

May 21, 1979
Notes on a Meeting in Seoul on 5 May 1979, 10:30 – 12:30 AM

Citation:

“Notes on a Meeting in Seoul on 5 May 1979, 10:30 – 12:30 AM,” May 21, 1979, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, “Representatives and Observers to the United Nations - Republic of Korea,” Office of Secretary-General - Kurt Waldheim, S-0907-0012-15, United Nations Archives and Records Management Section (UN ARMS), New York, NY. Obtained by James Person.

<http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119189>

Summary:

Kurt Waldheim and Park Chung Hee discuss the Secretary General's recent trip to Pyongyang and conversation with Kim Il Sung, as well as the possibilities for dialogue between North Korea, South Korea, and the United States.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from the ROK Ministry of Unification and Kyungnam University.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

- English Transcription

File: Korea

Xref: Trip

FMG/EF

cc: Mr. Sutterlin

bf: RA/AR

CONFIDENTIAL

NOTES ON A MEETING IN SEOUL ON 5 MAY 1979, 10:30 – 12:30 AM

Present: The Secretary-General

Mr. R. Ahmed

Mr. F. Mayrhofer-Grünbuhel (signature)

Mr. F. Giuliani

President Park Chung Hee

Foreign Minister Park Tong-Jin

Ambassador Yun, Permanent Observer

One official

Following an exchange of courtesies the Secretary-General briefed President Park about his talks in Vietnam and China concerning the situation in Indo-China. With regard to Korea he stressed that China apparently was interested to keep the situation in the Peninsula quiet for the time being. Vice Premier Deng, in particular, had indicated that an attack of the DPRK against the ROK was unlikely.

The Secretary-General then gave an extensive account of his talks in Pyongyang. He referred to the difficulties which originally had arisen over the visit to the DPRK. In his very extensive meeting with the Foreign Minister he hardly had noticed any change of North Korea's well-known position regarding the Korean problem. The talks with President Kim Il Sung had yielded a substantially different picture. The President had accepted his thesis that neither of the two sides could be expected to give up their respective social system. It would therefore be necessary to take a pragmatic and practical approach which would take account of this. What should be achieved was a stabilizing modus vivendi, some loose framework of unification which would enable the resumption of economic and cultural ties. President Kim who had accepted this idea had said repeatedly that he did not want to force his country's system on the South. What he wanted was peaceful reunification.

With regard to the procedural aspects, in particular, who should participate in the negotiations to replace the Armistice Agreement, President Kim had shown some flexibility. He did not exclude the participation of the ROK and stressed that he had never been given a chance to discuss this subject with the Americans. What he apparently had in mind were discreet contacts with the United States in which he then would accept trilateral talks. Kim Il Sung had said that he would even make concessions once the South accepted the principle of reunification.

As to the Secretary-General's role President Kim had been rather positive. He had not been against the Secretary-General's concrete suggestions in this regard (Observer, channel of

communications) but had said that his Government needed more time to study these proposals and an answer would be given later on.

In conclusion, the Secretary-General said that although the principal positions appeared unchanged President Kim shown some flexibility. Given the new political and strategic developments in Asia it was his feeling that the present situation should be used in order to make renewed efforts for a South-North dialogue.

President Park briefly reviewed the history of the United Nations involvement in Korea, mentioning inter alia that the United Nations had recognized the Government of the ROK as the only lawful Government in Korea. Even now, 25 years after the unprovoked attack of the North against the South the DPRK maintained that the war was a result of a Southern provocation. Such falsification of history caused grave doubts about the sincerity of the other side. In her many dealings with the North over the years the ROK had found out that President Kim's Government was not sincere. The statistics by the UN Command showed more than 4,000 violations of the Armistice Agreement since it had entered into force. He gave further examples of Northern war preparations against the South such as the digging of tunnels. Even when the two sides were negotiating the Joint Communiqué of 1972 the North was busily engaged in building these tunnels.

In such a situation, unification was not an easy task. The most reasonable and practical approach was to start with the easiest problems in order to make some progress in reducing the existing tension. The Northern concept of starting with the basic political problem which would later automatically solve all other issues was illogical. Given the present situation, reunification might realistically take place in hundred to two hundred years. But everything should be done to avoid hostilities and a fratricidal war. Peace to come first, then reunification. If the two sides would agree on a federation or a similar concept this would only increase the risk of war.

The Northern proposal of a whole nation congress was impractical. He was convinced that the North still thought of unifying the country under its ideology, if necessary, by use of force. Therefore the South had to maintain strong armed forces in order to repel any aggression. At the same time it made all efforts to continue the dialogue in order to dissolve mistrust and tension.

However, in this dialogue the South wanted to deal only with authorized representatives, not with the envoys of some unknown social organizations. As to the replacement of the Armistice Agreement it should be kept in mind that treaties existed in order to be abided by. The present agreement was enough to prevent hostilities but the North had violated it on numerous occasions. Any new agreement would have to contain safeguards to guarantee that it will be kept.

It was obvious that the South had to be immediately involved in any agreement to replace the Armistice Agreement. The forces of the South vastly exceeded those of the UN Command. In wanting to negotiate with the United States only, the DPRK might be thinking of the Vietnamese example. A replacement of the Armistice Agreement might of course in the DPRK's view entail the loss of justification for the presence of U.S. forces in the ROK. But it should be kept in mind that the American forces were stationed in the ROK on the basis of the Mutual Defense Treaty.

In spite of all difficulties the ROK did not lose hope and would continue to negotiate with patience and perseverance. The President welcomed the Secretary-General's suggestion to appoint an observer to the dialogue who could be in many ways of practical assistance, for example in calling meetings between the two authorities at the UN headquarters or in Geneva. The talks in Pamunjom had always been very unpleasant with the Northern representatives shouting at and threatening the Southern delegation. A change of venue would be welcome.

The Secretary-General ascertained the correctness of his understanding that the President agreed to his nominating an observer to facilitate the holding of talks between the two sides and the negotiations of an agreement replacing the Armistice Agreement.

The President made clear that his side was not very interested in trilateral talks about the Armistice Agreement. The South-North dialogue was more important, in it the question of the replacement of the Armistice Agreement could be taken up.

He felt that the positions were still wide apart but they seemed to have moved closer in one point, namely the Secretary-General's good offices. Maybe this was a basis for future efforts. However, when the North agreed with this suggestion it should be made clear that both sides should send properly authorized officials. Otherwise a meeting would be meaningless.

He would make Ambassador Yun responsible for any further contacts with the Secretary-General.

In conclusion, it was agreed that the idea of the appointment of an Observer should not be mentioned to the press.

21 May 1979