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8/6/53

KOREAN TRUCE

x President (The Person)

x Quantico Meeting



The President's visit to the Department of Defense Conference at Quantico on July 25th and 26th occurred during the final stages of the negotiations for truce in Korea. It seemed obvious to those who knew him well that the President was under considerable strain during the trip. However, when he was with others than White House staff members, he kept a cheerful appearance and probably did very much enjoy this break from routine and opportunity to return to a military base and meet with many old friends.

There was cause for the President's uneasiness from the very beginning, for his departure for Quantico was delayed by the need for a last minute session with Secretary Dulles and Assistant Secretary Robertson on Friday afternoon. On Friday evening the President completely departed from his routine by remaining up until nearly one-thirty, while he talked on and on with General Cater (Commandant at Quantico), Mr. Cutler, Mr. Hagerty, and Colonel Carroll. In his conversation he did not concentrate on the Korean situation, but did revert to his experiences during World War II. It is perhaps significant that he recalled his discussions with Marshal Zhukov, which emphasized the complete disregard of the Russians for the value of human beings. He told one story about how Zhukov explained that the Russians cleared mine fields for their tanks by marching troops over them. Also, Marshal Zhukov had expressed surprise that the Americans should allow themselves to have difficulty with handling German prisoners of war. The President recalled that he had explained to Zhukov that there was always the danger that the Germans could retaliate against American prisoners, whereupon the Marshal asked why the Americans had any worries about their prisoners in Germany, for they were no longer of any value for fighting!

The President also stayed up long beyond his customary bedtime on Saturday night, again talking almost incessantly to his close friends.

It had been expected that the truce would be signed early Sunday morning (Washington time). Indeed, the President had asked the Cabinet members to attend church services with him in the event it was accomplished. On Saturday afternoon at Quantico, he learned that the Communists had proposed the signing ceremony for Sunday evening rather than morning, and he was concerned lest this delay be the forerunner of additional delays.

While at Quantico the President worked on the message he planned to make when the truce was signed. He went over it on Saturday morning and then worked it over again extensively with Mr. Hagerty and Colonel Carroll

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during the drive back to Washington on Sunday. In the middle of Sunday afternoon he called Mr. Hagerty to get his opinion on changing the end of the message to incorporate the paragraph from Lincoln's second inaugural address concerning "malice toward none". He told Hagerty he had just been reading over Lincoln material.

It is perhaps significant that the President turned to Lincoln's works at this crucial moment prior to the truce. He spent most of Sunday afternoon by himself in what Hagerty termed "a contemplative mood", at first painting, then reading. (Mrs. Eisenhower once remarked to Hagerty that President Lincoln was the only one of the Presidents whose residence there could still be felt. This feeling of Lincoln in the White House has also been confirmed by members of the Secret Service and others who have spent time in the White House.)

In making arrangements for his truce message, the President had insisted that they have official word from General Clark prior to going on the air, for he feared that press reports might be premature, that they would probably be sent out as soon as signing began, but that there was still the possibility that something would go wrong before the signing was complete.



(This report is based on comments made by Mr. Hagerty shortly after the Quantico meeting.)

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