

TEXT OF TELEGRAM 79SEUL 015909

ADP147
[REDACTED]

PAGE 01 SEUL 15909 01 OF 02 200423Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSD-00
ICAE-00 INRE-00 IO-14 ACDA-12 AID-05 HA-05 /087 W
-----130390 200445Z /14

O 200337Z OCT 79
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1655
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KS
CHJUSMAG SEOUL KS
SA CINCUNC KS

[REDACTED] SECTION 01 OF 02 SEUL 15909

EO 12065: RDS-3 10/20/89 (CLARK, WILLIAM) DR-P
TAGS: SHUM, PINS, MPOL, PINT, KS
SUBJECT: EMBASSY THOUGHTS ON CURRENT MOOD FOLLOWING
DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW IN PUSAN

REF: SEUL 15817 ✓

1. [REDACTED] ENTIRE TEXT.
2. THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS IS THE FULL TEXT OF A CABLE (SEOUL 15895) WHICH WAS UNFORTUNATELY ONLY PARTIALLY TRANSMITTED YESTERDAY.
3. SUMMARY: WE FEEL THAT THE VIOLENT DEMONSTRATION WHICH LED TO DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW IN PUSAN PROBABLY RESULTED FROM A COMBINATION OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FRUSTRATIONS INCLUDING CONSIDERABLE WEARINESS WITH THE PARK GOVERNMENT AND WIDESPREAD OBJECTION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT HEAVY-HANDEDNESS. ALTHOUGH SOME IN THE RULING CAMP BLAME THE NDP, MOST PEOPLE, INCLUDING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, DISCOUNT SUCH TALK. STUDENT ACTIVISTS HERE PROBABLY

[REDACTED]
PAGE 02 SEUL 15909 01 OF 02 200423Z

PLAYED A MORE SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN PRECIPITATING UNREST. THE ROKG INVOKED MARTIAL LAW TO CORRECT A SITUATION WHICH HAD CLEARLY GOTTEN OUT OF HAND AND TO SERVE AS A WARNING TO OTHER POTENTIAL DEMONSTRATORS. WE ARE NOT YET ABLE TO ASSESS THE DEGREE OF REAL GOVERNMENT CONCERN. OBVIOUSLY IT JUDGED THE SITUATION SERIOUS, AS ITS IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW SHOWED, BUT IT IS TRYING TO CONVEY A SENSE OF CALM AND SEEMS TO HAVE THE MATTER IN HAND AT PRESENT. IF DEMONSTRATIONS SPREAD, THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRST STEP WILL

PAGE NO. 1

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833

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BE TO INCREASE THE SCOPE OF MARTIAL LAW. WE SEE THE MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS AS BEING THE SUCCESS OF THE STUDENTS IN STARTING THEM AND KEEPING THEM GOING. CONFIDENTIAL

THE WIDE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE DISTURBANCES IS ALSO SIGNIFICANT. WE ARE STRUCK BY THE EXTENT THAT PEOPLE IN ALL STRATA ARE CONCERNED WITH THE SITUATION. THEY TEND TO BLAME THE ROKG, BUT ARE ALSO WORRIED ABOUT THE VIOLENCE. NEVERTHELESS, WE DO NOT FEEL THE SITUATION IN OTHER CITIES IS EXCEPTIONALLY TENSE. WE RECOMMEND THAT THE DEPARTMENT CONTINUE TO EXERCISE CARE IN ANY STATEMENTS IT MAKES ABOUT THE SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

4. FOLLOWING ARE OUR FURTHER THOUGHTS ON SITUATION FOLLOWING THE DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW FOR THE SPECIAL CITY OF PUSAN.

5. THE DEMONSTRATIONS PROBABLY RESULTED FROM A COMBINATION OF CUMULATIVE FRUSTRATIONS, SOME POLITICAL, SOME ECONOMIC, AGAINST A BACKDROP OF WEARINESS WITH PARK GOVERNMENT. THE CUMULATIVE EVENTS OF THE PAST FEW WEEKS--THE Y.H. INCIDENT, THE COURT JUDGMENT AGAINST KIM YONG-SAM, KIM'S EXPULSION FROM THE ASSEMBLY BY RATHER HEAVY-HANDED MEANS, THE SUS-

PAGE 03 SEOUL 15909 01 OF 02 200423Z

PENSION OF THE ASSEMBLY AND NDP RESIGNATIONS--CAUSED A MARKED INCREASE IN DISAFFECTION WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM, WHICH REACHED THE POINT IN PUSAN WHERE AN INCIDENT WAS EASILY PRECIPITATED. THERE ARE SOME IN THE RULING CAMP WHO BLAME THE NDP FOR STIRRING UP THE PUSAN DISTURBANCES, BUT WE DOUBT THIS. THE NDP, ESPECIALLY KIM YONG-SAM, IS QUICK TO CAPITALIZE ON THIS TROUBLE, BUT WE DOUBT THAT THE PARTY OR ITS MEMBERS PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN INSTIGATING IT. ONE STUDENT LEADER HAS TOLD US THAT STUDENTS FROM SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, SOME OF WHOM HAD ALREADY BEEN EXPELLED, WENT TO PUSAN AND WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN ORGANIZING THE STUDENTS.

6. WE CONTINUE TO SEE THE DECISION TO INVOKE MARTIAL LAW LOCALLY IN THE PUSAN AREA AS STEMMING FROM TWO PRINCIPAL REASONS--FIRST, THE SITUATION, BY THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN ADMISSION, HAD GOTTEN OUT OF HAND. SECOND, THE GOVERNMENT PROBABLY WANTED TO CONTROL THE NEWS ABOUT THE PUSAN SITUATION AND SERVE WARNING TO POTENTIAL DEMONSTRATORS IN OTHER PLACES THAT TROUBLE WOULD BE MET WITH DECISIVE ACTION. DECLARING MARTIAL LAW FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVEN YEARS, ESPECIALLY WITH A CABINET-LEVEL AMERICAN IN COUNTRY, WAS NOT A TRIVIAL STEP.

7. OUR PRELIMINARY READING IS THAT THE SYMPATHIES OF THE AVERAGE KOREAN LEANS TOWARD THE DEMONSTRATORS BUT NOT


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TEXT OF TELEGRAM 79SEOUL 015909

UNCLASSIFIED

249

THEIR VIOLENCE. THERE IS ENOUGH AUTHORITARIAN CONTROL
IN KOREA TO MAKE MANY PEOPLE SYMPATHETIC WITH THOSE WHO
OPPOSE THAT CONTROL. THERE IS ALSO AMONG THE KOREANS
WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN IN SEOUL A GENUINE INCREASE IN
NERVOUSNESS OVER THE FUTURE. THE PEOPLE REMEMBER THE



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TEXT OF TELEGRAM 79SEOUL 015909

UNCLASSIFIED

249

ADP151
[REDACTED]

PAGE 01 SEOUL 15909 02 OF 02 200431Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-06 H-01 INR-10
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[REDACTED] SECTION 02 OF 02 SEOUL 15909

LAST TIME THAT NATION-WIDE MARTIAL LAW WAS DECLARED IN
1972 AND WANT NO RETURN TO THAT SORT OF ATMOSPHERE.

8. THE GOVERNMENT'S PROCLAMATION OF MARTIAL LAW HAS
SHOWED THAT IT FEELS THE SITUATION IS SERIOUS. THE
DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE SPREAD TO MASAN (SEE SEPTTEL) WHICH HAS
CONFIDENTIAL

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS, SINCE THE FINDING OF A
STUDENT'S BODY IN MASAN HARBOR IS REMEMBERED BY MANY
KOREANS AS THE MAJOR SPARK OF THE 1960 STUDENT UPRISING
AGAINST SYNGMAN RHEE. AT THIS POINT, THE ROKG SEEMS TO
HAVE THE SITUATION IN HAND. HOWEVER, THE MOMENTUM HAS
NOT STOPPED AND UNTIL IT DOES THE POSSIBILITY THAT DEMON-
STRATIONS WILL SPREAD CONTINUES TO EXIST. IF DEMONSTRATIONS
DO START SPREADING, THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRST REACTION
WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE TO INCREASE THE SCOPE OF MARTIAL LAW,
PERHAPS TO MAKE IT NATIONWIDE.

9. A MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE TO DATE OF THE DISTURBANCES IS
THE SUCCESS OF THE STUDENTS IN OVERCOMING THE LONG-STANDING
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PAGE 02 SEOUL 15909 02 OF 02 200431Z

AND SUCCESSFUL ROKG PRACTICE OF CONTAINING STUDENT DIS-
TURBANCES ON THE CAMPUSES (WHERE THEY COULD BE HIDDEN FROM
PUBLIC VIEW) NOT ONCE BUT FOR SEVERAL DAYS IN A ROW AND
IN AT LEAST TWO LOCATIONS. THIS IS NO MEAN FEAT, SINCE
PUSAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, THE ORIGINAL SOURCE OF THE
DEMONSTRATIONS, LIES SOME SEVEN MILES FROM THE DOWNTOWN
AREA WHERE THE DEMONSTRATIONS WERE MOUNTED. THE CONSEQUENCE
OF THE ROKG'S FAILURE TO KEEP THE STUDENTS OFF THE
CITY STREETS IS INDICATED BY THE ENCOURAGEMENT THE STUDENTS

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

249

TEXT OF TELEGRAM 79SEOUL 015909

RECEIVED FROM ELEMENTS OF THE COMMON CITIZENRY, WHILE SOME OF THE PARTICIPANTS OBVIOUSLY DO FALL INTO THE CATEGORY OF WHAT THE ROKG CHOOSES TO DISMISS AS "HOOLIGANS," RELIABLE SOURCES INDICATE THAT THE AREA SHOPKEEPERS JOINED IN SUCH THINGS AS THE HAND-CLAPPING.

10. NOR CAN WE OVERLOOK THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON AVERAGE CITIZENS THROUGHOUT THE REPUBLIC WHO WOKE UP THE MORNING OF OCTOBER 18 TO FIND THEIR NEWSPAPERS NOT ONLY FILLED WITH REPORTS OF THE FIRST DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW IN SEVEN YEARS BUT ALSO THE FIRST PRINTED MENTION OF STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS SINCE 1975. IT IS ONE THING FOR PEOPLE TO "KNOW" ABOUT STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS ON THE BASIS OF UNVERIFIABLE RUMORS. IT IS QUITE ANOTHER FOR THEM TO HEAR IN DETAIL FROM THE ROKG ITSELF--WHICH HAS ALWAYS PUBLICLY PRETENDED THAT STUDENT DISTURBANCES DID NOT EXIST AND CONSEQUENTLY NOT REPORTABLE IN THE MEDIA--ABOUT POLICE INJURED, VEHICLES DESTROYED, POLICE BOXES ASSAULTED, AND EVEN THAT STUDENTS WERE CALLING FOR THE OVERTHROW OF THE GOVERNMENT. AT A MINIMUM, THE SITUATION UNDERMINES THE ROKG'S CAREFULLY CULTIVATED IMAGE OF A STABLE SOCIETY ADVANCING UNDER THE YUSIN SYSTEM.

11. BEYOND THE OBSERVATIONS ALREADY PRESENTED, WE CANNOT

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PAGE 03 SEOUL 15909 02 OF 02 200431Z

FURTHER ASSESS POLITICAL OPINION IN THE PUBLIC AT LARGE. ALLOWANCE MUST BE MADE IN THE PRESENT SITUATION FOR THE FACT THAT PUSAN IS KIM YONG-SAM COUNTRY AND FOR THE SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVING MASAN IN THE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES. HOWEVER, WE ARE STRUCK BY THE EXTENT OF CONCERN AMONG PEOPLE FROM ALL SOCIAL STRATA OVER EVENTS IN THE SOUTH AND THE GENERAL TENDENCY TO BLAME THE GOVERNMENT FOR WHAT HAS HAPPENED. NEVERTHELESS, THE ATMOSPHERE IN SEOUL, AND WE BELIEVE MOST OTHER CITIES, DOES NOT HAVE A FEELING OF TENSENESS.

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12. ACTION RECOMMENDED: IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES U.S. STATEMENTS COULD HAVE AN INCENDIARY IMPACT, PARTICULARLY IN THE PUSAN/MASAN AREA. JAPANESE RADIO AND TV, WHICH ARE RECEIVED THERE, ARE PRESENTING EVENTS IN AN EXCITED MANNER, SOMETIMES BROADCASTING RUMORS EVEN AFTER THEY ARE PROVEN TO BE UNFOUNDED. RECOMMEND THAT DEPARTMENT INITIATE NO STATEMENTS ON KOREAN EVENTS AT PRESENT AND CONTINUE TO EXERCISE PARTICULAR CARE IN RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS. GLEYSTEN

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