

**April 19, 1986**  
**International Olympic Committee President interview with  
Chun Doo-hwan on North Korean Threats to the 1988  
Seoul Olympics**

**Citation:**

"International Olympic Committee President interview with Chun Doo-hwan on North Korean Threats to the 1988 Seoul Olympics," April 19, 1986, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, International Olympic Committee Archives (Switzerland), SEOUL' 88, POLITICAL MATTERS, DE 1982 A MAI 86. Obtained for NKIDP by Sergey Radchenko.  
<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113475>

**Summary:**

IOC President Samaranch speaks to South Korean President Chun Doo-Hwan. Samaranch tries to persuade Chun to concede some of the sports organizing at the upcoming Summer 1988 Olympics to North Korea, as their demands have "decreased drastically." Chun fears that concessions now will lead to greater concessions in the future. Chun urges Samaranch to take control of the situation, as the IOC is well-respected. In order for the IOC to negotiate with North Korea, North Korea must declare that it will honor the Olympic Charter.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

- English Transcription

(stamped confidential)

19.04.86

## INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH KOREA CHUN DOO-HWAN

Also present was : Kim Pyong Hoon  
Chief Secretary of President's Protocol

After President Chun had made some kind remarks about the work I am doing to ensure the success of the Olympic Games in Seoul, acknowledging that I have the best intentions as has the IOC, I spoke to the President of my fears that North Korea might all it can to destabilise the Games in Seoul.

In spite of their awareness that, at the present time, the majority of the socialist countries, in particular those of Europe, are inclined to participate, they have on their side a major ally, namely Cuba. I expressed to him in clear terms that the socialist countries of Europe respect enormously President Fidel Castro and will try not to do anything which could disrupt the good relations they have with him at present.

For that reason, I asked the President to look into the possibility of conceding some sport to North Korea. Its demands have diminished drastically; they began by refusing to accept the Olympic Games in Seoul, then asked for the organisation of 50% of the Games, and are now asking for the organisation of five of the twenty-three sports. I said to the President that perhaps two or three would be sufficient, but that the IOC could only go a step forward in this direction if we had the prior agreement of South Korea. That is why, as I pointed out to him, I regard our conversation as being of supreme importance.

He replied that there was a fundamental question for him, namely the question whether there was any authority, country or organisation higher than the IOC itself. He said that he understood that the IOC is the supreme authority and that the whole world must respect its decisions. "I know your organisation has the best intentions, but what worries me are the threats of North Korea. The IOC must give nothing, it should not allow provocations, it should pay no attention to threats. That is what worries me most"...

"It is true that Korea has more arms than we have but they do not have the means to fight against us and the US forces based in my country. President Kim Il-Sung knows that he can not attack us and I know it and he knows that I know it."

"Neither the USSR nor China will allow North Korea to attack South Korea. North Korea is not in a position to attack us. If we were to give them 3 sports

now, afterwards they would ask for five sports.

“The problem of the danger of war depends on whether the USSR is inclined to fight against the United States in my region. I can assure you that that country does not want war either.

“Without the support of these two countries, North Korea can do absolutely nothing and if it were to do something, that would be an act of self-destruction. If they want a fight, they would have it, but it would be suicide on their part.

“The sole reason I am explaining all this to you is to give you the support you need. You believe they are much stronger than they really are.

“Let it be well understood. North Korea was opposed in principle to our Olympic Games; afterwards, they wanted divided Games, then they changed their demands at least two or three times before asking, as you said, for five sports. My question is this : through whom did they ask for it?”

My reply was to tell him that they did so directly and also through China, the USSR, Cuba, Ethiopia and many other countries. In addition, these points were discussed during the joint meetings we held in Lausanne.

President Chun continued to tell me that I should know the reality of the military situation in the peninsula and also the situation within North Korea, a country which does not understand and does not want to understand the Olympic Charter or follow the IOC's instructions.

“You show dignity, consistency and leadership. You are respected by the whole world, but if you give in to the claims of North Korea, you will lose your credibility and that of the organisation of which you are the President. They have a domestic problem arising from the fact that they lied to their people.

“President Kim Il-Sung and his son said that Seoul could not organise the Olympic Games as there is nothing in Seoul but beggars in the streets. It was only propaganda and I know it, but when they realised that these Games could be a success, they became very nervous. They can only get out of this problem with threats. They can do nothing to stop Seoul. Time is passing and, I repeat, you and your organisation are greatly respected and you may be assured that North Korea can not win the battle against the IOC.

“There is a very important principle. North Korea does not wish to respect the IOC's resolutions if it does not get anything out of them. Before making any requests, they should state clearly that they respect the Olympic Charter and the decisions taken by the IOC. If North Korea states that it absolutely agrees to respect the Olympic Charter and the IOC's decisions, then we could discuss in

Seoul in a few days time in another conversation with you the possibility of giving them some sport. I am favourably disposed to do what you desire to help the IOC, not North Korea, but I insist on the principle that the IOC should not feel affected by the threats of North Korea.

“Before I left Seoul, I was visited by the Secretary of Defence of the USA, Caspar Weinberger and high-level American and Korean personalities and he handed me a personal letter from President Reagan in which he expressed very clearly his country’s wish to maintain peace in the Korean peninsula and to help the Olympic Games take place normally. All means will be employed if North Korea wishes to attack. The United States recently took action in Lybia, but I can assure you that in my country the reaction would be much stronger. If North Korea attacks, it will be destroyed. I am telling you all this in strict confidence.

“President Samaranch, do not take seriously the threats of North Korea. They are not in a position to do anything against the IOC. You may believe me, just as I believe you. You should day to North Korea that it must respect the Olympic Charter and all the decisions taken by the IOC. If they do so, tell them that we can help them.”

The interview lasted almost one and a half hours, and at the end, President Chun repeated that we should continue it in Seoul in a few days.

Before concluding, I raised with him the candidature of Un Yong-Kim in a fairly direct manner and he asked to wait until we meet in Seoul for his reply.

With respect to anxiety concerning the political situation within his country and the problem resulting from the holding of presidential elections in 1988, six months before the Olympic Games, he reminded me that I had already expressed my anxieties during our last talk one year ago in Seoul. He is sure that nothing will happen, but we shall continue to speak of this matter in Seoul.

After my meeting with President Chun was over, I talked with the Chief of Protocol, Kim Pyong Hoon, to summarise the main points of the conversation, of which there were three :

1. – if There is a declaration of the part of North that it will respect the Olympic Charter and the decisions of the IOC, there could be negotiations with them, not before.
2. – With respect to the new IOC member, the reply was that we should continue with the conversation in Seoul, which leads me to suppose that perhaps he has another candidate.
3. – On the matter of internal politics, we shall continue to talk in Seoul, but it

seems to me very unlikely that he would change the plan concerning the future presidential elections