of the country's peaceful unification. Yet, its success requires American withdrawal, Park Chung Hee's international isolation, and the outbreak of an uprising in South Korea.

There is always a possibility for a revolt while U.S. forces are still present. Yet, the DPRK recommended some advice to the democratic forces in South Korea for their actions. Obviously, Kim said, there is always the option they do not listen to us and rise up.

Geographical and natural conditions in South Korea are very different from Vietnam's. South Korea has no neighboring territories like Vietnam has in Laos and Cambodia, and it is surrounded by sea on three sides. In the case of a move by the Korean army into the South, Northern forces would be in great danger of entrapment and encirclement. Also, there is no fertile ground for a sustainable guerrilla war. The forces of the adversary are strong and small unit fighting cannot be successful. For all these reasons, the DPRK does not favor a military method to solve the unification problem.

Kim Il Sung concluded that this does not mean the DPRK will be unable to defend its achievements if attacked. To the contrary, it increases its vigilance. The DPRK is ready to fight if attacked. Kim emphasized that its mountain ranges and submerged rice paddies are natural obstacles for any enemy to move forward rapidly in case of an aggression. The enemy could only resort to air power, but countermeasures are already in place - underground bunkers, factories, power plants and so on. Then Kim stressed that there is the huge supportive hinterland of the allies Soviet Union and China. In essence, Kim stated that the KWP and DPRK's positions are aiming at solving the question of Korean unification peacefully. However, it will take a lot of time.