

Czechoslovak-North Korean Relations in the Context of the NNSC in the 1950s and 1960s*

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*Československo-severokórejské vzťahy v rámci Dozornej komisie neutrálnych štátov
v 50. a 60. rokoch 20. storočia*

Resumé Štúdiá pojednáva o Československo-severokórejských vzťahoch v rámci Dozornej komisie neutrálnych štátov (DKNŠ) na Kórejskom polostrove v 50. a 60. rokoch 20. storočia. Československo-severokórejské vzťahy v rámci prešli obdobiami intenzívnej spolupráce, taktiež však i obdobiami rozdielneho prístupu (napr. k riešeniu problematiky udržiavania prímeria). Okrem československo-severokórejských vzťahov však štúdiá analyzuje i vzťahy všetkých členských krajín komisie v širšom kontexte činnosti DKNŠ.

Abstract This article deals with the Czechoslovak-North Korean relations within the Neutral Nations' Supervisory Commission (NNSC) in the Korean Peninsula in the 1950s and '60s. These relations within the NNSC underwent a period of intensive cooperation, however, they also went through a period of different approaches. Beyond the Czechoslovak-North Korean relations, the article also presents the relations among all NNSC countries.

Keywords Czechoslovakia-Korea, history, 1948-1992 · Korea, Neutral Nations' Supervisory Commission (NNSC)

The beginnings of Czechoslovak-North Korean relations within the territory of both countries occurred in the end of the 1940s when Czechoslovakia was one of the first countries that recognized the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

(DPRK). The cooperation of Czechoslovakia and North Korea was focused on the non-military assistance in the form of medical dispatching, building the hospitals, providing scholarships to North Korean students sent to study in Czechoslovakia, voluntary donations etc. Czechoslovakia was the third country after the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China which provided the greatest economic aid to the DPRK during and after the Korean War as well.

Czechoslovakia's non-military aid to the DPRK after the war was accompanied by the military support as well. Based on the Armistice Agreement¹ in 1953, Czechoslovakia was admitted to the Commission for the Repatriation of Prisoners of War and to the NNSC composed of four neutral nations—Czechoslovakia, Poland (nominated by the KPA² and the CPVA³), Switzerland and Sweden (nominated by the UN). The term 'neutral nations' refers to those nations whose combatant forces have not participated in the hostilities in Korea. However, based on the work and activities of individual member nations to the Commission, the term neutrality may be argued, as in many cases it acquired a purely abstract meaning. The problem of the concept of neutrality and maintaining the peace can be already seen in the preparations for operations in the NNSC. Unlike Sweden and Switzerland, Czechoslovakia entered the Commission as a 'friend', not only as a participating partner. This tendency was reflected e.g. by one of the key negotiations with the first legation secretary of the

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- 1 Armistice Agreement (*Jeongjeonbyeobjeong* 정전협정). The agreement signed between the United Nations, the KPA and CPVA on 27 July 1953. The signed armistice put into the force the restoration of the borders between North and South Korea close to the 38th parallel, established the Korean Demilitarized Zone (a new border between the two nations), put into force a cease-fire, and finalized repatriation of prisoners of war.
- 2 Korean People's Army (*Joseoninmingun* 조선인민군). The army was established in 1939, headed by the supreme commander Kim Il-sung. Since the signing of the Armistice Agreement in 1953, it was an adversary of the army of South Korea and US forces stationed on the territory of South Korea.
- 3 Chinese People's Volunteer Army (*Jungguginminjiweongun* 중국인민지원군); Armed Forces deployed by the People's Republic of China during the Korean War (1950-53), the self-composed army in order to avoid the official war with the US; CPVA worked in North Korea in the years 1950-58.

DPRK legation hold on 22 April 1952 in Prague, when the Commander of the Special Group, Brigadier General František Bureš,⁴ stated:

[...] S. legation secretary was yet in 1951 at the Korean front and is very well aware of the situation at the 38th parallel [...]. He severely stressed mainly the fact that there is no possibility to trust Americans even in a situation such as ceasefire. There is higher possibility to expect their various misdeeds and dealing behind the backs [...].

He stated that the Special Group should be aware of the fact that they do not go to the country in peace, but to come to play a serious combat role.⁵

On the basis of this statement, the Czechoslovak Army Headquarters did not consider the activities on the ceasefire line as a peacemaking mission, but as a combat role. According to the Deputy Chief of General Staff, General Tesala, »our group was to play the second greatest role in our army's history after the first Czechoslovak army corps in Soviet Union«.⁶

The abovementioned opinions reflected in military equipment, provision, and mainly in the personnel composition of the Special Group, which was formed from April to May 1952. The group consisted of 380 members of the military. Its formation and training was based on the NNSC's text proposal, which was handed by the North Korean side to the Czechoslovak *chargé d'affaires* in Pyeongyang, Rudolf Babka, on 25 May 1952. According to this proposal, 20 inspection teams of total were planned to be set up—five on the »entrances to Korea« (ports and airports) controlled by Chinese and North Korean units (Sineuiju, Cheongjin, Heungnam, Manpo and Sinanju), and five on the »entrances controlled by UN forces« (Incheon, Daegu, Busan, Kangneung, Kunsan). The remaining »ten mobile groups« played a backup role of which most five could be deployed at any time at the request of the head of one of the parties represented in the NNSC.⁷

4 František Bureš (1905-?)—the head of the first Czechoslovak NNSC group in DPRK between July 1953 and July 1954.

5 »Zpráva o činnosti a přípravách zvláštní skupiny«, Příl. 1 [Report on the Activities and Preparations for Special Groups; Enclosure no 1], *VHA* (see list of abbreviations in the end of this article) 1954, sign. 1/2/6/105-138, k. 437.

6 Vladimír Pilát, »Příprava takzvané Zvláštní skupiny čs. armády k činnosti na linii příměří v Koreji« [Preparation of the So-Called Special Group of the Czechoslovak Army to the Work on the Ceasefire Line in Korea], *Historie a vojenství* [History and Military] 47,5 (Bratislava, 1998), 60.

7 *Ibid.*, 61.

Training focused on the deployment of the Czechoslovak group to NNSC was performed in Komorní Hrádek and Ruzyně and the automobile battalion prepared in Terezín. The case of the preparations in Komorní Hrádek was the secret action accompanied by the others, e.g. »Action 9999«, »Action B« and »Action 103«. ⁸ Preparations in Ruzyně were renewed after the period of the Special Group's temporary dissolution (at the turn of June and July 1952) due to long Panmunjom talks discussing the detention of the prisoners of war. Unlike the training in Komorní Hrádek and the other secret actions, the preparations in Ruzyně focused on more advanced professional work (the study of Armistice Agreement, international law, political situation in Far East, training interpreters) were no longer a secret activity.

During the preparation phase, Czechoslovakia considered not only the DPRK, but also China and Poland as its allies and friends in future NNSC's activities. As well as Czechoslovakia, Poland was preparing a huge group of delegates coming to Korea. Unlike Poland, Switzerland and Sweden were considered by Czechoslovakia as the main enemies. Hostility to delegations from the so-called Southern side reflected in Czechoslovakia's reluctance of communication and providing information. There was mostly no or highly distorted information provided. The already mentioned problem of keeping the neutrality can be observed on Czechoslovakia's request to artillery command (in 3 April 1953) related to Special Group's possession of guns. Unlike members of the Swedish and Swiss delegation, the Czechoslovak group planned to leave for Korea with military equipment that didn't meet its peace keeping mission. ⁹

Problems during a preparatory phase did not harm just the relations among member nations, but the Czechoslovak negotiations on the number of group members as well. The government of the PRC raised the drastic reduction of the group from 380 members of military personnel to 250. However, after several diplomatic negotiations PRC opted for a compromise, it allowed Czechoslovakia to dispatch 300 members to the ceasefire line. Thus, on 22 July 1953, the Czechoslovak Army Special Group departed from Prague and after a three-week trip via the Soviet Union, China and North Korea, it arrived safely to Kaeseong on 13 August 1953.

8 *Čechoslováci v Koreji, Kronika čs. delegace v DKNS* [Czechoslovaks in Korea. Chronicle of the Czechoslovak Delegation in the NNSC] (Praha: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009), 3.

9 Pilát, »Příprava takzvané Zvláštní skupiny čs. armády k činnosti na linii příměří v Koreji«, 65.

The Beginnings of the NNSC in Korea: The First Years of Activity

The first meeting of the NNSC was held on 1 August 1953, thus, before the arrival of the Czechoslovak delegation to Kaeseong. As mentioned above, the main goal of the Commission was the peace-keeping on the Korean Peninsula. The part of this goal was exercising the inspection, observation and investigation accounting on the sub-paragraphs 13 (c) and 13 (d), which should hold an important role in the member nations' work performance.

§ 13 (c) prohibits »...the introduction into Korea of reinforcing military personnel ...« but »replacements of units or personnel by other units or personnel who are commencing a tour of duty in Korea are permitted...«¹⁰

§ 13 (d) prohibits »...the introduction into Korea of reinforcing combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition; provided however, that combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition which are destroyed, damaged, worn out, or used up during the period of the armistice may be replaced on the basis piece-for-piece of the same effectiveness and the same type...«¹¹

§ 13(d) was, until the second half of 1950s,¹² the most-cited paragraph during the NNSC's negotiations, which from the beginning acquired a hostile character especially from the Czechoslovak and North Korean sides. Both countries can be described as the first countries accusing the Swiss and Swedish side of the armistice violation, however, the constant accusing appeared and continued among the other sides as well. A strong partner of Czechoslovakia was also Poland, which shared the same ideology as Czechoslovakia, the DPRK and the PRC regarding the goal of US troops' withdrawal from South Korea. The very beginning of Czechoslovakia's activities in the NNSC can be described as a period of companionable relationship with the whole 'Northern side' involved in the Commission's work. Czechoslovakia's close relationship to the DPRK

10 Gabriel Jonsson, *Peace-Keeping in the Korean Peninsula: The Role of Commissions* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2009), 23.

11 Tae-gyun Park 박태균, »1950 nyeondae migugeui cheongjeonhyeopjeong ilbujohang muhyoseoneongwa keu eumi 1950« 년대 미국의 정전협정 일부조항 무효선언과 그 의미 [The Significance of the USA's Annulment of Some Clauses of the Armistice Agreement in the 1950s], *Yeoksapipyong* 역사비평 63 (2003), 42.

12 Canceled in 1957.

confirms the report from December 1954 providing information on the visit of Czechoslovak delegates to the battle field of People's Liberation Army:

Czechoslovak people are popular in Korea. Chinese and North Koreans possess abundant knowledge of our country and our aid to North Korea. We are impressed by Chinese and North Koreans which strongly fight for peace and never give up.¹³

Companionable, even personal relationship with DPRK and Poland is captured also in the Chronicle of Czechoslovak delegation in the NNSC:

We spent warm evenings together with Polish and Korean comrades on the stairs in front of the main building and sang the songs. Those were nice moments of our companionable friendship.¹⁴

The companionable relationship of the Northern side was reflected in the already mentioned accusation of the South's violation of the Armistice Agreement. However, since the start of the inspection teams' activities the member states of the Northern side came with other types of accusations, such as accusing the Americans and their allies, the Swiss and Swedes (from Czechoslovakia's view) of a desire to get rid of the whole Commission. The trigger of this accusation was the US proposal to postpone the launching of the inspection team's activity and hold a basic meeting only. Nevertheless, the teams launched their activity on 12 August 1953. However, the tension, the other accusations and unwillingness to cooperate during the implementation of controls appeared. The mission of inspection activity had gradually becoming the ineffective mission, sometimes completely impossible. Members of the Czechoslovak delegation together with the DPRK accused Sweden and Switzerland from provocations during exercising of control and argued that the Southern side intentionally creates out of them a negative image. Sweden and Switzerland, on the contrary, put the blame on North and emphasized that the reason of low effectivity of the IT¹⁵ is Czechoslovakia. Tensions increased in February 1954, when a member of the MAC¹⁶, General Julius Kahn Lacey (1904-1992), doubted the existence of NNSC and accused Czechoslovakia of importing the war material to the territory of Korea. Lacey sent a letter with the accusation of armistice violation and with the command to send three ITs to the North. Czechoslovakia,

13 *Čechoslováci v Koreji, Kronika čs. delegace v DKNS*, 20.

14 *Ibid.*, 20.

15 Inspection Team (*Sachaltim* 사찰 팀).

16 Military Armistice Commission (*Kunsajeongjeonwijeonhoe* 군사정전위원회).

however, denied Lacey's allegation and argued that the major player of the problem is the UN.¹⁷

Constant accusations caused more distrust and hostility among all NNSC member countries and countries involved in the Commission's activities. Except of the tensions between North and South, however, there were controversies in the North as well—between the DPRK and both Northern delegations, what captures a telegraphic message sent from the embassy in Pyongyang:

Based on Polish government info, North Korean & Chinese side request from Poland and Czechoslovakia certain procedures and measures that are according to Poland not always appropriate, e.g. cessation of relationship with Sweden and Switzerland, in other cases there is requirement to distort facts or indicate exaggerated figures in reports, however, Polish government rejects to fulfill these requirements and insists on their inappropriateness [...]. The Polish Government assumes that compliance to all these requirements would lead to the complications and reciprocities in other areas of political events [...]. The same probably applies to Czechoslovak group as well [...]. The sign of fruitful and sincere friendly cooperation must not be a mechanical consent, but thorough common discussion of all impulses and suggestions.¹⁸

Despite disagreements and tensions in the North, however, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the DPRK were associated with the common goal and ideology. Northern side thus continued to represent a strong ally of the DPRK in the fight against the South and continued labeling US as a violator of the Commission's activities and importer of war material in Korea. The above mentioned reluctance to North-South cooperation emerged during the implementation of further inspections, when North Korea rejected the Swiss and Swedish IT dispatched to the DPRK. Later, however, Czechoslovakia and the DPRK admitted their mistake, what can be described as a first positive action taken against the Southern side. Nevertheless, tensions caused by the different point of views still persisted. It should not be omitted that the reason of the mentioned hostility and persistent discomfort, especially by the Northern side

17 »Prohlášení k dopisu gen. Li San Čo a k odpovědi gen. Laceymu na žádost o vyslání tří pohyblivých IS« [Statement to the Letter of Gen. Lee San Cheo and to the Answer to Gen. Lacey on the Request For Dispatching of Three Mobile Inspection Teams; 16.2.1954], *Dozorčí komise neutrálních států* [Neutral Nations' Supervisory Commission] February, 12 (1954), 1 (VHA 1954, sign. 95/1/2, k. 22).

18 »Sdělení, Telegrafická zpráva« [Report, Telegraphic Message; 24.5.1954] (VHA 1954, sign. 95/1/2, k. 23).

during this period, was probably the report from August 1954, which informs about the alleged intention of Chiang Kai-shek to commit the assassination to the members of the Czechoslovak and Polish delegation.¹⁹

After numerous discussions of Northern side, the agreement to establish a general line of further progress aimed at warming relations in the NNSC and proposal to change the tactics was carried out. There was a new international situation in the background of these changes created by the Geneva Conference in 1954. The Czechoslovak and Polish delegation, the DPRK and the PRC stressed the need to show that NNSC can be not only a good example for the establishment of a similar body in Indochina, which in their view the US would like to thwart, but also that the Commission's existence is fully empowered and able to successfully carry out the entrusted tasks. In August 1954 the meeting was held in Beijing, which set out a number of proposals and the following decisions: 1) reach the cooperation among the Commission members and expand the scope of its activities; 2) improve relationship with the Swedish and Swiss delegates; and 3) improve relationship with Americans in the MAC. In addition to the consultation, the need of maintaining a neutral character of the Czechoslovak and Polish delegation was highlighted. The additional decision was not to deny the dispatching inspection teams, to decide case by case and achieve the common review of monthly rotations of personnel and exchange of war material. Also the need of the ability of the delegation members to show a common coexistence of communist and capitalist countries and the willingness of common agreement was pointed out.²⁰

From the conclusion of the Beijing meetings, it was evident that the Northern side expressed interest in improving relations with Southern side and the US (though of course, one of the reasons was the application of its own authority), the enthusiasm, however, was replaced by an even greater tension caused by the demonstrations against the Czechoslovak and Polish delegation, occurring in the South Korea at the same time as the meetings in Beijing. Demonstrations in South Korea against the Northern side of the Commission took place in 1954 and 1955 with the support of President of the ROK,²¹ Rhee Seung-man (1875–1965), who held a negative attitude towards the Commission and rejected to regard the NNSC as a neutral body. Seriousness of the situation

19 »Zpráva DKNS« [NNSC Report; 13.8.1954] (*VHA* 1954, sign. 95/1/2, k. 24).

20 »Zpráva o činnosti DKNS v Koreji od 1. srpna 1953 do 30. června 1959« [Report on the Activities of the NNSC in Korea from 1 August 1953 to 30 June 1959], 8–9 (*VHA* 1959, sign. 31/4/-).

21 Republic of Korea (*Daebanmingug* 대한민국).

is illustrated in detail in preserved diaries and memoirs of the NNSC Czechoslovak members²² that capture not only the Czechoslovak delegation's facing the harsh insult, but the threat of life as well. Incidents happened in Busan, Daegu, Kunsan, Kangneung and Incheon, e.g. the incident of shooting on four Czechoslovak delegates in Busan, on 2 August 1954 (with the result of some injuries and death) and incident in Kunsan, on 3 and 4 August, when bombs were thrown into the seat of the Czechoslovak and Polish delegation. A new beginning of demonstrations occurred in 1955 when a majority of fourteen to fifteen year old Korean youth, hired by South Korean President Rhee Seung-man commenced the march against the 'Czechoslovak red spies'. Due to the severe escalation of the situation, Czechoslovak members of the delegation were prohibited to walk freely in the city. According to Czechoslovakia and the DPRK, an increase of protests and attacks right after the Geneva Conference was not a random affair. Czechoslovakia pronounced that thanks to the conclusion of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities in Indochina and addressing Indochina issue, the peacekeepers had reached significant victory, thus, aggressive US circles suffered a crushing defeat in Geneva. Further Czechoslovakia claimed that the latest attacks against the Czechoslovak and Polish NNSC members in South Korea are closely related to American provocations in the Chinese island of Hainan, to the new efforts to create offensive Pact in South-East Asia and Western Pacific, to the war-lusty statement of Rhee Seung-man before the US Congress and to the enhanced attacks of the US government officials toward People's Republic of China and other Asian nations.²³

The Reduction of Inspection Activities and the End of Inspection Teams

During the South Korean protests against the NNSC Czechoslovak and Polish delegation, the period of IT reduction activities arrived. According to the Southern side of the NNSC, the Commission was losing its *raison d'être*. The

22 Václav Rydyger, »Deník 1954–1955« [Diaries 1954–1955], Supplement no 7 of the Chronicle of the Czechoslovak delegation in the NNSC; Section Diaries (*Archiv MZV*); Jaroslav Komárek, »Jak šel život« [As Life Went], Supplement no 3 of the Chronicle of the Czechoslovak delegation in the NNSC; Section Memoirs in *Archiv MZV*.

23 »Monitory tisku z Koreje« [Summary of Articles from Korean Press], 234, The collection of archival documents is in *Archiv MZV*, fund 7.t.o. Korea 1945–54.

opinion was often justified by the lack of freedom in the territory of the DPRK that caused the inefficiency of performed work. The governments of Sweden and Switzerland proposed the abolition or at least the reduction of ITs, and in case of Commission's dissolution to entrust its tasks to the MAC. US agreed mainly with the Commission's dissolution. In April 1955, the Swiss and Swedish delegations brought a formal proposal to the IT reduction in the NNSC and to transform the Commission into a purely symbolic authority. The Czechoslovak and Polish side rejected the proposal without any hesitation and put forward a proposal to IT reduction from four to two teams, thus, highlighting the compromise providing maintenance of inspection activities to fifty percent. Efforts to make a compromise were successful; however, Czechoslovak report on the activities of the NNSC informed that the Swedish and Swiss sides constantly made their efforts to further reduction.²⁴

Rhee Seung-man, led by the Korean Government, insisted on the dissolution of the NNSC and argued that the dissolution is the only satisfactory solution. In early August 1955, Rhee's insistence resorted to the ultimatum requiring the withdrawal of the ITs from the Southern ports until 15 August, otherwise he could not guarantee the personal security of IT members. The Southern government immediately organized the already mentioned second round of demonstrations against the members of the Czechoslovak and Polish delegations. The result was the abolition of IT in Daegu, Kangneung, Cheongjin and Heungnam on 15 September 1955. The ports of entry in Incheon, Busan, Kusan, Sinuiju and Manpo remained, sub-teams or sub-groups underwent reduction. In October 1955, the Swedes have proposed to abolish all teams in the ports of entry and replace them by mobile inspection teams. Unlike Czechoslovakia and Poland, Switzerland agreed. With the argument of the failure of all attempts, Switzerland and Sweden turned to the PRC with the need to forward the solution of the problem to the governmental level. The PRC decided to keep only one port of entry on both sides, however, this proposal was not accepted. Therefore, on 9 April 1956, after consultation with the DPRK, the PRC government requested the British government to convene a conference of all involved states which would negotiate on the withdrawal of foreign troops from Korea. Czechoslovakia at the same time emphasized that the Chinese government has carried out in late 1955 the withdrawal of six divisions of Chinese People's Volunteers and thank to other removals created conditions for constructive discussions at this conference. It can be argued that the reason for this

24 »Zpráva o činnosti DKNS v Koreji od 1. srpna 1953 do 30. června 1959«, 13.

emphasis was the goal of Czechoslovakia to demonstrate itself under the guise of neutrality.²⁵

An important issue associated with the dissolution of the Commission or with the reduction of ITs in the second half of the 1950s, was the security issue, which was triggered by the incidents in Kunsan and Busan. On 11 July 1956 in Kunsan, the crash of American helicopter caused the death of three members of the NNSC Polish delegation, in January of the same year, the head of the Swedish delegation suffered a fatal injury caused by the crash of a helicopter as well. The lack of security was another reason of mutual accusation of the armistice violation among the Commission member countries. On 10 March 1956, Sweden suggested the temporary withdrawal of IT from the ports of entry. During the General Assembly held in late May 1956, General Robert G. Gard (b1928) wrote a letter with the order to stop the inspection in South Korea within ten days. General Gard reviewed the failure of NNSC's activity as a result of uncooperative approach of the KPA and the PRC and 'abnormal' activities of the Czechoslovak and Polish group. North argued that the abolition of the Commission would be in conflict with the transfer of ceasefire to a state of lasting peace and peaceful settlement of the Korean issue. On 8 June 1957, MAC announced the end of inspection activities since the day after the announcement. 9 June was the day of holding a special meeting at which it was agreed to cancel the IT in Sinuiju, Manpo, Sinanju, Incheon, Busan and Kunsan. All Southern ITs were canceled until 9 June and all Northern until 12 June. The situation is most accurately described by Urs Alfred Mueller-Lhotska,²⁶ who pointed out that the NNSC without IT became a »Commission without Supervision« whose function was essentially reduced to a purely symbolic institutional presence.

As mentioned above, South Korean and US supported dissolution of the NNSC. Already on 18 June 1956, South Korean National Assembly unanimously approved the proposal to dissolve the NNSC and expel its members from the Korean Peninsula, including so-called 'No Man's Land'—Panmunjeom. The Northern side at the same time showed a persisting interest in maintaining the Commission.²⁷

25 Ibid., 17.

26 The Swedish colonel active in the NNSC in the years 1994–96.

27 Jonsson, *Peace-Keeping in the Korean Peninsula*, 90.

*The Second Phase of Czechoslovak-North Korean Relations
and the NNSC Activities—the Period of ‘Warming’?*

After the gradual restriction of inspection activities, the political-diplomatic activities began to play an important role in the Commission. As mentioned above, until 12 June 1956, all ITs were withdrawn from the North and from the South as well. Thus, the NNSC's activity lost the nature of military control and gained a diplomatic character. From 1 April 1957, the NNSC passed from the Ministry of Defense under the aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other NNSC delegations also fell under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the respective country, which was another reason why the Czechoslovak delegation underwent this transition as well. The transition phase of the Czechoslovak delegation from the Ministry of Defense to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be described as the second phase of Czechoslovak-North Korean relations. The Czechoslovak delegation with the function of political authority emphasized the importance of the Commission and regarded its existence as the main means of reducing tension not only in Korea, but also all over the Far East. In favour of maintaining the armistice, the Czechoslovak group showed willingness to intensify cooperation even with Sweden and Switzerland as well, but the detection of ‘aggressive intentions’ of US persisted in its daily programme. Czechoslovakia relations with the DPRK and the PRC also further strengthened, in contrast to Poland, which suffered of many misunderstandings with the DPRK due to the lack of knowledge and language.

Based on the situation mentioned above, the year 1956 can be described as a relatively quiet period. The DPRK intended to establish closer contacts with their American adversaries through Switzerland and Sweden, therefore it had issued a command to Czechoslovakia to intensify the frequency of contact with the Swedish and Swiss group. However, Czechoslovakia's optimism had gradually faded. Czechoslovak authorities argued that the frequent contact with delegations of the Southern side is not a certain guarantee of obtaining useful information and enhancing their role in negotiations. It also emphasized that as the significance of the NNSC cannot be overstated, it cannot see the NNSC as a body which could itself decide on its future existence. On the other hand, it should be regarded as an important platform which as *ultima ratio* would enable

to expose to the international public those who would try to break the Armistice Agreement.²⁸

During the period of relative calm, the DPRK leader Kim Il-sung (1912–1994) visited Czechoslovakia from 21 to 25 June 1956 for the purpose of strengthening the ties. The main topic of discussion (except the strengthening of relations) was the international political situation and mutual economic cooperation. Czechoslovakia pledged to the DPRK constant support in economic construction of the country, strengthening the cultural and educational exchange and promoting North Korean researchers in vocational training. At the end of the meeting, they signed the agreement on cultural cooperation.²⁹

June 1956 was thus the synonym of a relatively calm period, but in July, tensions appeared again. Czechoslovakia and the DPRK held the view that the UN considers NNSC as a barrier to the spread of modern guns and nuclear weapons and re-plans the dissolution of the whole Commission. The Czechoslovak members designated Switzerland and Sweden as a mediating tool of manipulation related to this effort. Czechoslovakia drew attention to the passive attitude of the Swiss and Swedish group and put the US to the position of disturbing element in peacemaking efforts to calm the international tensions. It also added that the imperialists hoped that their campaign against peace, which resulted in the sharpest aggression in Egypt and counter-revolution in Hungary would also create the conditions for the repeal of the Armistice Agreement and the NNSC and prepared or unleashed a new aggression against the DPRK and the PRC.³⁰

In April 1957, the DPRK held a joint meeting with the members of the Czechoslovak delegation where discussed in detail the intensive cooperation with socialist countries. They put to the fore a friendly relations with the Soviet Union and the PRC which were from both countries' point of view the guarantee of the defense of socialism and strengthening the world peace. They have also set a goal to restore the legal right to the PRC in the UN.³¹

28 »Mimořádná zpráva o stycích čs. delegace a delegací polskou a korejsko-čínskými přáteli [Special Report on Relationship of the Czechoslovak Delegation with the Polish Delegation and Korean-Chinese Friends], 10–11 (printed compilation—*VHA* 1954, sign. 9/2/11/10, k. 31).

29 *Archív MZV* 1956, no 7, 245.

30 »Vývoj Dozorčí komise neutrálních států v letech 1953 až 1957 a postup československé delegace« [Development of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in the Years 1953–57 and the Progress of the Czechoslovak Delegation], 4 (*VHA* 1957, sign. 2/9/43).

31 The collection of the archival documents, *Archív MZV* 1957, no. 5–6, 191–194; printed later as

In May 1957, disagreements within the NNSC achieved even a higher frequency. During the conference held on 14 May, the US Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Foster Dulles (1888–1959), announced the exportation of atomic warheads that would meet the requirement of the President Rhee Seung-man. The final step to disruption of the Armistice Agreement was the 75th meeting of the MAC (21 June) organized by the command of the UN and the UN Commission. After the meeting, the South unilaterally declared the suspension of § 13 (d). The DPRK reacted to the abolition of the § 13 (d) in the form of accusing the US for making South Korea their nuclear base and evaluated this act as a gross armistice violation. Due to the abolition of § 13 (d), the NNSC activity further reduced. The official weekly meetings every Tuesday at 10am at the NNSC Headquarters continued to be held, but sessions only lasted for two to four minutes. The documents of the meetings were formally correct, but had practically no content. Once a month it was also said that the reports »had not proved any violation of the Armistice Agreement«. ³² Thus, after the abolition of § 13 (d), the activity of the NNSC was limited to performing simple administrative tasks.

After the abolition of Paragraph 13 (d), the DPRK prepared the normalization plan in order to address the peaceful solution of the Korean issue. In the Appendix of the report on the development of the NNSC, the DPRK suggested to the Southern Side the renewal of commercial relations and exchange of goods. In order to realize the renewal, it was necessary to change certain provisions of Armistice Agreement and to permit the crossing of the demilitarized zone between North and South by the prearranged routes. However, the DPRK government's efforts were in vain, which again resulted in accusations of South and in criticism of Rhee Seung-man's inappropriate practice. North Korean and Czechoslovak criticism of the South appeared also in January 1958 when the UN and the South Korean troops carried out the joint military exercise »Snow Flake« close to the DMZ. ³³ During the exercise, 280-mm nuclear guns were employed for the first time. On 29 January, it was reported in the press that the UN Commission had stationed nuclear weapons in South Korea. The weapons were Honest John (M-31, 1951–53) missiles and »atomic artillery«. On 3 February, artillery pieces and Honest John missiles were shown without any hesitation to the

Documents of Czechoslovak Foreign Politics, 1945–1960 (Praha: Státní nakladeství politické literatury, 1960), 757 pp.

³² Jonsson, *Peace-Keeping in the Korean Peninsula*, 98.

³³ Demilitarized Zone (*Bimujangjidae* 비무장지대).

public at a big troop parade at the First Army Headquarter close to Seoul. On 1 May, exhibition firing of the missiles and atomic artillery took place at the central front lines. The DPRK immediately reacted to this act, and accused the South of having violated the Armistice Agreement. The North also argued that making South Korea a nuclear base was the reason of the abolition of § 13 (d).

Year 1958 in the NNSC presented a period of common discussions among Czechoslovakia, Poland and DPRK which more frequently analyzed not only the issue of elimination of weapons, but also troops withdrawal. The DPRK persistently insisted on withdrawal of US troops, however, the UN troops emphasized that the dislocation of troops in the South ensures a peaceful unification and freedom of citizens. Despite the problematic disputes between NNSC member states, Czechoslovakia decided to maintain friendly ties with the South. Czechoslovakia and DPRK assumed that Sweden and Switzerland did not consider to abolish the Commission. According to Czechoslovakia, the reason was the incoming economic crisis in the capitalist countries, what raised the interest of Sweden and Switzerland in enshrining in the Chinese market with using its position in the NNSC.³⁴

In the end of 1958, the Czechoslovak delegation NNSC documents began to show the criticism of the DPRK more frequently. The report from 1 December³⁵ gives information on placing mines in certain sections of the DMZ. The DPRK identified this act as a protection against the crossing of spies and agitators through the Demarcation Line. The whole action was secret, without informing Czechoslovakia and Poland, however, soon there was spread a report on the accident of the Polish mechanic and his leg avulsion during the accidental stepping on a mine. North Koreans in an effort to conceal accurate information about the incident alleged that there was a complicated fracture of the lower limb which Polish mechanic suffered during a trip behind Keaseong. Czechoslovakia expressed big disappointment with the approach of the DPRK.

Another reason of disappointment was the prohibition of movement of the Czechoslovak and Polish delegation. North Korea ordered the movement accompanied by guards only and the obligation to obtain permission in case of necessary transfer to Panmunjeom. The prohibition applied to vehicles used

34 »Doplňk k informační zprávě o vývoji Dozorčí komise neutrálních států v Koreji« [Supplement to the Information Report About the Development of the Neutral Nations' Supervisory Commission], 5 (VHA 1954, sign. 9/2/1/10, k. 31).

35 »Zpráva o činnosti čs. delegace v DKNS« [Report on the activity of the Czechoslovak Delegation in the NNSC; 1.12.1958], 5-6 (VHA 1958, sign. 31/4/21).

during the free time of delegates, when they had to be driven by designated driver. Czechoslovakia perceived this action as a disruption of relations with the Swedish and Swiss delegation, with whom the contact was significantly disturbed since the validity of the prohibition.

Tensions on the Northern side had been growing, but because of the common ideological interests, Czechoslovakia and DPRK presented their relationship as cooperative. The visit of Czechoslovak President Antonín Novotný (1904–1975) in the DPRK contributed to this presentation. During the visit, both countries discussed the support of the Soviet proposal related to the complete disarmament and withdrawal of American troops from South Korea. Czechoslovakia and the DPRK also declared in the interest of world peace the need for withdrawal of foreign troops and the liquidation of all foreign military bases stationed in Asia. Finally, they promised following the principles of Marxism-Leninism, proletarian internationalism, enhancing solidarity and cooperation with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the other communist and workers' parties of the socialist countries and countries all over the world.³⁶

The Situation in the NNSC in the 1960s

The problematic milestone in the 1950s was the abolition of inspection teams and § 13 (d), which had a profound impact not only on maintaining the Armistice Agreement, but also on relations among member states and states involved in the activities of the NNSC. Persisting violation of the Armistice Agreement became more serious in the sixties. One of the most serious problems in this period of time was increased strengthening of DMZ's armament. A growing number of armistice violation on sea and on land caused frequent military conflicts, espionage and penetration forces also did not facilitate the improvement of the situation in the DMZ.³⁷

36 »Společné Československo-korejské komuniké o návštěvě prvního tajemníka ÚV KSČ a presidenta republiky A. Novotného v KLDK« [Czechoslovakia-Korean Joint Communique on the Visit of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and the President of Czechoslovakia A. Novotný in the DPRK], *Rudé Právo* 11.10.1959.

37 Bo-yeong Kim 김보영, »1960 nyeondae kunsajeongjeonwiweonhoewa jeongjeoncheje 1960«년대 군사정전위원회와 정전체제 [The Military Armistice Commission and the Armistice System in the 1960s], *Yeoksawa byeonsil* 역사와 현실 50 (2003), 173 and 192.

The MAC led endless discourses focused on military force to mitigate the conflict, however, neither delegation states and states involved in the NNSC activities admitted to (at that time) the very frequent armistice violation. The DPRK continued to demand the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea, but South Koreans emphasized the need of the existence of Americans which was justified as an excellent means of preventing the outbreak of war. It also stressed that the MAC authority is not sufficient enough to solve the problems. In 1961, the DPRK, China and the Soviet Union signed the mutual security treaty. However, a feeling of mitigation and calm from the perspective of the Northern NNSC members was eroded later by the US who increased the military aid to South Korea. Thus, though at first glance the situation on land, sea and in the air looked quiet, frequent signs of tension were recorded. The period from the 1967 to 1969 was called the »Second Korean War« due to the numerous conflicts. Korean historian Kim Bo-yeong shared the view of the United States relating to the MAC as a body unable to reach an agreement between the NNSC members, on the other hand, he still considered it as one of the tools allowing to solve the problems through negotiations and as a means contributing to suppress the outbreak of another war.³⁸ The Swedish Koreanist Gabriel Jonsson claims that the above account supports Kim's opinion about its peace-keeping role, but it should be noted that Panmunjeom was a place for 'verbal battles' in the Cold War squeezed between East and West. Thus, there can be no doubt that the Commission's work was hampered by such battles and the peace keeping role of the MAC should not be overvalued.³⁹

Almost during the entire 1960s, no fear of war breaking out was recorded during various incidents and loses, however the situation changed in the end of this decade. The year 1968 brought two most disturbing incidents—North Koreans' assassination attempt on President Park Chung-hee (1917–1979) and the detention of American ship called Pueblo off the coast of North Korea. The assassination attempt caused another commotion and tension in Inter-Korean relations, but this incident was gradually overshadowed by the Pueblo case.

The major role in the solution of the Pueblo incident was played by the NNSC that ought contribute to the release of tensions and maintaining the armistice. It was also one of the authorities permitting formal and informal interviews and discussions unlike the MAC which organized the austere, purely

38 Ibid., 165–194.

39 Jonsson, *Peace-Keeping in the Korean Peninsula*, 187.

formal meetings and did not allow the meeting outside the walls of the advisory room.

Despite many problems, emerging even before the mentioned year 1968, in December 1960 Czechoslovakia took also more optimistic stance. Based on the report on the activities of the Czechoslovak delegation in the NNSC,⁴⁰ American General Manning T. Jannell (b1921) approached the members of the Commission and apologized for his lack of interest in their activity. The Czechoslovak delegation stressed that such situation has arisen for the first time for the whole period of their activities in the NNSC. But the optimism was soon replaced by distrust toward North Korea stemming from its anti-South Korean policy. On 11 January 1961, a joint meeting of China, Czechoslovakia and Poland was held in Kaeseong. The representative of the Chinese side, General Zhu De 朱德 (1886–1976) reminded that during the initial meetings the performances of the Swedish member Hartmann and his emphasizing of increase of the NNSC's activity and restoration of its control function which would contribute to the achievement of the country's reunification, whereby the number of its members could be increased by another Asian country. After longer discussion, the guideline of General Zhu De consisting of two main points was adopted: 1) hold the official line drawn by Kim Il-sung during the interviews on the country's reunification with Western partners and reject any external intervention including the services of NNSC; 2) proposal to unleash the control function of the NNSC should be regarded as Americans' probing, do not adopt any statement so far to the proposal and wait for further development of the situation, alternatively, get more detailed reports.

In the next item on the agenda, General Zhu De announced that the US imperialists had recently intensified strengthening of its South Korean nuclear base which is the target of criticism by the KPA and the CPVA and therefore arises the question whether the KPA and the CPVA relating to this matter should not send a letter to the NNSC. However, Czechoslovakia and Poland shared a different opinion. The head of the Czechoslovak delegation pointed out that the suitability of sending a letter to NNSC should be carefully considered since the Commission did not have its own control options, and unlike previous cases, did not have any official evidence of import of new missiles to South Korea. He also added that such step would most likely cause rejection of nego-

40 »Zpráva o činnosti čs. delegace v DKNS za prosinec 1960« [Report on the Activities of the Czechoslovak Delegation in the NNSC in December 1960], 2 (VHA 1960, sign. 1/21/10, k. 456).

tiation by the other partners in the Commission and the result would be a disruption of the relations in the NNSC.⁴¹

Another cause of tensions in the Commission were the consultations regarding the unification of Korea. Czechoslovakia, Poland and the DPRK constantly emphasized the lack of cooperation by South Korea in addressing the Korean issue. The DPRK continued demanding a ban of foreign interference and withdrawal of foreign troops from South Korea. Members of the Czechoslovak group also pointed out that the paradox is that at a time when many nations were gaining freedom and breaking up the colonial system, the country with a history of nearly five thousand years of culture remained a colony. They also claimed that such statements as »expel US invaders and liberate the people of South Korea«, which could be easily abused as a propaganda, are to some extent in conflict with slogans about the peaceful resolution of the unification of the Korean Peninsula.⁴²

North's Propaganda against the South was reflected in early September 1962 in the incident in DMZ. Report of the NNSC's Czechoslovak delegation captures the opinion of the North Koreans, which claimed that on 5 September seventeen members of the military personnel of the UN began shooting at the North Korean army members in Demarcation Line in the North Korean side of DMZ and that this incident ended up with the death of three and shooting up the other three members. The KPA and the CPVA declared that this provocation was prepared in advance and accused the Southern side of a serious armistice violation. The UN troops expressed to this accusation resolute opposition. According to data from the UN, the crash arose when members of the North Korean army crossed the line located about 14 miles from Hwacheon defined by boundary indicators and launched the shooting at the members of the South Korean army. As in previous cases, neither side was willing to give up its standpoint. However, the head of the Czechoslovak delegation, Major-General Oldřich Chýle (1899-?) and commander of the fourth group in the NNSC from June 1956 to July 1957, expressed the view that the North Korean side's argument with regard to the circumstances of the incident it is stating is not very convincing. He also reminded that it took ten days until the North Korean press

41 »Záznam o poradě konané dne 11. ledna 1961 ve štábu KLA v Kesonu« [Report on Meeting Held on 11 January 1961 in the Headquarters of the KPA in Kaeseong], 1-2 (VHA 1961, sign. 31/7/6, k. 60).

42 »Vývoj otázky sjednocení Koreje—souhrnná zpráva« [Developments in the Issue Related to Reunification of Korea—Summary Report], 4-5 (VHA 1962, sign. 31/7/7, k. 89).

ever published the first mention of the incident, thereby, emphasizing the strangeness of the situation, since in analogous cases, the North Korean side is always ready. Chýle also pointed out that unlike the entire practice until that period of time, despite the fact that this was such a serious incident, the KPA and the CPVA didn't ask for convening the military armistice commission and the meeting was carried out after the request of the UN.⁴³

Relations among the NNSC member States were becoming an increasingly important issue. At the end of 1962, South Korean President Park Chung-hee sent a gift to members of the Czechoslovak and Polish delegations in the form of boxes of fruit. Handing over of the donation was made only through the liaison officer of the UN in Panmunjeom without official dedication, but it was the first time in history when South Koreans paid such attention to the Czechoslovak and Polish delegation. However, Czechoslovakia and Poland rejected the gift. They justified the rejection claiming that South Koreans perceived Czechoslovakia and Poland as hostile states with which according to their political agenda they did not intend to establish diplomatic relations.⁴⁴ Another reason was the visit of Seoul by Czechoslovaks and Poles in early October 1962 reported in an article of *Chosun Ilbo*.⁴⁵ The article portrayed a shock of Northern member groups at seeing the high level development of South Korea, but Czechoslovakia designated the report as grossly exaggerated propaganda. The third reason for rejecting the gift was Czechoslovakia and Poland's fear of the reaction of North Koreans that could understand the act of acceptance as an act hostile to them. North Koreans accepted Czechoslovakia and Poland's refusal of Park Chung-hee's gift with great satisfaction, and thereupon submitted to the Czechoslovak and Polish delegations series of gifts from the head of state, Kim Il-sung, from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of National Defense and other personalities from Kaeseong.

On 9 January 1963, a group dinner at a government villa in Pyeongyang was organized by a representative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK,

43 »Incident v demilitarizovaném pásmu« [Incident in the Demilitarized Zone], 1-3 (VHA 1962, sign. 31/7/11, k. 216).

44 »Vztahy mezi delegacemi v DKNS—zpráva« [Relations Among the NNSC delegations—Report; 28 Jan 1963] (VHA 1963, sign. 31/7/7, k. 68).

45 An English translation of the article is included in the report »Tell Kim Il Song to be Our Guest Too!«, *Chosun Ilbo* ? Oct 1962. A copy of the article is included in the report »Vztahy mezi delegacemi v DKNS« of 28 Jan 1963, but unfortunately does not carry the exact date of publication.

Kim Dae-ji⁴⁶ for the representatives of the Czechoslovak and Polish delegations. Kim Dae-ji thanked the Czechoslovak and Polish representatives for meritorious work and stressed their importance in the future in the fight against US imperialism. Report on relations among the delegations claims that Kim Dae-ji highlighted the successes of the DPRK, but he hardly mentioned the policy of the Soviet Union and the other countries. On the contrary, Czecho-slovakia and Poland did not miss to emphasize the overall framework of inter-national politics and the role of the Soviet Union. North Korea's omission of the Soviet Union's policy is thought to be logical since from 1963, the DPRK had established closer ties with China. Khrushchev's policy of peaceful coexistence between capitalism and communism and his criticism of Stalinism had been an obstacle in Kim Il-sung's attempt to gain absolute power and was considered a threat to the interests of the DPRK. Zhao Huji argues that the connecting link of Kim Il-sung with Mao Zedong was not only a common political ideology, but also similar cultural environment and very difficult living conditions, of which both came from.⁴⁷

At the time of strengthening the relations of the DPRK with China, the KPA troops and the CPVA changed their attitude towards Switzerland and United States. The main reason was to establish personal relations with the US. North Korean General Chang asked the new Swiss delegate Marcel Scherler (d1963) to ask Americans to ensure the regular income of the South Korean press consigned directly from the US Secretariat in Panmunjeom. He promised to send North Korean press to Americans in return. He also asked for the mediation of the postal service through Panmunjeom between the DPRK and South Korea, renewal of the option to exceed the demarcation line and drive into the Swiss and Swedish camp. The applications were approved after mutual discussion of Switzerland and the US. To improve the relations between the NNSC member states, the DPRK invited Switzerland and Sweden to Pyeongyang. This matter caused negative reactions from the Czechoslovak and Polish delegations which were not informed in advance on the negotiations of Scherler and the DPRK focused on the relations with the US. At the end of the report, the Czechoslovak part of the Commission states that the change of the DPRK's

46 Name unclear, found only the Czech version of the Korean name in the document—Kim Tä-dži.

47 Zhao Huji, »China-North Korea Relations in Post-Cold war Era: Review and Prospect«, in *Changes in North Korea and Policy Responses of the International Community Toward North Korea*, ed. by Cho Myung-chul and Kim Ji-yeon (Seoul: KIEP, 2009), 77.

attitude was most likely the result of an agreement or even a direct order from Beijing.⁴⁸

Czechoslovak-North Korean Relations Within the NNSC

As mentioned above, the tension of relations between Czechoslovakia and North Korea can be observed already in the 1950s, however, more intense statements from the Czechoslovak side on the actual mutual relations come from the NNSC reports in the 1960s. Regarding North Korea's strong relation with China, the CPVA started to be more involved in the Commission's disputes. Czechoslovakia highlighted the unity of the Chinese political line with that of the North Korean and equated almost identical strong impact of China on the North Korean policy to influence of the DPRK. According to the report of Czechoslovakia from 1963, the KPA and the CPVA continued to promote its 'Beijing line' against the Czechoslovak and Polish delegations in the NNSC, pushed back both delegations (from the social point of view as well) on the sidelines and took side of the western delegations, mainly the Swiss delegation, in an attempt to resolve their issues without the Czechoslovak and Polish members. Czechoslovakia for the first time commented very concretely on the relationship with the DPRK and CPR as well:

This relationship is seemingly friendly and cordial, but in reality it's still hostile and disrespectful. There is no improvement of our cooperation despite our and Poland's efforts to maintain a good relationship with North Korea and China.⁴⁹

On 19 July 1963, the Czechoslovak delegation became aware of the visit of the Swiss delegation to China as well as their Pyeongyang visit. The members of the Czechoslovak and Polish group were invited as well by the UN for a visit of Seoul; however, the DPRK explicitly omitted any comment on this invitation and ignored it. The Czechoslovak delegation subsequently contacted General Mróz (1902–1988), the head of the Polish group, who *inter alia* expressed his opinion on the relationship of the KPA and the CPVA to the Czechoslovak representatives. Mróz asserted that the KPA and the CPVA like neither the Czechoslovak nor the Polish delegation, but they do not have enough courage to

48 »Vztahy mezi delegacemi v DKNS—zpráva« [Relations Among the NNSC Delegates—Report; 2 May 1963], 1–4 (VHA 1963, sign. 31/7/7, k. 68).

49 »Vztahy mezi delegacemi v DKNS—zpráva [Relations among the NNSC delegations - Report] (31.7.1963), 1 (VHA 1963, sign. 31/7/7, k. 69).

express their antipathy for fear of consequences in terms of international relations. North Korea's hostile relationship to Czechoslovakia reflected in the maintenance and supply and in the service providing, e.g. long-term disposal of dial-up connection and the power supply, provision of vehicles in poor condition, rotten food supply etc. From the Czechoslovak delegates' perspective, the only scale of correctness or incorrectness of the NNSC activities was the opinion of the North Koreans which rejected any kind of discussion and regarded the Czechoslovak delegates as a »subordinate body«.⁵⁰

The biggest difficulty for members of the Czechoslovak delegation was their forced isolation. The movement outside Kaeseong was permitted only after the KPA's approval what was regarded by the Czechoslovaks as a huge obstacle in communication, exploring the country and the real life of locals. There appeared more frequent criticism of North Korean support of the 'Beijing Line' in the documents of the Czechoslovak delegation. The report on the military situation in the DPRK mentions the situation that was characterized by a strenuous defense building at the expense of further development of the national economy. The Czechoslovak delegation criticized the reluctance of the DPRK to forge the alliance and close cooperation with Soviet Union, the other Socialist bloc countries and their armies and the isolation caused by the orientation exclusively on China. The head of the Czechoslovak delegation at that time, Vaclav Tauš (1910–1965) took a critical stance against the KPA and the CPVA which advocated the strategy of rapid solution of the Korean issue and forced weaponry.

The reason of the ongoing tensions was the concealment of Czechoslovakia's visit of Seoul in September 1964. Czechoslovakia regarded the duty to inform the DPRK in advance as an unnecessary waste of time since the other side ignored the need of mutual discussion. The purpose of this visit was the normalization of relations of South and North Korea. Czechoslovakia expressed optimistic view, on the other side assumed that the goal of the UN was to deepen the conflict between the KPA/the CPVA and the Czechoslovak and Polish delegation. It also argued that the UN through their gestures (which included the permit of free movement as well) wanted to emphasize the difference between similar visits to North, where the movement of western representatives was limited. The Czechoslovak delegates expressed the futility of worrying about normalization of the relations with the UN and regarded the cooperation as a source of another information not only for the activity of the

50 Ibid., 3, 5–6.

Czechoslovak delegation, which was more and more isolated by the KPA/the CPVA, but also for their embassy in Pyeongyang.⁵¹

The turning point was the visit of Czechoslovak representatives in the NNSC on 19–22 November 1964. The visit of the delegation was publicized by the Soviet ambassador Vasily Moskovsky (and the Czechoslovak ambassador in Pyeongyang, Václav Moravec) through their secretaries. A substantial part of the visit was devoted to the clarification of the political situation in the DPRK and South Korea and further cooperation of the Czechoslovak delegation in the NNSC with the Czechoslovak embassy in Pyeongyang. In honor of the visit of ambassadors dinner was hosted North Korean Major-General Park Chun-guk⁵² and Chinese Colonel Wang were invited. Park Chun-guk highly appreciated the work and importance of the Czechoslovak delegation in the NNSC and underscored the need for mutual cooperation in the fight against imperialism. Both ambassadors were invited to the Korean Military headquarters in Kaeseong, what the Czechoslovaks identified as a significant act since such invitations were not made for a long period of time. They also considered this visit for a great importance to consolidate their own authority. On the basis of the KPA and the CPVA's approach, the Czechoslovak side predicted the possibility of warming the mutual relations, on the other side, it did not omit its common commentary on the North Korean strongly following of the 'Beijing Line'. Thus, Czechoslovakia did not expect substantial changes in the North's ideology.⁵³

After the visit of the abovementioned ambassadors, Major-General Park invited the representatives of the Czechoslovak and Polish delegations and discussed the relations with South Korea and United States. Park announced that the representatives of the MAC submitted a proposal to the meetings taking place once every two months and only in case that one or the other side it would consider necessary to make a notice to the other one and would make this notice by telephone or by letter. General Park said that the North Korean side con-

51 »Poznatky ze zájezdu členů čs. delegace v DKNS do Seoulu 21. a 22. září 1964« [Information on the Trip of the NNSC Czechoslovak Delegation to Seoul on 21 and 22 September 1964], 4–5 (VHA 1964, sign. 31/7-5/13).

52 Name unclear, found just a Czech version of the Korean name in the document as »Pak Čchun-guk«.

53 »Konzultace se ZÚ Pchjongjang a některé otázky k činnosti čs. Delegace« [Consultations with the Embassy in Pyeongyang and Other Issues Related to the Activities of the Czechoslovak Delegation; 25.11.1964], 1–3 (VHA 1964, sign. 31/7/18, k. 105).

siders such behavior as a serious armistice violation and won't agree with such proposals. He claimed that Americans who constantly violate the Armistice Agreement on the water, air and land did not want to be criticized for their actions during the meetings. According to Park, another reason of the tension of Americans were the visits of journalists and the other citizens of North and South whose the only place of contact during the MAC meetings was Panmunjeom. He further insisted that if the Commission did not hold a meeting for a long time, large amount of disturbances would be accumulated and the hearing would become a matter of formality which would not fulfill its mission. Thus, he proposed a measure called the »Bolshoi noise«, i.e. a strong campaign negatively publicizing the Americans, their failure to fulfill the Armistice Agreement and also their preparation of a new aggression against the North. The Czechoslovak delegation evaluated the meeting with General Park as the next step in warming of relations and in improving care for their NNSC members.⁵⁴

The reason for tension release between Czechoslovakia and DPRK can be the concerns of the DPRK and China from abolition of NNSC. North Korean side frequently emphasized the cooperation with the Czechoslovak delegation and its' important role in addressing any deficiencies. Another motivation for improving the relations was the already mentioned Czechoslovakia's visit of Seoul. North Koreans feared that Czechoslovakia will change the object of interest and replace them with the Southern side what they regarded as a threat to their own authority.

The discussions about sending a letter dealing with the South Korea's Armistice Agreement violation contributed to improving of relations between Czechoslovakia and DPRK as well. After sending the letter were the leaders of the Czechoslovak and Polish delegations, together with their wives and secretaries invited to Hamheung, Wonsan and Mount Keumgang where they visited several collective farms, factories and cultural institutions. Czechoslovakia appreciated the DPRK's interest in their members and activities in the NNSC, however they continued to disapprove the North Korean inclination to China. At that time, North Korea signed the agreement on mutual assistance with the Soviet Union what triggered gradual improving of their neglected relationship. The cause of the establishment of this relationship was the North's isolation caused by strong support of the 'Beijing line'. The consequence of the DPRK's isolation was not only the military crisis, but an economic crisis as well.

54 »Záznam o rozhovoru vedoucího čs. delegace« [Record of an Interview with the Head of the Czechoslovak Delegation; no date], 1-2 (VHA 1964, sign. 31/7/17, k. 45).

China, already caught up in the 'Cultural Revolution', did not provide economic aid to the DPRK, therefore the DPRK started to seek assistance elsewhere.

The problem of the North's isolation was one of the several topics during a meeting of the Czechoslovak and Polish delegation and the DPRK on 19 June 1965. On the same day, a dinner in honour of the visit from Pyeongyang in the Korean headquarters in Kaeseong was held where North Koreans thanked the Czechoslovak and Polish delegations for their work. However, Czechoslovakia did not attach particular importance to this visit and regarded it only part of formally improved relations, and also expressed the presumption that it might be a review of their activities by the KPA and the CPVA in the MAC. At the end of the report on the relations among delegations in the NNSC and cooperation with the embassy, the Czechoslovak delegates claimed that the influence of the situation in the East and Southeast Asia (particularly in Vietnam) and the situation related to the Japanese-South Korean agreement on basic relations reflected in the Commission's activities. They did not omit mentioning of the armistice violation which increased the tensions at the 38th parallel and affected the atmosphere of the negotiations in MAC. They evaluated the cooperation of the DPRK with the Soviet Union very positively and highly evaluated the improvement of their relations what could be seen e.g. in increased material care.

A relatively friendly atmosphere persisted until 1967 when Czechoslovakia launched a criticism of the DPRK's attitude and behaviour again: North Korea did not demonstrate positive approach to a peaceful reunification of Korea and, compared to the previous period, the DPRK's anti-South Korean propaganda gained even more intense momentum. The DPRK proclaimed the state of full combat readiness, so as to break the American aggressors, highlighted the military industry, relying on the strength of independent national economy, which made different kinds of military hardware and equipment necessary for modern war. Czechoslovakia immediately responded with disagreement justifying that such statement can greatly complicate negotiations in the NNSC, in case that the KPA would protest against the import of new weapons to South Korea. In conclusion, Czechoslovakia said that the North Koreans probably ceased to believe in the possibility of peaceful reunification and showed that their ideas about the unification of the country were associated with an armed invasion of the South.⁵⁵

55 »Vojenská komise pro příměří v I. čtvrtletí 1967« [Military Armistice Commission in the First Quarter of the Year 1967], 10–11 (*VHA* 1967, sign. 31/7/7, k. 10).

The abovementioned 'Beijing Line' policy from the former half of the 1960s in the DPRK and tensed relations reflected in the attitude to events in August 1968 during the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Soviet troops. It has proved still impossible to find primary documents that would address this issue in detail. However, the authors of a monograph briefly portray the attitude of the DPRK towards the 'Prague Spring'.⁵⁶ In terms of the Juche ideology,⁵⁷ Soviets' attacks on Czechoslovakia were a gross breach of sovereignty, nevertheless the DPRK assessed this attempt for normalization led by Alexander Dubček (1921–1992) just as an exaggerated, radical movement. North Koreans disagreed with the Czechoslovak reform policy, with its abandoning the dictatorship of the proletariat and class struggle, which in their opinion represented counter-revolutionary Marxism and revisionism. The reason for such a DPRK's approach towards Czechoslovakia was the North's military dependency on the Soviet Union which ruled out open criticism of the breach of Czechoslovakia sovereignty by the Soviet Union.⁵⁸

Conclusions

Research on the basis of archival documents concerning the activities of Czechoslovakia in the NNSC ends in late sixties. The latest information available is the document mentioning a discussion of the Czechoslovak delegates with the North Korean General Park⁵⁹ which captures Czechoslovakia's lack of enthusiasm for North Korea's proposal to send a letter dealing with the North's protest against the importation of new weapons to South Korea.

The abovementioned authors of the monograph capture the North Korean relations with the countries of Eastern Europe and outline the period of the

56 Cf. Park Jae-kyu; Koh Byung-chul; Kwak Tae-hwan, *The Foreign Relations of North Korea. New Perspectives* (Seoul: Kyungnam University. Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 1987).

57 The governing principles of Juche expressed by Kim Il-song in 1967 are that the Government of the Republic will implement with all consistency the line of independence of the country (*chaju*), build up more solidly the foundations of an independent national economy capable of ensuring the complete unification, independence, and prosperity for the nation (*charip*) and increasing the country's defense capabilities, so as to safeguard the security of the fatherland reliably 'by our own force' (*chawi*), by splendidly embodying the Party's ideas in all fields.

58 Park & al., *The Foreign Relations of North Korea*, 221.

59 Name unclear, found just a Czech transcription of the Korean name in the document—Pak.

1970s and the improving of mutual relations. However, available first-hand information is limited to political representatives' visits and to purely formal matters. From later periods, i.e. from the 1980s to the early 1990s (i.e. up to 1993), when the period of the activities of the Czechoslovak delegation ends, only few very scarce informations and data are available from various Slovak and Czech academic articles,⁶⁰ but they are far from sufficient to provide sufficient sources for a detailed analysis of Czechoslovak-North Korean relations and the mapping of the overall situation in the NNSC. Based on additional research mainly in the Central Military Archive and Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague, it was possible to find new yet unconsidered sources of information presenting new peinspectpectives on the issue. The need to find additional sources of information presents a motivation for further research and encourages us to analyze Czechoslovak-North Korean relations within the NNSC from a broader perspective, involving dynamic relations among the member countries of the Commission, the impact of international affairs on the NNSC's activities and the Commission's activities' impact on the 'outside world' – world out of NNSC in North and South Korea. Detailed comparative analysis of documents of the NNSC member countries and the countries involved in its activities would be great contribution as well.

List of Abbreviations

<i>Archiv MZV</i>	Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí ČR (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic), Prague
CPVA	Chinese People's Volunteer Army (<i>Jungguginminjiweongun</i> 중국인민지원군)
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone (<i>Bimujangjidae</i> 비무장지대)
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (<i>Joseonminjujuuiinmingonghwagug</i> 조선민주주의인민공화국)
IT	Inspection Team (<i>Sachaltim</i> 사찰 팀)
KPA	Korean People's Army (<i>Joseoninmingun</i> 조선인민군)

60 Jozef Korený, »Zvláštna skupina ČSEA v Kórei« [Special Group of Czechoslovak People's Army in Korea], *Apológia* 6, 3 (1998), 24–25; Tomáš Smetánka, »Neutrální Československo. Čtyřicet let v komisi pro dohled nad příměřím v Koreji« [Neutral Czechoslovakia. Forty Years in the Commission to Supervise the Truce in Korea], *Mezinárodní politika* [International Politics] 36,6 (2010), 9–12.

MAC	Military Armistice Commission (<i>Kunsajeongjeonwiweonhoe</i> 군사정전위원회)
NNSC	Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (<i>Jungripguggam-dogwiweonhoe</i> 중립국감독위원회)
PRC	People's Republic of China (<i>Jungbwanmingongbwa-gug</i> 중화인민공화국)
ROK	Republic of Korea (<i>Daebanmingug</i> 대한민국)
UN	United Nations
US	United States
VHA	Vojenský historický archiv, Ministerstvo národní obrany (Historical Archives, Ministry of National Defense), Prague

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