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THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
of the  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

American Embassy, Seoul,

July 25, 1953.

Following is a personal letter to President Rhee from the Secretary of State, Mr. Dulles:

My dear President Rhee:

I have your message of July 24. I have read it to President Eisenhower. We are both surprised at your statement that "before deciding on the position of my Government it is of utmost importance to have your answers to two vital questions which at present remain in an uncertain status." Our surprise is two fold. We thought you had decided and we thought you had the answers.

First, in your letters of July 11, 1953, to President Eisenhower and to me, you gave explicit assurances with reference to the position of your Government. Thus, in your letter to President Eisenhower you said "As you know, I have decided not to obstruct in any manner the implementation of the terms, in deference to your request." In your letter to me, you said with reference to the truce "I have granted almost every request that has been made upon me. My only qualification is that if the means which you have chosen do not prove to be successful, we must be allowed the final right to do what we can to retrieve our nation from the situation that will exist when the Communists refuse to grant in peace what the Allies have refrained from accomplishing in war. The truce will now be signed. We shall abide by our agreement to give the United Nations yet another chance to try out in our nation its prescribed method of political negotiation."

The "only qualification" to which you referred is recognized. Thus, we believed, and we were surely entitled to believe, that the attitude of your Government toward a truce was already decided.

Second, the position of our Government on your questions was set forth in Assistant Secretary Robertson's Aide Memoire of July 2, 1953. Upon his return to Washington, he discussed Congressional committees, and you were advised under date of July 21, when I communicated with you through our Embassy and when Mr. Robertson through the same channels wrote you personally.

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If, in violation of the armistice, the Republic of Korea is subjected to unprovoked attack, you may of course count upon our immediate and automatic military reaction. Such an attack would not only be an attack upon the Republic of Korea, but an attack upon the United Nations Command and United States forces within that Command.

So far as concerns a military security pact, as Mr. Robertson explained to you at Seoul and as was confirmed in the two July 21 communications above referred to, the pact in order to secure ratification would in our opinion have to adhere rather closely to the draft which was submitted to you on July 4 and which as you were then advised had been discussed with Congressional leaders. This provides that our action must be in accordance with our Constitutional processes. Of course, the President would within his executive powers act instantly to aid a friendly nation with whom we had a security pact which was the victim of unprovoked aggression. But under our Constitution only Congress can declare war. We believe that your country can feel confident that the treaty we propose will deter aggression.

With reference to your inquiry regarding moral and material support of your possible military effort which might follow a collapse of the political conference, this is not a matter where the President can give any blanket commitment in advance. As pointed out in Mr. Robertson's letter of July 21, the President does not wish to curtail the liberty of action to take whatever steps may be indicated by the conditions then existing. But as Mr. Robertson also said in his letter to you, the United States commitment to withdraw from the political conference under the circumstances set forth in Mr. Robertson's Aide Memoire of July 2 still stands.

I promised you that, upon the signing of the armistice, I would promptly come and talk with you to settle a common policy in relation to the political conference. I eagerly look forward to seeing you again and I have every confidence that we shall be able to arrive at an agreed program which will embody every honorable means of accomplishing the unification of your country.

I believe that the many assurances of cooperation which have been given you and which go to the limit of our governmental power should be of the sincerity of our purpose and the strength of our determination. Never in all its history has the United States offered to any other country as much as is offered to you.

During recent days many people and many countries have been slandering you and alleging that such promises as you have given the President and me could not be depended upon. We have indignantly rejected these insinuations and have insisted that we had complete confidence that you would adhere to the position which you communicated to us. As I said in a public statement day before yesterday, these are times when we must have confidence in our friends and when our friends can have confidence in us. My final plea is that you should share this sentiment. You did not find us lacking in the past and you can, I believe, trust us for the future.

From your good friend, John Foster Dulles

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