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E2225

EXCISE

TEXT OF TELEGRAM BOSEOUL 012787

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

IS/FPC/CDR **TR B** Date: **9/13/93**

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-01 INR-10
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HA-06 SY-05 SYE-00 DCT-02 /081 W

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P 300908Z SEP 80
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9409
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
SA CINCUNC KS
CHJUSMAG SEOUL KS
COMUSKOREA, SEOUL KS//BJ-IS
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SEUL 12787

E.O. 12065: GDS 09/30/86 (GLEYSTEN, W. H.) OR-M
TAGS: PINS, PGOV, SHUM, KS, US
SUBJECT: THE MOOD IN THE CHOLLAS

REF: SEUL 9829

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY. EMBOFF RECENTLY SPENT THREE DAYS IN KWANGJU, THE CAPITAL OF SOUTH CHOLLA PROVINCE, AND ONE IN CHONJU, THE CAPITAL OF NORTH CHOLLA, SPEAKING TO A NUMBER OF KOREANS ABOUT THE MOOD OF THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA. THE SAMPLE WAS HEAVILY WEIGHTED TOWARD THE MORE EDUCATED AND ECONOMICALLY PRIVILEGED ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY--PROFESSORS, NEWSMEN, AND BUSINESSMEN--AND THE FINDINGS MAY NOT BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MAJORITY OF CHOLLA RESIDENTS.

3. THE ATMOSPHERE IN KWANGJU SEEMS NORMAL, WITH NO EXTRAORDINARY SECURITY MEASURES VISIBLE (THOSE SURROUNDING
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EMBOFF'S VISIT WERE PERSVASIVE). PEOPLE THINK THE KWANGJU UPRISING WAS CAUSED ALMOST TOTALLY BY THE BRUTALITY OF THE PARATROOPERS, AND DISCOUNT REGIONALISM AS A CAUSE. PRESIDENT CHUN IS HELD DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF THE PARATROOPERS, AND IS A HATED AND FEARED MAN IN THE AREA. U.S. STOCK IS DOWN BECAUSE OF WHAT MANY FEEL WAS AT LEAST ACQUIESCENCE IN CHUN'S MOVES, BUT THERE IS NO OVERT ANTI-AMERICANISM. WHILE LESS-EDUCATED KOREANS ARE SAID TO BELIEVE MANY OF THE CHARGES AGAINST KIM DAE JUNG, THOSE

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KWANGJU VISIT

CHUN "is a hated and feared man"

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DON'T CARE IF THEY PUT THE RIOTS DOWN SEVERELY, BUT THE BRUTALITY WAS TERRIBLE.") NOT SURPRISINGLY, VIRTUALLY EVERYONE SPOKEN TO DISCOUNTS REGIONALISM AS A CAUSE OF THE RIOTS ("MAYBE ONE PERCENT," SAID A SOURCE), AND MANY ARE ANGRY WITH AMERICAN AND JAPANESE NEWSMEN WHO REPORTED TO THE CONTRARY. SOMEWHAT ILLOGICALLY, THESE SAME KOREANS

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SPOKEN TO MAINLY DISCOUNT THEM.

4. IN THE SHORT RUN, A RECURRENCE OF MASSIVE PUBLIC ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS SEEMS UNLIKELY, EVEN IF KIM DAE JUNG WERE EXECUTED; THE LONG RANGE OUTLOOK IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT. THE RESIDENTS OF CHOLLA, IN TRUE KOREAN FASHION, ARE MAKING THE BEST OF WHAT THEY CONSIDER A BAD DEAL. THEY MAY NOT PREVAIL, BUT THEY WILL SURVIVE. END SUMMARY.

5. THE SETTING.

PERHAPS THE MOST STRIKING INITIAL IMPRESSION OF KWANGJU IS THAT ITS ATMOSPHERE IS NORMAL. THERE SEEM TO BE NO MORE POLICE OR ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL THAN ELSEWHERE IN KOREA, AND PEOPLE GO ABOUT THEIR USUAL BUSINESS. THE ONLY VISIBLE SIGN OF THE MAY DISTURBANCE IS THE KBS BUILDING NEAR THE STATION. THE FIRST TWO FLOORS ARE STILL AS THEY WERE WHEN FIRE GUTTED THE BUILDING, AND BROADCASTING IS GOING ON FROM A BUS. THERE IS A LOT OF NEW CONSTRUCTION GOING ON, AND SIGNS EXHORTING CITIZENS TO "WORK FOR A NEW KWANGJU" ARE IN ABUNDANCE. WHILE SOME PEOPLE REFUSED TO SEE EMBOFF, THOSE WHO WERE WILLING TO DISCUSS POLITICS WERE SURPRISINGLY FRANK. THE DISTURBANCES ARE ON EVERYONE'S MIND, AS
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IS THE FATE OF THE 175 PEOPLE UNDER INDICTMENT AS A RESULT OF THE DISTURBANCES.

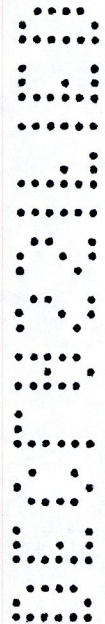
ACTIONS AGAINST THOSE WHOM THE GOVERNMENT SEES AS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISTURBANCES CONTINUE.

IN SPITE OF WIDESPREAD NEGATIVE FEELINGS ABOUT THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND PRESIDENT, THERE IS NO QUESTION WHO IS IN CHARGE, AND EXTRA SECURITY IS CLEARLY NOT NEEDED. IN CHONJU, THE CAPITAL OF NORTH CHOLLA PROVINCE, THERE IS EVEN MORE CONSTRUCTION WORK GOING ON, IN PREPARATION FOR AN ALL-KOREA ATHLETIC MEET IN OCTOBER, AND AN EVEN GREATER AIR OF ACTIVITY AND BUSTLE THAN IN KWANGJU.

6. THE KWANGJU RIOTS AND THEIR CAUSE.

PEOPLE IN KWANGJU ARE PROUD OF THE WAY THE CITY FUNCTIONED DURING THE MAY DISTURBANCES. ALL THE SERVICES CONTINUED, AND NOT ONE BANK OR CREDIT UNION WAS ROBBED, SAID ONE PROFESSOR. (THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT PEOPLE IN KWANGJU ARE SYMPATHETIC TO THE RIOTERS. SUCH DISTURBANCES HELP KIM IL SONG, AND CAN'T BE ALLOWED," SAID THIS SAME PROFESSOR. "I

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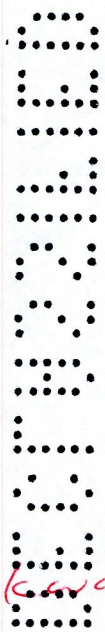
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WILL OFTEN GO ON TO EXPLAIN IN DETAIL THE SLIGHTS THE
CHOLLAS HAVE SUFFERED AT THE HANDS OF SEOUL AND THE
KYONGSANG PROVINCES THROUGH THE CENTURIES. WITH THE
EXCEPTION OF KWANGJU, WHERE FEELINGS ARE MUCH DEEPER, THERE
SEEMS TO BE LITTLE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE WAY THE
RESIDENTS OF NORTH AND SOUTH CHOLLA
PROVINCES SEE THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE MAY
DISTURBANCES. THEY RESENT THE WAY THE PEOPLE OF KWANGJU
WERE TREATED, AND PERHAPS FEEL GUILTY THAT THEY DID NOTHING
IN SYMPATHY OR SUPPORT OF THE INSURGENTS. IN ANY CASE,
THESE KOREANS CLAIM TO A MAN THAT THE CAUSE OF THE
DISTURBANCES WAS THE BRUTALITY OF THE PARATROOPERS WHO
WERE INITIALLY SENT IN TO CONTROL THE SITUATION. MOST OF
THE KOREANS WHO SPOKE TO EMBOFF IN KWANGJU SAID THEY
PERSONALLY SAW THE PARATROOPERS COMMITTING OUTRAGES AND
HAVE VIVID MEMORIES OF THEM. (IN CONTRAST, NO ONE HAD ANY
COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE 20TH ROKA DIVISION'S ACTIONS WHEN THE
CITY WAS RETAKEN AFTER THE DISTURBANCES.) WHILE ESTIMATES
OF THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED BY THE PARATROOPERS VARY
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*at least 1,000 dead in Kwangju
a prof tells US*



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"AT LEAST A
THOUSAND," SAID A PROFESSOR). NO ONE SEEMS TO ACCEPT THE
GOVERNMENT FIGURE OF 185 DEAD. ONE EX-NEWSMAN CLAIMED THAT
AT LEAST 300,000 OF KWANGJU'S 800,000 POPULATION WERE
INVOLVED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER IN THE DISTURBANCES, AND
THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S EXCESSES TOUCHED, EITHER DIRECTLY OR
INDIRECTLY, THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE CITY'S RESIDENTS.

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7. PERCEPTIONS OF CHUN.

REACTION TO PRESIDENT CHUN (M-R: CHON TU-HWAN) RANGES FROM VIOLENT HATRED TO A SOMEWHAT GRUDGING ADMISSION THAT HE HAS SOME GOOD POINTS. SEVERAL KOREANS MENTIONED THAT WELCOME SIGNS FOR THE PRESIDENT HAD BEEN DEFACTED THE TWO NIGHTS BEFORE HIS ARRIVAL ON A RECENT VISIT, AND ALL SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO APPLAUSE FOR THE PRESIDENT'S MOTORCADE (ONE KOREAN SAID "EVERYONE" KNEW THAT ANYONE WHO APPLAUDED WOULD BE KILLED). SEVERAL KOREANS SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT MISSED A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO BEGIN THE PROCESS OF HEALING WOUNDS WHEN HE FAILED TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE UPRISING (A COUPLE OF THESE SAME PEOPLE ADDING ILLOGICALLY THAT "NOTHING HE COULD DO OR SAY WOULD MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE"). OTHER REASONS FOR THE LACK OF ESTEEM IN WHICH CHUN IS HELD ARE THE BRUTALITY OF THE PARATROOPERS; THE TREATMENT OF KIM DAE JUNG (M-R: KIM TAE-CHUNG), AND THE SPOILING OF LAST SPRING'S RELATIVELY LIBERAL POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE. ONE KOREAN IN KWANGJU SAID THAT PEOPLE USED TO REFER TO PRESIDENT PARK (M-R: PAK CHONG-HUI) AS KIM IL-SONG'S YOUNGER BROTHER, BUT NOW SAY PRESIDENT CHUN WILL SURPASS KIM IN HIS EXCESSES. AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY IN CHONJU SAID SOME NORMALLY CONSERVATIVE PARISHIONERS CALL THE PRESIDENT "GANGSTER." ON THE CONFIDENTIAL...
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OTHER HAND, SOME CONTACTS SPOKE FAVORABLY OF THE PRESIDENT'S EFFORTS AS THE NATION'S LEADER, AND THE PURIFICATION PROGRAM GAVE IN FOR SINCERE PRAISE. EVEN IF ONE ACCEPTS AT FACE VALUE THE EXPRESSIONS OF PERSONAL HATRED MADE BY SOME IN THE CHOLLA AREA TOWARD PRESIDENT CHUN, THIS HATRED IS NOT ACCOMPANIED BY ANY EXPRESSION OF WILLINGNESS TO GO INTO THE STREETS IN PROTEST. EVEN THE STUDENTS, WHOM TWO OR THREE KOREANS DESCRIBED AS "TERRIFIED," SEEM TO POSE LITTLE THREAT TO PUBLIC ORDER FOR THE MOMENT.

8. KIM DAE JUNG.

SEVERAL PEOPLE WHO SEEMED QUITE FRANK ON OTHER ISSUES WERE OBVIOUSLY UNCOMFORTABLE TALKING ABOUT KIM (A STORY THAT THE EX-GOVERNOR OF NORTH CHOLLA LOST HIS JOB BECAUSE HE ONCE SHOOK HANDS WITH KIM IS MAKING THE ROUNDS IN CHONJU). VIRTUALLY EVERYONE SPOKEN TO SEES THE CHARGES AGAINST KIM AS AT LEAST PARTIALLY FALSE. ONE PROFESSOR SAID KIM IS STILL EXTREMELY POPULAR WITH THE PEOPLE OF KWANGJU. "ALL THE TAXI DRIVERS SUPPORT HIM." HOWEVER, THE PROFESSOR, WHO SAYS HE KNOWS KIM QUITE WELL, SAID THAT "I DON'T LIKE THAT KIND OF MAN." THERE WAS A FAIR AMOUNT OF INTEREST IN WHAT THE U.S. WOULD DO IF KIM WERE EXECUTED, BUT NO ONE PREDICTED VIOLENCE IN THE CHOLLAS EVEN IF KIM WERE PUT TO DEATH.

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9. PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S.

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AMERICAN STOCK IN KWANGJU IS AT A LOW POINT. SOME KOREANS ARE RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH AN AMERICAN DIPLOMAT, BUT OTHERS BROUGHT IT UP ON THEIR OWN. THE VIEWS CAN FAIRLY BE SUMMARIZED AS "I DON'T PERSONALLY THINK THAT YOU AMERICANS WERE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING CHUN TO POWER, BUT LOTS OF PEOPLE DO. I MYSELF WONDER ABOUT THE U.S. ROLE IN TROOP MOVEMENTS HERE, GENERAL WICKHAM'S SUPPORT OF CHUN, AND IF YOU HAVE PROTESTED SUFFICIENTLY STRONGLY CHUN'S ACTS." MOST KOREANS SPOKEN TO DENIED THAT THERE ARE STRONG STRAINS OF "ANTI-AMERICANISM" IN THE CHOLLAS, BUT ALL SAID AN UNEASINESS ABOUT RECENT U.S. ACTIONS PERSISTS.

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10. SECURITY SURVEILLANCE.

EFFORTS BY VARIOUS SECURITY AGENCIES TO MONITOR EMBOFF'S VISIT WERE IMPRESSIVE, EVEN BY KOREAN STANDARDS. SINCE THE KWANGJU TOURIST HOTEL IS OBLIGED TO GIVE THE IDENTITY CONFIDENTIAL.
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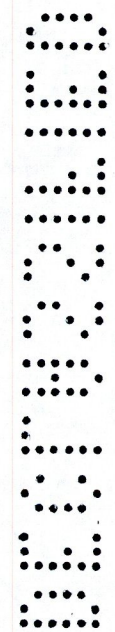
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OF FOREIGN GUESTS TO THE POLICE, THE LATTER HAD AN ADVANTAGE FROM THE BEGINNING. KOREAN CONTACTS WERE QUESTIONED ABOUT THE CONTENT OF CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBOFF AFTER THE FACT (EMBOFF HAD WARNED THESE CONTACTS OF THE LIKELIHOOD OF JUST SUCH AN OCCURRENCE) AND THE PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL IN KWANGJU, A RESPECTED INSTITUTION RUN BY AMERICANS, WAS CALLED AND ASKED ABOUT THE VISIT, EVEN THOUGH THERE HAD BEEN NO APPOINTMENT MADE THERE.

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CALLER AN FSN IN SEOUL TO INQUIRE ABOUT THE TRIP. SHORTLY AFTER THE TRIP, A KCIA FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICER TOOK EMBOFF TO LUNCH TO EXPLAIN THAT SUCH TRIPS OUTSIDE SEOUL ARE UNNECESSARY, AND THAT THE KCIA WOULD LIKE TO HELP WITH APPOINTMENTS ("INCLUDING WITH SOME PEOPLE WHO DON'T LIKE PRESIDENT CHUN") IF EMBOFFS MAKE SUCH TRIPS ANYWAY. EMBOFF TOLD KCIA OFFICER THAT TRIPS ARE A NORMAL PART OF A POLITICAL SECTION'S WORK, AND THAT ROKG SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES AND HARASSMENT OF CONTACTS IS IMPROPER IN A SUPPOSEDLY NON-COMMUNIST ALLY.

Korean surveillance of OSeomb

11. COMMENT: IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BE SURE WHAT THE PEOPLE OF KWANGJU THINK; THEIR PERCEPTIONS ARE STILL IN FLUX AND CONTAIN NOT A FEW INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS. NEVERTHELESS, SOME GENERALIZATIONS CAN BE MADE.

- -- THE CAUSE OF THE DISTURBANCES WAS THE BRUTALITY OF THE PARATROOPERS. PRESIDENT CHUN IS HELD DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF THAT GROUP BY THE PEOPLE OF CHOLLA.

- -- PEOPLE OF CHOLLA DO NOT LIKE PRESIDENT CHUN. YET EXCEPT FOR KWANGJU IT MAY BE POSSIBLE TO WORK OUT SOME SORT OF MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE CHOLLAS ON SOME BASIS OTHER THAN CONFIDENTIAL
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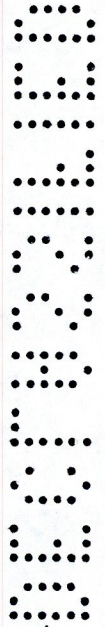
THE PRESENT PERVASIVE FEAR OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE HIGHWAY TUNNEL THROUGH MOUNT CHIRI NOW UNDER STUDY AND CHUN'S INSTRUCTIONS ON SEPTEMBER 25 TO DOUBLETRACK THE RAILROAD FROM IRI SOUTHWARD TO NEAR KWANGJU ARE STEPS IN THAT DIRECTION.

- -- THERE IS GENERAL MISUNDERSTANDING OF U.S. ACTIONS AND DISAPPOINTMENT WITH THE UNITED STATES ABOUT OUR ACTIONS (OR LACK OF ACTION) DURING THE KWANGJU DISTURBANCES, BUT THIS IS NOT ANTI-AMERICANISM. NEVERTHELESS, THE VAGUE FEELING OF DISAPPOINTMENT WITH AMERICA MAY COLOR THE WAY A SIGNIFICANT PART OF THE YOUNG GENERATION PERCEIVES US.

- -- THE GOVERNMENT NEED NOT FEAR A RENEWAL OF DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE CHOLLAS IN THE SHORT TERM. THERE IS NO DESIRE TO DO ANYTHING THAT MIGHT PRECIPITATE A RECURRENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT ACTIONS SEEN IN MAY. EVEN THE EXECUTION OF KIM DAE JUNG WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO BRING ABOUT ANY MAJOR OVERT PROTEST. THIS MOOD COULD CHANGE, AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT POSSIBLE PRECIPITATING EVENTS.

12. DOES ALL THIS MEAN THAT A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE NATION WILL BE INDEFINITELY SULLEN AND UNRESPONSIVE TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT? THE ANSWER SEEMS TO BE NO. THE RESIDENTS OF CHOLLA, INCLUDING KWANGJU, KNOW THAT A BARRIER EXISTS BETWEEN THEM AND THE REST OF KOREA AND WANT IT TO

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GO AWAY (HENCE THE INSISTENCE THAT REGIONALISM PLAYED NO PART IN THE DISTURBANCES). THEY ARE ALSO, LIKE MOST KOREANS, REALISTS. THEY ARE AWARE OF THE REALITY OF THE NEW ORDER AND ARE BUSILY ENGAGED IN COMING TO TERMS WITH IT AND MAKING THE BEST OF WHAT THEY CONSIDER A BAD BARGAIN. GLEYSTEN

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