

April 21, 1962

**Record of Chairman Liu Shaoqi's Conversation with
Korean Ambassador to China Han Ik-su**

Citation:

"Record of Chairman Liu Shaoqi's Conversation with Korean Ambassador to China Han Ik-su", April 21, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 106-01380-05, 56-60.
Translated by Stephen Mercado.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/119000>

Summary:

During a courtesy call with the new North Korean ambassador, Liu Shaoqi offers his views on Sino-Korean and Sino-Indian relations.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Henry Luce Foundation

Original Language:

Chinese

Contents:

Translation - English

Record of Chairman Liu Shaoqi's Conversation with Korean Ambassador to China Han Ik-su

(President Liu has yet to review and approve)

After the presentation of credentials there took place a conversation primarily on relations between China and Korea

Time: 4:00 p.m., 21 April 1962

Place: Great Hall of the People

Those in attendance:

Our side: Vice Minister Ji Pengfei, Department Director Zhou Qiuye, Department Deputy Director Ge Buhai

Korean side: Embassy counselors Ma Dong-san, Jeong Bong-gyu [Chong Bong-gyu]

Interpreter: Jiang Longqiu

Recorder: Tang Yingbin

Liu: Welcome, Comrade Ambassador.

Han: Is Comrade President in good health?

Liu: I am fine.

Han: Comrade Kim Il Sung [Kim Il-song] has asked me to express his best wishes for Comrade President's health.

Liu: How has Comrade Kim Il Sung's health been lately?

Han: All right, thank you. A few days ago he was feeling some discomfort. Recently he has been feeling somewhat better and has been resting for several days.

Liu: I heard that from the doctor. I hope that he recovers quickly. Comrade Kim Il Sung asked about my health. Please convey to him that I am fine. Please convey my regards to Comrade Kim Il Sung, Comrade Choe Yong-geon [Choe Yong-gon], and other leading comrades of the Workers Party of Korea and government.

Han: Thank you. I will surely convey them right away. Comrade Kim Il Sung will not rest too long and will be better soon.

Liu: Did I hear that the Ambassador was in Czechoslovakia?

Han: In 1957, I was in Czechoslovakia.

Liu: Have you been to China before?

Han: I was born in China, in Helong County, Jilin Province, and grew up there. It was after Liberation when I finally went to Korea.

Liu: Then you can speak Chinese?

Han: I spoke it in the past, but I have not spoken it for a long time, so I have forgotten much of it. Now I will have to recover it little by little.

Liu: Are there relatives of Comrade Ambassador in China?

Han: There are. Most of them are still in China: some cousins on my father's side and some members of my mother's family.

Liu: Wonderful. You understand China very well. Between our two countries, a great many among the Korean colleagues understand China, but not many Chinese comrades understand Korea. China's ethnic Korean comrades have a relatively good understanding of Korea, but among the Han Chinese there is too little understanding of Korea. Han Chinese do not speak Korean, but there are many Koreans who speak Chinese. This shows that in the past we had some great-power chauvinism and great-nation chauvinism. This is the legacy of historic great-nation chauvinism.

In the future, every nation in the world will mix together. Of course, this is still a matter of thousands of years, but it will be this way. China has Manchus, who in China established the Manchu Qing Dynasty in Beijing and ruled China for two hundred years. They absorbed Han Chinese culture and came to speak Chinese. As a result, now they have completely mixed with the Han Chinese and become indistinguishable from them. They were not forced, because they were the emperors. Nobody forced them. Now one of their emperors is here, the last emperor. He even spoke at the recently convened Chinese People's Consultative Conference. His name is Pu Yi. At the end of the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression, the Soviet Union arrested him and later handed him over to us. We put him away for 10 years and then pardoned him. He was in prison for 10 years and learned a great deal of Marxism-Leninism. He thought that he would be unable to live but, now that we have released him, is very happy and unexpectedly delighted. It seems now that his rebirth was not a sham. The book he wrote, "From Emperor to Citizen," has not yet been published. He has written of his previous life of error, laying himself bare and saying that he wanted to correct his mistakes. Perhaps you will meet him later.

Comrade Ambassador, now that you have come to China, I believe that you will surely be able to work well. Our two countries are fraternal and friendly countries. In the struggle against imperialism and colonialism, our positions and interests are the same. Such friendly relations must be forever maintained and continuously developed.

Han: Yes. Comrade President, I believe that we will achieve great results in the work to come. Of course, speaking from my own perspective, having been born in China and lived a long time with Chinese comrades, I well understand everything from Chinese customs and habits and how the Chinese comrades work to the climate. Relations between our two countries, as Comrade President has said, are those of friendship forged in blood, perhaps equal to those of family members. We have fought side by side, and our positions and interests are the same. It has been this way in history. Even more so, we have helped one another in the work of building socialism. Under such conditions, I have come to China to work and obtain some results, which is exactly as it should be. I am convinced that the militant friendship between our two countries will surely forever continue to develop.

Liu: Yes, that is right.

Han: Comrade Kim Il Sung has often spoken in regard to this point as well and often used it to teach us, saying that the militant friendship of Korea and China, formed in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the Fatherland Liberation War, were tested and will continue forever.

Liu: Yes, the relations between our two countries were tested and formed, and the relations between our two countries are the same as those between two persons,

having had to pass some tests. We must not be afraid to make mistakes. We cannot say that there have been no mistakes. It is not possible for there not to be any mistakes. (two lines blacked out) China is a great power and a great nation, so we are liable to commit great-power chauvinism. We must certainly be on guard against it and pay conscious attention to this problem. A small power, too, may make a mistake, which is called small-power chauvinism. There is also what is called narrow nationalism. In China, we also call it local nationalism. It is easy to speak of friendly relations. But we must always have many exchanges and we should be prudent in them, must strive not to make mistakes, and not commit any to the extent possible. But we will make some mistakes. It is impossible to say that we will not commit any. Therefore, we must also consider what to do once we do make a mistake.

It is easy, once having made a mistake, to correct it. We must adopt this attitude between fraternal countries. At times, this attitude is not be adopted and relations between countries do not go well for a time.

Han: Comrade President, what you say is correct. It is not possible for a revolutionary party or a revolutionary not to make a mistake. Lenin said that it is impossible to make a revolution without making mistakes (not checked yet against original Chinese translation).

(section redacted from document)

Comrade Kim Il Sung has often spoken of this and said that the Chinese Party has handled matters thoroughly and well.

Liu: Yes, we have adopted this attitude towards other countries as well, adopted this attitude towards fraternal countries and, at the same time, towards some other capitalist countries of Asia and Africa, such as Cambodia, that have been friendly towards us.

However, it is not so easy regarding those countries that are unfriendly, such as India, which in fact has committed great-power chauvinism, wanting to act in our Tibet and direct the Dalai Lama's rebellion. Because India was not pleased after we had pacified the rebellion in Tibet, it sought for a border issue to cause trouble and then attacked. May we not defend ourselves? When bullets are fired, many persons will die. At first something happened there and people were killed, but neither their higher authorities nor ours knew what was happening, nor did local leaders there. Lower-level authorities did it. As long as both sides discuss their faults and make reparations, it will not be a major problem. If resolved, it will be over and done with, but they have not done so.

At present India, as I see it, is increasingly prone to imperialism and dependent on foreign debt, first of all from the United States, then from the Soviet Union, as well as from such countries as Britain, France, West Germany, and Canada. They are depending on foreign debt for construction. How will that go? Foreign debt has to be repaid. What will they do in the future?

We, too, borrowed in the past, borrowing from the Soviet Union. I do not know if you Koreans have had any experience in this issue of borrowing money, but it is not good! Now we have already repaid most of it; there is still a small part of it that we have not yet repaid. We borrowed mainly due to the Korean War. There was also some needed for construction. Now we are working to repay the debt, and we do not want a penny of it. Repayment is hard work. Do you Koreans have any experience of it? India has borrowed heavily, and I think it will be unable to repay its debts.

Han: Repaying debt is hard work. Honestly, although we cannot say that what we

have borrowed heavily, our Party and government know it and think that China's repaying its debt at such a difficult time as now is hard. We often think of this.

The Chinese people have given us great and timely help. This is the friendship that future generations of our descendants can never forget.

Liu: You have also helped us. This is helping one another.

Han: You may say that it is helping one another, but what we have given you is not as great as what you have given us.

Liu: In fact, that is not necessarily so.

Han: But it really is so. China has always helped us in our times of greatest difficulty. It was so at the time of our Fatherland Liberation War, it goes without saying, and also after the war. Certainly, the period is certainly very important from the perspective of when help is given. Help given in times of greatest difficulty is thousands of times greater than that given in ordinary times. We will never forget your help. Comrade Kim Il Sung has often mentioned that in our most difficult time for food, things were also very difficult for China, but the Chinese comrades gave us food. He has often said, and recently said, that China has helped us in spite of its own difficulties, that if we had not had the aid at that time, the difficulty would have been very difficult to overcome, and that we certainly must develop friendly relations between our two parties and peoples.

Liu: Yes, these relations certainly must develop. It was right at that time to have given help. If we had not given help, that would not have been right. Is that not the case?

Han: That is right.

Liu: It is this way for every country. All need friendship and, in difficult times, each must help the other. You, for example, need our friendship. Without it, you would feel pain. It is the same for us. In my view, the Soviet Union also needs it. Lenin said before that it needs it. Stalin, too, said so. Therefore, without friendship, it is also difficult for great powers.

You need our friendship, and we need yours. On two of our sides, you are on our eastern side and Vietnam is on our southern side. We have friendly relations, which are necessary for us both. It would be a difficult situation, otherwise.

Han: Comrade Kim Il Sung, too, often raises these issues and our Party has a profound understanding regarding them. Our two countries formed a militant friendship in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and in Korea's Fatherland Liberation War, a friendship also very much needed in the cause of building communism. This is also necessary from the perspective of geographic conditions, which are very significant. In fact, from the perspective of geographic conditions, if Korea really has any problem, things would not be peaceful for China, either. Our country's people know that, no matter when, we must always be with the Chinese people.

Liu: Therefore, our two countries must be together. If you have anything to your disadvantage, we will think of how to deal with it like one of our own problems.

Our fates are the same, something called a common destiny. We take great care to

understand the construction policies and achievements in Korea of the Workers Party of Korea and Comrade Kim Il Sung.

We are very pleased to see the achievements of the Korean people and believe that your construction policy is quite correct.

Han: Yes, under the wise leadership of Comrade Kim Il Sung, it is true that we can thus advance without making nearly any mistakes. Particularly in domestic construction, the speed is relatively fast. This shows that our country has wise leadership and a correct line.

But Comrade Kim Il Sung also has often said that this is inseparable from the help of fraternal countries, particularly China, which has given us tremendous help in every difficult period.

Liu: It is still aiding one another. All right, then! This is the end of our discussion today. We will talk again the next time that we have a chance.

Han: Today, Comrade President has spent such a long time talking with me. Thank you very much.

CC: [Liu] Shaoqi, [Zhou] Enlai, [Deng] Xiaoping, Peng Zhen, He Long, [Wang] Jiaxiang, [Yang] Shangkun, [Luo] Ruiqing, Kong Yuan, Fang Yi, Central Committee Office of Confidential Secretaries, Office of Foreign Affairs (4), Central Propaganda Department (2), International Liaison Department (5), Investigation Department (4), [Wu] Lengxi, [Zhu] Muzhi

Chen, Zhang, Ji, Huang, Qiao, Han, General Office (3), Policy Research Office, Second Asian Affairs Department (2), Information Department, Protocol Department, Ambassador, 3 file copies, 46 copies in total

Received on 1 May 1962 Submitted for printing on 3 May 1962
General Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Printed and distributed on 7 May 1962