

Dispelling Gonzaloist Legends about Korea



The article on [*The August Incident: The Struggle Against the Right Opportunist Line in the Workers' Party of Korea*](#), published by Tjen Folket Media a few years ago, makes an attempt to reconstruct the factional struggle in the WPK in 1956 by drawing mostly on declassified Soviet diplomatic reports available on Wilson Center Digital Archive.

The essay is not relevant as a work of historical research since it confines itself to repeat conclusions already reached by bourgeois scholarship while merely putting a “red” cap on them, but its effort to portray the leaders of the Yanan faction as hard-line Maoists is exerting some influence on the supporters of Chairman Mao in various countries and added to the ultra-left tropes against the DPRK. So a closer examination is needed to re-establish historical truth about anti-revisionist struggle in Korea.

1. Essence of the Dispute

The authors warn that “the article may contain some shortcomings”, and its main fault is the lack of ideological substance. It describes organizational measures taken by Kim Il Sung against the factionalists but it fails to tell us what their contrast was about, it doesn't explain their different political platforms and the source of their contradictions; it just labels Kim Il Sung as “the leader of the right opportunist line” and Kim Tu Bong as a representative of “the left red line” without any explication. And this is by no means casual: had the authors properly examined the factionalists' ideas as they appear from every available historical document—including the very sources they quote—they would have to reverse their labels.

In his [talk](#) to the Soviet ambassador Ivanov — which took place on 8 June 1956, not “a month later” than the August Plenum, by the way — “Choe [Chang Ik] then expressed the opinion that the work of the WPK Third Congress had not been permeated by the spirit of the CPSU Twentieth Congress. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union showed an example for all Communist and workers' parties of how to disclose existing shortcomings and mistakes in [their] work and to struggle to eliminate them. At the same time there was essentially none of the necessary criticism and self-criticism at the Third Congress which would have promoted the consolidation of our party.”

Choe Chang Ik, the chief representative of the Yanan faction and “one of the leaders from the left line” according to Tjen Folket Media, viewed the vilification of Stalin by Khrushchev at the 20th CPSU Congress as an example to follow and regretted that the 3rd WPK Congress went otherwise. He was not alone in this assessment. The CPSU had sent a delegation to the 3rd WPK Congress led by none other than L.I Brezhnev, who wrote a very unfavourable [review](#) of that gathering:

The reports and the speeches were not permeated with the spirit of the 20th CPSU congress. Pomposity, phrase-mongering, and an assemblage of high-flown phrases and words were a characteristic feature of the majority of the speeches at the congress: “a revolutionary approach to the masses”, “revolutionary achievements”, “struggle against subjectivism and bureaucratism”, “brilliant victories”, etc. (...)

On the eve of the congress a classified KWP CC letter, “Some Issues Connected with the Study of the Report of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev at the 20th CPSU Congress”, was distributed to all Party organizations. The letter was permeated by the most bombastic glorification of the KWP, its CC, and Cde. Kim Il Sung. The letter pursued the idea that whereas violations of the Leninist principles of collective leadership, the cult of personality, and violations of socialist legality had been committed in the CPSU, the KWP and its CC have firmly and consistently implemented a Marxist-Leninist line on all these issues. The letter gives a mistaken interpretation of some issues of the ideological work of the KWP.

In particular, when correctly raising the issue of a broader study and propagandizing of the history and culture of the Korean people, the KWP CC letter calls for a vigorous fight against “a mechanical imitation of everything foreign, ‘alien’”.

It is clearly evident from the letter that by “foreign” and “alien” the authors mean everything Soviet. On the whole the classified KWP CC letter, “Some Issues Connected with the Study of the Report of Cde. N. S. Khrushchev at the 20th CPSU Congress”, demonstrates that the Korean comrades did not understand the decisions of the 20th CPSU congress. Such a letter is an impermissible event for a Marxist Party. (...)

Considering that the WPK leadership is infected with the spirit of self-glorification and embellishment of reality, it incorrectly assesses the republic’s economy, and is surrounded by people among whom there are many people who are unseasoned, incapable of work, and are sycophants, and is one of the main reasons for the serious shortcomings and a series of mistakes in the work of the KWP, [I] would think it necessary to direct the attention of Cde. Kim Il Sung to this during his stay in Moscow.

The Workers’ Party of Korea was trying to shield itself from the waves of “destalinization” coming from Moscow while paying only lip service to the line of the 20th Congress, and Soviet revisionists clearly noticed it; they were already worried by the Juche ideological campaign in 1955 that targeted members of the Irkutsk faction within the WPK. As they voiced their discontentment at the 3rd Congress, they started establishing ties with the Yanan faction and discussing ways to influence Kim Il Sung with Ri Sang Jo, the DPRK ambassador in Moscow, who asked to meet the Soviet deputy foreign minister on 29 May 1956.

As N. T. Fedorenko reported in his [journal](#), “The ambassador stressed that the Korean officials of the public security organs are in great need of assistance from Soviet comrades inasmuch as an erroneous method of operation of the organs has existed to date in the DPRK and this ought to be decisively changed. It would be very important, said Ri Sang Jo, for these officials to become deeply familiar with and master in practice the CPSU CC’s approaches regarding the strictest observance of revolutionary legality.”

In 1956 Khrushchev released 350,000 political criminals (70% of the total) while Beria had freed 1.2 million of common offenders in 1953, thus marking the start of a decade of unrest caused by those old class enemies which never fitted in Soviet society. And while dark clouds were already looming over Hungary and Syngman Rhee was boasting about “march to the North”, internal opponents of Kim Il Sung pushed for a relaxation of class struggle and Party guidance over judicial bodies following the footsteps of Soviet revisionism. The effects of the misguided “assistance” Ri Sang Jo called for were mentioned by Kim Il Sung two years later, at the WPK Conference on 6 March 1958:

The dictatorship of the proletariat is a powerful weapon of the working class in thoroughly crushing all the counter-revolutionary elements hostile to the socialist revolution and in defending the interests of the working people and the revolution.

Our judicial organs, however, under the pretext of “protecting human rights”, disturbed social order by freeing hostile elements such as Ri Man Hwa, a Christian, who had turned against our Party and the revolution, and by releasing many prisoners who had perpetrated hostile acts. Our state power is a weapon for protecting the interests of the working people and the revolution; it cannot be a weapon which protects the interests of the hostile classes that oppose us. This tendency in the judiciary is a revisionist one which is against the dictatorship of the proletariat. — *Works*, vol. 12, Foreign Language Publishing House, Pyongyang 1983, p. 119.

What were the ideas behind such tendency? Kim Il Sung further recalled:

In our country revisionism found expression in the rejection of the Party’s leadership and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Kim Tu Bong said that the Presidium of the Supreme People’s Assembly stood above the Party. What does that mean? It means that the Presidium rejects the Party’s leadership. So Hwi said: “The Party is not entitled to lead the trade unions. The membership of the trade unions is greater than that of the Party; they are a larger organization than the Party. Those who are working in Party organizations should obey the leadership of the trade unions because they are all trade union members. The trade unions should get rid of the tutelage of the Party.” Kim Ul Gyu said that the People’s Army was not the army of the Party, but rather “the army of the united front”. All these are ideological viewpoints which reject the Party’s leadership. — *Works*, vol. 12, Foreign Language Publishing House, Pyongyang 1983, pp. 117-118.

The same individuals Tjen Folknet Media depicts as orthodox Maoists and fondly quotes as reliable sources about Kim Il Sung’s methods were carriers of modern revisionism, undermining proletarian dictatorship and Party leadership over civil society. Kim Tu Bong, a former anarchist dubbed as the leader of the Yanan faction, was not directly involved in the conspiracy but sympathized with the views of its promoters. As Kim Sung Hwa told S. N. Filatov, counsellor of the Soviet Embassy, on 24 July 1956: “Kim Tu-bong indicated that the Kim Il Song personality cult was widespread in the WPK and that although after the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party all Communist parties have been seriously engaged in an attempt to overcome the personality cult and its consequences, nothing has been done in our party so far... [Kim Tu-bong said that] Kim Il Sung does not want to rectify his mistakes.”

Once it became clear that Kim Il Sung had no intention of following the “advice” to destalinize he got from Khrushchev during his trip in Moscow, from 10 July to 2 August 1956 Pak Chang Ok, Choe Chang Ik, Yun Gong Hum and other factional elements visited the Soviet embassy to get support for their scheme, hinting at the need to oust Kim Il Sung. The most outspoken statement came from Li Pil Gyu, recorded in the [diary](#) of charge d'affaires A.M. Petrov on 20 July: “In his opinion, a group of officials consider it necessary to undertake certain actions against Kim Il Sung and his closest associates at the earliest possible opportunity.

In response to my question about what exactly those actions would consist of, Li answered that the group set before itself the task of replacing the present leadership of the CC WPK and government. In his opinion, there were two ways of doing this. The first way – that is sharp and decisive criticism within the Party and self-criticism. However, Li said, Kim Il Sung would likely not be in favor of that way and he doubted the success of such an approach. The second way was forcible upheaval. That was a difficult path, Li said, involving sacrifice. In the DPRK there were such people who can embark on that course and who were currently making appropriate preparations. (...) Li requested that I consider the contents of our conversation strictly confidential and not, under any conditions, inform the Korean leadership of them.”

Factionalists were secretly plotting a coup against the WPK leadership with the support of a foreign power, as it appears from this document though the most sensitive papers are still classified. They tried to involve those Korean who had lived in the USSR like Pak Jong Ae and Nam Il in the conspiracy, but they stood loyal to Party leadership and warned Kim Il Sung: “When I returned from a visit to the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in Europe in 1956, Ri Ul Sol, the chief aide-de-camp, called on me one day and warned me to take care, exposing in detail the suspicious movements of Choe Chang Ik and Pak Chang Ok.

Nam Il also informed me on the phone of their suspicious behaviour.” (*With the Century*, vol. 8, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Pyongyang 1998, p. 260) Since their schemes were known in advance, the CC Plenum was postponed until the end of the month while telling a wrong date (2 August) to complicit Soviet embassy personnel, security forces were alerted and surveillance on factionalists was increased to prevent a military coup. The game was set and the final showdown took place on 30 August 1956.

What really happened to the Plenary Meeting? Why were factionalists whistled by the audience? The [speech](#) by Yun Gong Hum is available from the archives for everyone to read:

As everyone knows, the 20th CPSU congress has the greatest historical importance for the international Communist movement. A deep Marxist analysis of the contemporary international revolutionary movement was given in the decisions of this congress; they should become the action program of Marxist Parties and worker's parties of the entire world, including our Party, too.

In spite of this, under the pretext of a so-called "national spirit" and so-called "national features" part of the officials of the leading nucleus of our Party did not intend to put the decisions of the 20th CPSU congress into effect, and what is more, they consider [them] incorrect, as a result of which a number of serious mistakes continue to be made at the present time with which our Party, being loyal to Marxism-Leninism, cannot tolerate. (...)

However, how did the 3rd congress of the Korean Worker's Party, convened after the 20th CPSU congress, go? The 3rd congress of the Worker's Party was not guided by the spirit of the decisions of the 20th CPSU congress. (...) It was not noted in the summary report to the congress, in the resolutions of the congress, or in the statements at the congress how necessary it is to learn from the 20th CPSU congress. (...)

Why not bring the spirit of the decisions of the 20th CPSU congress to the people and the members of our Party? One of the most important rules of Marxism-Leninism is to explain the role of the popular masses, the Party, and individual personalities in history, to explain that the main force of historical development is the popular masses, and to also explain how great are the merits of political leaders; a cult of personality cannot be permitted with regard to them.

Why did the third congress of our Party did not want to hold a deep discussion of the different issues touching on the principles of Party life, the ties between leaders and the Party and popular masses and the leadership of the revolution and policy, based on the experience of the 20th CPSU congress and the experience of the fraternal Parties? (...) The reason that the 20th CPSU congress is considered incorrect ought not be sought anywhere else.

It is that in the decisions of the 20th congress a deep Marxist-Leninist analysis of the work in the past was given, an irreconcilable struggle against the cult of personality of Stalin was unleashed, and measures were outlined to decisively overcome its harmful consequences. The fact is, these decisions are opposed to and declare a fight against the cult of personality, which leads to a reduction of the role of the Party and the popular masses and a reduction of the role of collective leadership inside the Party, often carrying with it serious oversights in work and gross violations of socialist legality.

What they fear is that the more the spirit of the decisions of the 20th congress are implemented consistently, the stronger will be the blow to the ideology of the cult of personality, which is seriously spreading in our Party; the more the Leninist principles of Party life are guaranteed the more an atmosphere of democracy will develop, and the more successfully the shortcomings which exist in Party life and Party work will be exposed.

I am thinking of the following: not to follow the spirit of the decisions of the 20th congress when working out the policy of our Party itself means intolerable factional actions betraying Marxism-Leninism; such a situation is intolerable in our Party, one of the constituent parts of the international Communist movement. (...) The 20th CPSU congress has actually become a beacon of the world revolutionary movement. Its policy documents have enriched Marxist-Leninism even more, and clearly indicated the movement's path forward to the workers of the entire world and Marxist-Leninist Parties.

It would be hard to speak in clearer terms: factionalists swore their allegiance to the 20th CPSU Congress all the time and wanted to force its "spirit" on the WPK, to import the struggle against "cult of personality" in Korea along with Khrushchevite revisionism. Not surprisingly, members of the Party Central Committee were indignant at such attacks and lost their temper. As the conspiracy had failed and the Yanan faction was being purged, So Hwi, Yi Pil Gyu, Kim Kang and Yun Gong Hum fled to China. Maybe this is enough to include them in the "left line", according to Tjen Folknet Media.

But the authors of the article are certainly familiar with Mao Zedong's saying that "We should support whatever the enemy opposes and oppose whatever the enemy supports." So let's listen to the notorious anti-communist historian Andrei Lankov: "The crisis of 1956 basically was a conflict of two trends: the more indigenous, more independent, more nationalist, but also more repressive, reckless, and eventually harsh political line personified by Kim Il Sung versus the more open-minded, more liberal, but also pro-foreign political line personified by the opposition leaders. (...)

The moderate and incomplete but still beneficent Khrushchev-type reforms that swept through a majority of the Communist countries in 1955–1960 were ruled out by the new political environment in North Korea. (...) The movement toward a less oppressive, more liberal society—perhaps not necessarily inconceivable in the 1950s—was halted. North Korean state socialism was to become one of the harshest, most inflexible, most oppressive, and, ultimately, most economically devastating of its kind." (*Crisis in North Korea*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu 2005, pp. 95, 221, 223)

Ambassador Ri Sang Jo, equally displeased with the outcome, [appealed](#) directly to Nikita Khrushchev. It's by no way casual that he ended his life as a traitor of communism, blaming Kim Il Sung for the Korean war on a visit to Seoul in 1989.

2. Soviet and Chinese Involvement

A major reason why Tjen Folknet Media mistook those who—according to every available evidence— were a right-wing Khrushchevites for spotless revolutionaries is that the CPC, later a champion of anti-revisionism, intervened to support them. But how did the Chinese approach the August incident?

In his [talk](#) to the Soviet delegation on 18 September 1956 Mao Zedong said: “The 20th Soviet Party Congress was very unfavorable to Kim Il Sung. The 20th Party Congress revealed Stalin’s mistakes, and Kim Il Sung is still doing the Stalin thing. He brooks no word of opposition. He kills whoever opposes him.”

“Indeed, Kim Il Sung is doing the Stalin thing,” Mikoyan replied, and went on to utter all sort of attacks against Stalin. He went so far to hint at the possible rehabilitation of Bukharin, a step only Gorbachev dared taking in 1988. Ill-informed by factionalists and having yet to realize the implications of what Khrushchev did against Stalin, Mao was accommodating to this.

Khrushchev’s right-hand man even celebrated his interference in Hungary which led to the downfall and exile of Rakosi: “After the 20th Congress of the CPSU, there were also abnormal phenomena inside the Hungarian party. I was on vacation at the time, and went to Hungary. Now it seems that I also interfered in their internal affairs. I interfered but the problem was resolved.” Less than two months later, Hungary entered a social turmoil which led to the attempted counter-revolution in October 1956.

The WPK leadership clearly detected the intention of factionalist and their external supporters to repeat the same operation, as Kim Chang Man said at their subsequent [meeting](#) with the Soviet delegation on 20 September 1956: “After the departure of the government delegation headed by Kim Il Sung to the democratic countries Choe Chang Ik and his group began work. They said that inasmuch as after the 20th congress they changed leaders in the other fraternal Parties, then it could be done here, too, in the WPK. It is known that they replaced Cde. Rakosi in Hungary, and Cde. Chervenkov in Bulgaria. Although in reality we did not have such terrible consequences as in these countries. Choe Chang Ik thought that we had such consequences.”

Mikoyan quickly denied the allegation of wanting to oust Kim Il Sung and adopted a diplomatic tone at the meeting. According to V. V. Kovyshenko, an official of the International Department of CC in charge of Korean affairs who was included in the CPSU delegation, precisely after that meeting Ponomarev and Mikoyan started working on a draft resolution for the WPK September Plenum where not only purges against factionalists were condemned, but Kim Il Sung was proposed to resign and be replaced by a pro-Soviet or pro-Chinese stooge. They expected the WPK to blindly vote for that ready-made resolution, written by foreigners, as they used to do in Eastern Europe, and they gave up that idea only after heated debates with Kovyshenko himself.

This account is confirmed by a later self-critical [remark](#) by Liu Shaoqi to Władysław Gomułka on 29 November 1960: “Had that delegation, in 1956 in Korea, only opposed the cult of personality of Kim Il Sung [that would be fine], but they wanted to topple the leadership. There was an opposition against Kim Il Sung inside the CC of the Korean Party at that time. They also had their VIII Plenum; Mikoyan and our [delegates] came and supported this opposition against Kim Il Sung. We presently think that we made a mistake at that time and we admitted in front of the Korean comrades that this was a mistake.”

At the September Plenum Kim Il Sung made a tactical retreat and formally accepted Soviet and Chinese “suggestions” by restoring the faction leaders in Party ranks, but they never recovered their previous power and influence and were eventually purged again at the WPK Conference in March 1958. Despite the concerted pressure of internal and external revisionists, the DPRK stood up against the storm of “destalinization” and built itself into the impregnable socialist fortress we know today.

Back then, Mao Zedong relied on wrong information coming from Kim Il Sung’s opponents, which led him to express sympathy for the known wrecker Pak Hon Yong, and had yet to realize the full extent of the damage caused by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress. This incomplete awareness of the danger of modern revisionism is reflected in the famous article *On the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, where the 20th Congress is treated as a positive occasion of self-criticism and just its distortion by bourgeois media is rebuked. On 15 November 1956 Mao Zedong pronounced his famous phrase on the “two swords” of Lenin and Stalin the CPSU had thrown away and a year later he corrected his mistaken judgement about Korea.

While [meeting](#) Kim Il Sung at the Moscow Conference in November 1957, “Cde. Mao Zedong said that, having studying the additional facts which had become known to them about the activity of this group, they came to the conclusion that the Korean officials from this group who had gone to China last year had described the situation in the WPK one-sidedly in their letter to the CPC CC, emphasizing only individual shortcomings and mistakes in the work of the Korean leadership. The visit to the DPRK last September by CPC CC Politburo member Cde. Peng Dehuai could be assessed as interference in the internal affairs of the KWP. Therefore we have decided not to resort to such actions any more. (...) Cde. Mao Zedong then proposed returning the group of Korean officials who had fled to China after the August plenum. Cde. Kim Il Sung replied to this, ‘We don’t need these people’.”

Chairman Mao changed his mind about the factional strife in the WPK once he came to know the whole picture. Tjen Folknet Media instead, clinging to his wrong viewpoint voiced in September 1956, ends up supporting the actual right-wing revisionists and mistakes them as Maoists just because they had spent some time in China and Mao once said positive words about them. Either they don't know about his later self-criticism or they want to conceal his error and do not acknowledge that, as Foreign Affairs Minister Pak Song Chol [mentioned](#) to the Albanian ambassador Siri Çarçani, "...we have not carried out or supported the theses of the 20th Congress of the CP of the Soviet Union even at a time when the Chinese comrades had yet to come out against them."

3. Korea and "Cultural Revolution"

The article mentions negative remarks by Kim Il Sung about the Cultural Revolution in his talks with Brezhnev, suggesting that he had joined hands with Soviet revisionists against China. After 1964 relations between the DPRK and the USSR actually improved and economic and military cooperation were re-established, since the new Soviet leaders gave up outright Khrushchev's tactic of outright pressure and spying which was the only reason why relations had deteriorated in the previous years.

Korean leaders have always hold fast to the principle that the ideological struggle against revisionism should not be turned into a state-to-state confrontation, breaking the unity of the socialist camp and hampering joint against imperialism like the successful assistance to Vietnam in the 1960s. But they didn't think that the CPSU had recovered from revisionism just by dismissing Khrushchev. As Kim Jong Il said on 15 August 1969: "Although Khrushchev was ousted, the wind of modern revisionism remains unabated in the Soviet Union." (*Selected Works*, vol. 3, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Pyongyang 2016, p. 148)

While normalizing diplomatic relations, Pyongyang and Moscow immediately disagreed on important issues of anti-imperialist strategy as Kim Jong Il further mentioned in 1971: "When our heroic People's Army captured the US imperialist armed spy ship *Pueblo*, the revisionists asked us to return the ship and the crew immediately, saying that if they were not returned, war would break out. Also when we shot down the US imperialist spy plane *EC-121*, which had intruded into our territorial space, they grovelled before the US imperialists in a cowardly manner, trembling over a possible breakout of war." (*Selected Works*, vol. 2, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Pyongyang 1995, p. 286)

And Kim Il Sung later recalled: “In the years subsequent to Khrushchev’s days, the party’s ideological work was also neglected. In consequence, people gave up the idea of working for the revolution and were infected with the growing bourgeois, revisionist idea of taking an interest only in money, villas and cars, and a corrupt and dissipated way of life became rife in society.” (*Works*, vol. 44, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Pyongyang 1999, pp. 239-240) So anti-revisionist struggle and education was carried on in the DPRK throughout the 1970s, to say nothing of when Gorbachev came to power, the WPK didn’t take part in the 1969 Moscow Conference and refused to support any anti-China measure by the USSR.

However, diplomatic reapproachment was enough to raise Chinese suspicions of betrayal, especially in the early chaotic years of the Cultural Revolution when almost everyone, except Chairman Mao, was labelled as a revisionist by the Red Guards. This happened to the great leader as well, in the *Guangdong wenge tongxun* bulletin of 15 February 1968: “Kim Il Sung is an out-and-out counterrevolutionary revisionist of the Korean revisionist clique as well as a millionaire, an aristocrat, and a leading bourgeois element in Korea. His house commands a full view of the Moranbong, the Taedong River, and the Pot’ong River. (...) The estate covers an area of several tens of thousands square meters and is surrounded on all sides by high walls. All sides of the estate are dotted with sentry posts. One has to pass through five or six doors before one arrives at the courtyard. This is really reminiscent of the great palaces of past emperors.” (R. Scalapino & Chong-Sik Lee, *Communism in Korea*, vol. 1, University of California Press, Berkeley 1972, p. 641)

Red Guards went so far to recycle rumours spread by South Korean media about non-existent coups in the North. But they did not restrict themselves to insults, as Kim Il Sung [told](#) Todor Zhivkov in October 1973:

During the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese set up along our border, which is 1,300 km long, loud speakers and they broadcast propaganda against our country day and night. The population along the border could not sleep. My son visited a village along the border at the time. When he came back he said, “Dad, I could not sleep a single night.” (...)

In this village we had soldiers and armed villagers (along the border our people bear arms), about 50 people; and the Chinese penetrated into our country with 100 armed soldiers and officers. I was out in the country at the time (on Saturdays and Sundays I usually go out in the country and I read,) and they told me about this infiltration by the Chinese soldiers. I gave instructions to our people to let them in and not to shoot at them straight away. But, if they tried to advance further into our territory and carry out actions – our people were to block their way and capture at least five of them alive. The Chinese soldiers, however, penetrated into our territory and after that withdrew, without undertaking any action. There were similar, less significant, incidents in other places along the border, too.

Things went even worse for Korean people living on the other side of the border, in the Yanbian Prefecture. As the GDR ambassador in Pyongyang [noted](#) on 20 October 1967, “Recently dead bodies are said to have been found in a freight train arriving into the DPRK from China via Sinuiju. They were Koreans living in Northeastern China. People are said to got injured or killed in incidents between Maoist Red Guards and members from the Korean minority in the PRC. The dead bodies were placed on the freight train bound to the DPRK. The freight cars also had anti-Korean slogans written on. Like for instance: ‘See, that’s how you will fare as well, you little revisionists!’”

Documents provided in the book *A Misunderstood Friendship* by Shen Zhihua show that the Korean side displayed superhuman patience in front of outrageous provocations carried out even by the Chinese embassy in Pyongyang, being aware of what was going on in China. Kim Il Sung [said](#) to Kurt Hager on 16 April 1968: “Currently there are big differences of opinion with the Chinese, but they still say they will fight together with us against U.S. imperialism if that proves necessary. They say our deep differences are of tactical and not of strategic nature. They slander us as revisionists but we always stay calm. When the Red Guards insult us, the Chinese tell us that the party and government are not responsible. Only if e.g. *People’s Daily* attacks us would they be responsible. Some comrades in the politburo have suggested that we should also organize Red Guards to insult the Chinese, but should not write articles. I am against that. It doesn’t work that way.”

While extremist elements like Yao Wenyuan wire pulled attacks on the DPRK, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai never endorsed them. Anti-DPRK provocations ceased as soon as the political situation in China was stabilized and they were back fully in control of the country. When Kim Il Sung [visited](#) Beijing in October 1970, Chinese leaders made self-criticism: “During the talks, Mao Zedong criticized some of the practices of the ‘extreme left’ in the Cultural Revolution.” (*Chronology of Zhou Enlai*, vol. 3, Beijing 1997, p. 399)

The fighting alliance between China and Korea was fully restored in the 1970s, as documented by the press of both countries and by the frequent military, economic and diplomatic visits, as well as by the third long-term trade agreement signed in October 1970 which pushed their trade volume up to \$395 million in 1976—a 340% increase in six years. Pyongyang sided with Beijing even when everyone else blamed it for the Mao-Nixon meeting in 1972.

In April 1975 Kim Il Sung [visited](#) China once again, meeting Mao Zedong for the last time, and said in a public speech: “In recent years in China the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and the movement to criticize Lin Biao and Confucius has consolidated the proletarian dictatorship, strengthened the unity of the entire people, built up the nation’s economic might and defence capabilities and further renewed the people’s mental and moral qualities.” (*Peking Review*, vol. 18, no. 17, 25 April 1975, p. 15) When Chairman Mao passed away, the telegram of condolences by the great leader was the first on the list.

To assert that the China-Korea relationship “improved for the first time in twenty years” when Deng Xiaoping came to power, as Tjen Folket Media does, is a blatant historical falsehood and also a revision of the mature judgement of Mao Zedong who “told Kim Il Sung that he hoped he would pay close attention to the world revolution and the international communist movement and that it was his last request.” (Kim Myong Suk, *Echoes Down Centuries*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Pyongyang 2014, p. 8)

