

NOVEMBER 22, 1974

POOL REPORT

Meeting of the Two Presidents at the Blue House

The Blue House, the South Korean equivalent of the White House, is a severe, beige stone building on top of a hill, commanding a view of an even higher mountain. It is reached by a long winding driveway, which today was lined with Army, Navy, and Air Force cadets in colorful dress uniforms.

The front of the building is covered by heavy concrete portico which today was guarded by elite troops.

At 3:02 p. m. an open lead security car occupied by three officers led President Ford's Cadillac to the top of the hill and under the portico. With the President was Foreign Minister Kim Dong-Jo, the former Ambassador to Washington. As they stepped from the car, President Park came out of the building to give Mr. Ford a brisk handshake. President Park then introduced his daughter, Miss Park Keun Hae, who serves as his hostess to President Ford.

The two presidents then went into a small sitting room while their entourages gathered in a formal reception room off the foyer. The main hall of Blue House is carpeted in a deep red pile. The reception room, 30' x 60', is lighted by massive chandeliers over an oriental carpet in classic design.

Before the two presidents entered the room, there was general chit chat among other officials of the two countries, including Foreign Minister Kim, Secretary of State Kissinger, General Brent Scowcroft, Philip Habib, and Ambassador Richard Sneider.

The two leaders entered the room at 3:07. President Ford presented his official party to his host, leading off with Mr. Kissinger. He then gestured toward a heavy wooden table against the wall and said, "May I show you some of the gifts?" For his host he had a porcelain arrangement of two figurines, two Indians seated around a council fire and a signed photograph of himself. He told President Park the Indians represented a "wonderful part of American history." Other gifts, which Mr. Ford said were "for the children," included an arrangement of white, gold and green enameled flowers for Miss Park Keun Hae, and a cassette player with tapes of the history of the fifty states for President Park's son.

President Park presented Mr. Ford a topaz bracelet for Mrs. Ford, topaz earrings and a ring for Susan, a silver pen and pencil set for Michael. President Ford received received a signed picture of his host which prompted him to say, "A beautiful picture, thank you."

The two presidents then stood side by side for photographers before leading the way down a long hallway to a conference room at the rear of the building where they settled around a massive wooden table for their formal discussions. Again they posed for photographers, chatting all the while. President Park tried his English during the conversation, which his aides say happens only rarely. At one point he broke into laughter, which he also rarely does in a public setting. To one side of the table stood an easel holding a map of the two Koreas. Presumably it was to be used for the briefing which followed the exclusion of the press.

Mr. Ford and Mr. Park both wore suits with pin stripes, the former in navy blue and President Park in a lighter blue.

Henry Trewhitt - Baltimore Sun