

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: President Bush's One-on-One Meeting with
President Roh Tae Woo of Korea

PARTICIPANTS: U.S.
The President
James A. Kelly, NSC, Notetaker
Chang Ho Lie, Interpreter

Korea
President Roh Tae Woo
Shin Doo Byong, Notetaker
Loh Chang Hee, Interpreter

DATE, TIME February 27, 1989, 12:47 p.m. - 1:26 p.m.
and PLACE: President Roh's office/study; Chong Wa Dae
(Blue House), Seoul, Korea

President Roh welcomed President Bush warmly. He said the visit was a sign of the importance the President attaches to our relations. Roh recalled that at their first meeting in 1987, both were running for office. Now both could meet again as heads of state. Roh again congratulated the President on his inauguration, which augurs well for the peace, freedom, and prosperity of the world. He related that when he visited Washington in October 1988, after his speech to the United Nations, President Reagan had told him the campaign was "history" and Bush was going to win. Roh said his own campaign was very tight. Only those who have run for public office can truly understand the experience.

President Bush said he had followed the Korean campaign very closely, and he respected how it had been run. He related former U.S. Speaker Sam Rayburn's criticism of someone -- "He never ran for sheriff" -- in support of the need for leaders to experience the feeling of standing for office. The President said that both our democracies' Presidents take strength from having taken themselves "to the people." It is an important underpinning of our authority.

President Roh said both had surprised skeptical political commentators. President Bush is the first American Vice

~~SECRET~~

Declassify on: OADR

~~SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED
PER E.O. 12958,
AS AMENDED
2000-0429-F
8/21/09

~~SECRET~~

SECRET

2

President to be elected President in 152 years. Roh described himself as having been "second man" while Mr. Bush was Vice President, and said the mantle of leadership is very difficult to inherit.

President Bush apologized for not having more time for this visit to Korea. He thanked Roh for inviting him, and emphasized his pleasure at being in Seoul. In the short time available, President Bush told Roh that he wanted to touch on the following:

- salute the strong friendship between the two countries;
- pledge continuity of American policies;
- encourage Korea's legislature to keep up its democratic work and express Korea's commitment to democracy;
- show we can also discuss contentious topics in the trade area; and,
- show the U.S. to be a steadfast friend which is not going to pull out and will not weaken its security commitment to Korea.

President Roh thanked the President for those words and for maintaining the strong relationship. The bonds between us were forged in blood, he said, and the U.S. had then helped Korea recover from its terrible war. The majority of Korean people will never forget this help.

President Bush interrupted the interpreter to ask President Roh to what extent young people still feel that sentiment.

President Roh said yes, the overwhelming majority do. A small fraction, maybe 1%, do not. Roh noted two categories of those who are anti-American. First are leftists who have been there all along. A second category is those that are being influenced by North Korea. With Korea's tight authoritarian controls in the past, feelings were submerged. Now they have come up, causing trouble and noise, but it is under control. From all that help, Roh said, Korea is trying to build itself as a world model for development. The Olympics have been a symbol of these policies coming to fruition. Concerning the Olympics, Roh said he was indebted to the U.S. for the help provided by the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, and from the U.S. for helping to prevent provocation from the North.

President Bush said he was delighted that this had brought the two countries closer on security cooperation. The same kind of efforts could help on tricky trade questions.

President Roh asked the President to discuss his just concluded

SECRET

~~SECRET~~

visit to China, especially any context involving Korea.

President Bush reported that General Secretary Zhao Ziyang will visit North Korea in April. China is very pleased with its unofficial trade contacts with South Korea. The President had advised China's leaders not to urge the U.S. to talk to North Korea about unification because that did not help dialogue. Successful talks are a matter for North and South, conversing together. The President said he had offered his frank opinion in Beijing, that he thought it may be too difficult for the United States to do serious business with Kim Il Sung or his son. Lower level discussions "to clear out the underbrush" would be fine, but the President was pessimistic about much beyond that. The Chinese, he said, seemed to understand what the President had said about the "supreme leader." China, of course, wants to expand its ties with South Korea and we favor that, and have been encouraged. The President said Chinese leaders were more understanding than he had expected of problems with North Korea -- they seemed a little embarrassed. There had been no pretense of encouraging the U.S. to reduce troop levels in Korea, and that was not mentioned.

President Roh made a point on South Korea's relations with China and the USSR. With respect to China, "the friend of our friend is our friend." There have been many contacts which continue. Korea's relations with the Soviets are of a different order. Roh hopes to cultivate these so as to encourage the Soviets to influence North Korea not to engage in aggressive behavior. In all Korea's relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, U.S. suggestions and guidelines are most welcome and will be used.

President Bush responded that China will not be joining with North Korea in any threats. They are interested in emulating South Korean economic development, and can play a useful role with the North.

At President Roh's suggestion that the leaders join the plenary meeting, President Bush -- who had made some notes on a pad -- told President Roh that although it might not be very legible, he wanted to leave a very personal "non-paper." The paper had three points:

- Market liberalization.
- Won re-evaluation -- very difficult, very important.
- Intellectual property rights.

The President added his hope that these actions could be seen as Korea's own. The U.S. Congress demands case-by-case action by the Executive Branch, creating an impression of pressuring our friends. The President said our Congress worried him, because they think responses only come from overt pressure, which undermines larger relationships. So the more that Korea could move on its own, said President Bush, the better. These trade and exchange rate problems, said the President, are our only major difference.

President Roh responded that he understood the gravity of this. He hoped both sides -- governments and private sectors -- could work cooperatively. But, said Roh, this may take some time.

President Bush then added a final point from China. Premier Li Peng had said China's central government would open a trade mission in Seoul, but had given no date. This had responded to a Korean request.

As a final point, President Roh asked the President's public support and approval of Korea's so-called "Nord politik" and the President agreed.

With a discussion of Roh's elaborately carved desk, the leaders left the room.