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ADP133

PAGE 01 SEUL 09043 01 OF 04 150721Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
ICAE-00 INRE-00 HA-05 IO-14 /069 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7754
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
SA CINCINNATI KS
CHJUSMAG SEOUL KS
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KS//BJ-IS

SECTION 01 OF 04 SEUL 09043

E.O. 12065: GDS 07/15/86 (MONJO, JOHN C.) OR-M
TAGS: PGDY PINT KS
SUBJECT: 1. FURTHER EFFORT AT ASSESSING
THE KOREAN SITUATION

REF: SEUL 7266

1. ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY: CAUTIOUS AND UNHAPPY, THE KOREAN PEOPLE
APPEAR INCREASINGLY RESIGNED TO A FURTHER PERIOD OF MILI-
TARY CONTROL. THE PAST EFFORT TO INFLUENCE POLITICAL
DIRECTION THROUGH DIRECT ACTION HAS BEEN DAMPENED BY RECOG-
NITION THAT POWER RESTS WITH THE GENERALS. THE QUESTION
NOW IS WHETHER TO DIRECTLY CONFRONT THAT POWER, WITH THE
COSTS WHICH WOULD BE INVOLVED, AND MOST APPEAR UNWILLING
TO GO THAT FAR. LINES ARE BEING DRAWN REMINISCENT OF THE
PARK ERA AND THE OLD HOPES THAT SOMEONE WILL LIGHT THE
SPARK ARE BEGINNING TO APPEAR.

PAGE 02 SEUL 09043 01 OF 04 150721Z

3. THE ARMY IS THE MAJOR SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT, AIDED
BY BUSINESS AND TOLERATED BY THE BUREAUCRACY. THE ARMY
REMAINS OUTWARDLY UNITED, WITH ONLY A FEW CRACKS AT
PRESENT. THE OPPOSITION IS DISORGANIZED BUT SOME ELEMENTS
OF IT ARE CONVINCED THAT "THE PEOPLE" WILL NOT PUT UP WITH
A NEW CROP OF GENERALS. STUDENTS ARE TALKING IN HEROIC--
AND OCCASIONALLY SUBVERSIVE--TERMS BUT HAVE YET TO MATCH
THESE WORDS WITH ACTION. THERE IS CONCERN THAT RADICAL
EXPLANATIONS OF RECENT EVENTS ARE PLAYING TO A MUCH WIDER

PAGE NO.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

SECRET
1869

AUDIENCE IN THE STUDENT COMMUNITY.

4. GIVEN THE MOOD OF RESIGNATION AND BARRING UNFORESEEN HAPPENINGS, THERE IS A GROWING CHANCE THAT THE EMPEROR MAY YET GET A NEW SUIT OF CLOTHES. NOT WHAT MOST KOREANS HAD IN MIND, IT MAY APPEAR BETTER THAN MORE OF THE PRESENT YUSHIN TAG END AND LESS COSTLY THAN DIRECT ATTEMPTS TO TAKE ISSUES TO THE STREETS.

5. THE LONGER THE PRESENT CALM CAN BE MAINTAINED, THE BETTER ARE THE GENERALS' CHANCES OF PULLING OFF THEIR POLITICAL MANEUVER. END SUMMARY.

6. NOTE: THE FOLLOWING REPORT WAS WRITTEN BY OUR OUTGOING POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND DELAYED BY THE AMBASSADOR'S INEFFICIENCY IN GETTING AROUND TO GIVE HIS APPROVAL.

INTRODUCTION--THE GENERAL MOOD: THE MOOD IN SEOUL AND THE REST OF KOREA, TO THE EXTENT WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO ASSESS IT, AND WITH THE EXCEPTION OF KWANGJU AND SOUTH CHOLLA, REMAINS ONE OF CAUTION AND GENERAL UNHAPPINESS, BUT WITH A GROWING ELEMENT OF RESIGNATION. THE PERCEPTION OF THE PROBLEM FACING KOREA HAS SHIFTED GREATLY FROM THAT OF MAY 17 AND PREVIOUS. THE EARLIER BELIEF THAT DISSIDENTS

PAGE 03 SEOUL 09043 01 OF 04 150721Z

COULD INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT BY THE STREETS--HAS BEEN REPLACED BY A CLEAR PERCEPTION THAT CHUN DOJ HWAN (M-R: CHON TU-HWAN) AND COMPANY ARE IN POWER AND INTEND TO CONTROL THE PUBLIC. THE PROBLEM THEREFORE HAS BECOME ONE OF WHETHER OR NOT TO ENGAGE IN DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE AUTHORITIES OR TO ACCOMMODATE AND ATTEMPT TO MODERATE FUTURE COURSES OF ACTION. AT PRESENT WE FIND LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR DIRECT CONFRONTATION.

7. INCREASINGLY WE HEAR STATEMENTS FROM MANY QUARTERS DEEPLY REMINISCENT OF THE PARK ERA. THE COMMITTED OPPOSITION IS ONCE AGAIN EMPHASIZING HUMAN RIGHTS, EXPRESSING HOPE THAT THE STUDENTS WILL SPEARHEAD SOME MOVEMENT, STATING THE BELIEF THAT THE KOREAN PEOPLE, ONCE THEY KNOW THE TRUTH, WILL NOT TOLERATE THOSE IN POWER, AND INCREASING THEIR EFFORTS TO ENLIST THE U.S. ON THE SIDE OF "TRUE" DEMOCRATS.

8. FROM THE GOVERNMENT SIDE THERE IS EMPHASIS ON THE FRACTIOUS CHARACTER OF KOREANS AND THE NEED FOR STRONG LEADERSHIP, THE BASICALLY PATRIOTIC MOTIVES OF THOSE IN CONTROL, AND THE FACT THAT KOREA HAS BEEN IN THIS POSITION BEFORE AND WILL PERSEVERE. AT THE SAME TIME, HEAVY-HANDED MOVES TO CONTROL THE PEOPLE RUN RISKS OF ALIENATING NEUTRAL SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY. TWO RECENT EXAMPLES OF THIS ARE ORDERS TO PROSECUTORS TO CRACK DOWN ON THOSE WHO LISTEN TO

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

ADP134

PAGE 01 SEDUL 09043 02 OF 04 150730Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SS0-00
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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7755
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
SA CINCJNC KS
CHJUSMAG SEOUL KS
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KS//BJ-IS

SECTION 02 OF 04 SEDUL 09043

BUT DO NOT SEEM INCLINED TO FLASH AT THIS TIME. THEIR MOOD MAY BEST BE SUMMED UP BY AN OLD KOREAN PROVERB WHICH LOOSELY TRANSLATED SAYS THAT EVEN IF THE SKY FALLS THERE IS ALWAYS A HOLE BY WHICH TO ESCAPE. THE RURAL SECTOR, ALWAYS HARD TO ASSESS, APPEARS DIFFERENT TO INDIVIDUAL OBSERVERS. YOUNG PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS REPORT A FEELING OF BEWILDERMENT AMONG FARMERS WHO DON'T BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT; ARE UPSET BY RUMORS AND CONCERNED OVER THE U.S. POSITION. A KOREAN-SPEAKING OFFICER HERE ON A VISIT TO NORTH KYONGSANG REPORTS LITTLE CONCERN, INDEED SOME NOSTALGIA FOR THE PARK ERA.

10. GOVERNMENT SUPPORT: THE FIRMEST BASE OF SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT REMAINS CENTERED IN THE ARMY WHERE STABILITY IS ALL-IMPORTANT. WE DETECT NO SERIOUS FISSURES, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE SOME DISCERNIBLE CRACKS. SOME OF THE OFFICERS WHO SAW THE INITIAL KWANGJU ACTION ARE DISILLUSIONED AND VERY DISTURBED THAT ROK ARMY PERSONNEL COULD BEHAVE, INDEED WERE ALLOWED IF NOT INSTRUCTED TO BEHAVE, IN SUCH A MANNER. THIS IS OFFSET TO A GREAT DEGREE OF CONTINUED PRIDE AMONG

PAGE 02 SEDUL 09043 02 OF 04 150730Z

OTHER OFFICERS IN THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ARMY HANDLED ITSELF IN THE RETAKING OF KWANGJU.

11. MORE IMPORTANT FROM A LONG-TERM POINT OF VIEW IS SOME QUESTIONING BY THE YOUNGER OFFICERS OF THE POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT OF THE MILITARY. THIS IS COMPOUNDED BY EARLIER EFFORTS BY GENERAL CHUN TO ENLIST YOUNGER OFFICERS-- PARTICULARLY KMA GRADUATES--BY APPEALS TO THEIR SUPERIOR TRAINING AND ASSERTIONS THAT THE MILITARY WOULD NOT INVOLVE

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ITSELF IN POLITICS. THIS LATTER PROMISE CLEARLY HAS BEEN VIOLATED AND CHUN MAY HAVE UNDERMINED THE CREDIBILITY OF HIS LEADERSHIP WITH THIS IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF THE OFFICER CORPS. THERE ARE ALSO RUMORS OF STRAIN WITHIN THE GROUP CLOSEST TO THE POWER CENTER, BUT NO SIGNS THAT THEY APPEAR UNMANAGEABLE.

12. THE BUREAUCRACY SUPPORTS THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE IT IS THERE. THIS, HOWEVER, IS A CAUTIOUS SUPPORT AT PRESENT COMBINED WITH CONCERN THAT THE PURIFICATION CAMPAIGN MAY WELL DAMAGE THE CAREERS OF MANY PUBLIC SERVANTS. THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE IN CAUTION AT THE WORKING LEVELS AND AN UNWILLINGNESS TO TAKE INITIATIVES THAT MIGHT BE CRITICIZED LATER. EVEN AMONG SENIOR BUREAUCRATS CO-OPTED INTO THE STANDING COMMITTEE STRUCTURE ONE FINDS MORE EMPHASIS ON THE NEED TO HELP THE COUNTRY AND LITTLE ATTEMPT TO JUSTIFY THE LEGITIMACY OF THOSE IN CONTROL.

13. DESPITE SOME QUESTIONING OF THE GENERALS' CAPABILITY AND CONTINUING UNEASE THAT THEY WILL BE MANIPULATED OVER THE CORRUPTION ISSUE, THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, OR AT LEAST THE MORE IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF IT, APPEARS INCREASINGLY WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH THE NEW STRUCTURE. THE GENERALS IN CONTROL HAVE GONE OUT OF THEIR WAY TO REASSURE BUSINESS

PAGE 03 SEUL 09043 02 OF 04 150730Z

THAT IT WILL BE EXEMPT FROM MAJOR ATTACK IN THE PURIFICATION DRIVE AND TO INSTITUTE POLICIES DESIGNED TO EASE CURRENT ECONOMIC PRESSURES.

14. THE OPPOSITION: FORCES OPPOSED TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PREPARED TO TAKE DIRECT ACTION, AGAIN WITH THE EXCEPTION OF KWANGJU AND SOUTH CHOLLA, PROBABLY HAVE DECREASED BECAUSE THE COST OF SUCH ACTION HAS GONE UP MARKEDLY. THOSE IN OPPOSITION TO PARK OVER THE YEARS ARE REVERTING TO FAMILIAR THEMES IN AN EFFORT TO EVOKE GREATER POPULAR REACTION TO THE GENERALS. THE WAVE OF ARRESTS FOLLOWING MAY 17 AND STILL CONTINUING ARE ONE AREA OF CONCERN. THE FACT THAT MANY OF THOSE ARRESTED HAVE NOT BEEN ACCESSIBLE TO FAMILY, FRIENDS, OR LEGAL COUNSEL HAS SPARKED INCREASED RUMORS OF TORTURE AND EVEN EXECUTION. HOWEVER, IN STRESSING THIS THEME THE OLDER OPPONENTS DO NOT THREATEN TO LEAD PEOPLE INTO THE STREETS BUT EXPRESS THE BELIEF THAT GREATER REALIZATION OF WHAT IS HAPPENING WILL FORCE THEM INTO DIRECT ACTION.

15. THEY ARE ALSO LOOKING TOWARD THE STUDENTS AS THE CATALYST FOR OPPOSITION. THIS AGAIN HAS LONG BEEN A BELIEF AMONG THOSE OPPOSED TO STRICT CONTROL FROM THE CENTER. THE STUDENTS THEMSELVES, HOWEVER, ARE IN SOME DISARRAY AND CLEARLY THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO INTENTION OF MAKING IT EASY FOR THEM TO REASSEMBLE. WHILE SCHOOLS WILL

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

ADP135

PAGE 01 SEUL 09043 03 OF 04 150738Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
ICAE-00 INRE-00 HA-05 10-14 /069 W
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AMEMBASSY TOKYO
SA CINCUNC. KS
CHJUSMAG SEOUL KS
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KS//BJ-IS

SECTION 03 OF 04 SEUL 09043

16. STILL UNKNOWN IS THE REACTION OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ONCE CLASSES RESUME IN THE FALL. LEADERLESS AND DEJECTED, THEY ARE NONETHELESS TALKING BIG ABOUT THE NECESSITY TO "SHED BLOOD FOR DEMOCRACY." THE STUDENTS SEEM TO UNDERSTAND THAT ANY FURTHER OVERT DEMONSTRATIONS WILL MEAN DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH A MILITARY REGIME THAT DID NOT HESITATE TO USE FORCE DURING THE KWANGJU INCIDENT. THE UNANSWERABLE QUESTION IS WHETHER, WHEN THE TIME COMES, CERTAIN NUMBERS OF STUDENTS WILL BE WILLING TO RISK MARTYRDOM FOR IDEALISTIC CONVICTIONS. AN ADDITIONAL COMPLICATION IS THE POSSIBILITY, RATHER REMOTE AT PRESENT, THAT GOVERNMENT OVERREACTION TO ANY POSSIBLE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD SERVE AS A SPARK TO BRING THE PEOPLE INTO THE STREETS.

17. THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS FROM CONCERNED FACULTY OVER AN INCREASE IN STUDENT ACCEPTANCE OF CONFRONTATIONAL RHETORIC. THIS RUNS CLOSE TO THE PYONGYANG LINE AND IS A RED FLAG TO THE ROK MILITARY. IT IS ALSO SEEN AS CLEAR INDICATION OF THE DEGREE TO WHICH RADICALIZATION HAS

PAGE 02 SEUL 09043 03 OF 04 150738Z

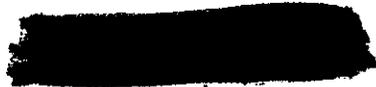
IMPACTED ON STUDENT VIEWS. LARGER THAN BEFORE, IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR HOW WIDESPREAD THE TIP TOWARD DETERMINIST LOGIC IS IN THE TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION.

18. ACTIVE POLITICAL OPPOSITION HAS BEEN CLIPPED. THOSE WHO COULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO LEAD A MOVEMENT IN POLITICAL CIRCLES HAVE EITHER BEEN ARRESTED OR ARE INTIMIDATED AND, IN MANY CASES, IN HIDING. MODERATE LEADERS IN THE OPPOSITION CAMP HAVE BEGUN TO ADOPT THE

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POSITION THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE INFLUENCED BY MEN OF GOOD-WILL RATHER THAN CONFRONTED. THIS POSITION STEMS IN LARGE PART FROM CONCERNS WITH THE HUMAN COSTS THAT THEY BELIEVE WOULD BE INVOLVED IN DIRECT CONFRONTATION. THIS POSITION PUTS THESE LEADERS UNDER EXTREME PRESSURE FROM THE MORE RADICAL WINGS OF THEIR FOLLOWING WHO BELIEVE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO MODERATE OR COMPROMISE WITH THOSE WHO HOLD POWER ILLEGALLY AND HAVE USED THAT POWER TO BRING SUFFERING AND DEATH TO FELLOW KOREANS.

19. THE WORKING PRESS, WHICH HAS ALWAYS HAD AN OPPOSITION BIAS, HAS APPARENTLY BEEN MUZZLED. REPORTERS ARE UNWILLING TO TALK, STATING THAT, SINCE THEY ARE NOT ALLOWED TO WRITE, THEY FEEL NO NEED TO ORALLY EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS. THIS POSTURE REFLECTS BOTH DISILLUSIONMENT AND FEAR. THIS NORMALLY VOCAL GROUP HAS SHARPLY REDUCED ITS CONTACT WITH THE FOREIGN COMMUNITY, AS HAVE MANY OTHERS WHO FEAR THAT SUCH CONTACTS MAY FURTHER WEAKEN THEIR ALREADY DELICATE POSITION.

20. SPECIAL MENTION NEEDS TO BE GIVEN TO THE SITUATION IN KWANGJU AND SOUTH CHOLLA. PEOPLE FROM THAT AREA REPORT SENTIMENT WHICH RUNS FROM "WE MIGHT AS WELL DIE NOW" TO "PERHAPS OUR CHILDREN WILL HAVE BETTER TIMES." WHILE NOT



PAGE 03 - - - SEUL 09043 03 OF 04 150738Z

LIKELY TO ERUPT SOON, THE SITUATION IS STILL TENSE. OTHERS, MORE FAVORABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT, BELIEVE THAT MORE ORGANIZATION BY LEFTIST ELEMENTS WAS INVOLVED IN KWANGJU THAN IS WIDELY THOUGHT. THEY HAVE EXAMPLES WITH WHICH THEY BUTTRESS THESE CONTENTIONS.

21. THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY: THOSE ELEMENTS OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN KOREA WHO HAVE BEEN DEEPLY INVOLVED WITH THE "DEMOCRATIC FORCES" HAVE BEEN FURTHER ALIENATED. EVEN FORMERLY CONSERVATIVE MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD ELEMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY PREPARED TO WORK WITH THE PARK GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN PUSHED INTO OPPOSITION BY THEIR HORROR OVER THE EVENTS IN KWANGJU. MANY ARE BUSILY PUTTING TOGETHER FULLER REPORTS ON KWANGJU ATROCITIES IN A BELIEF THAT THE FULL STORY WILL SO ALIENATE WORLD OPINION THAT IT WILL FORCE CHANGE IN THE POLITICAL DIRECTION OF KOREA.

22. THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAS UNDERGONE A SHIFT IN ATTITUDE FROM ONE OF WAIT-AND-SEE TO INCREASING RESENTMENT. PREPARED TO COOPERATE IF THE NEW LEADERSHIP COULD PROVIDE STABILITY AND A MORE SHARPLY FOCUSED DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN NOW FEEL THEY ARE BEING TREATED "AS CHILDREN" BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT. EFFORTS TO BRIEF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAVE ONLY SERVED TO INCREASE THIS RESENTMENT. BECAUSE THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS NOT BASICALLY OPPOSED TO THE PRESENT GOVERN-



UNCLASSIFIED

ADP132

PAGE 01
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
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CHJUSMAG SEOUL KS
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SECTION 04 OF 04 SEOUL 09043

IS NOW QUITE PRONOUNCED IN THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY.

23. ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT: THIS CONTINUES TO BE A MIXED BAG WITH HOPE ON ONE SIDE THAT THE U.S. CAN REVERSE THE FLOW OF EVENTS AND DISILLUSION THAT IT HAS NOT, AND COMPLAINTS FROM THE GOVERNMENT SIDE THAT U.S. INTERFERENCE HAS IN FACT CONTRIBUTED TO THE NEGATIVE MOOD IN KOREA. MUCH OF THE COMPLAINT HAS TAKEN THE FORM OF AD HOMINEM ATTACKS ON THE AMBASSADOR AND THE UN COMMANDER WHICH HAS TO SOME EXTENT SPARED THE USA. THE SITUATION IS NOT ONE THAT LENDS ITSELF TO EASY CORRECTION BUT RATHER REQUIRES PATIENCE IN WORKING THROUGH A DIFFICULT PERIOD. MORE DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE IS THE IMPACT OF RADICAL (INCLUDING MARXIST) EXPLANATIONS OF RECENT EVENTS ON THE PRESENT STUDENT GENERATION.

24. POLITICAL PROSPECTS: GIVEN THE ASSESSMENT THAT THE MOST PREVALENT MOOD IS ONE OF RESIGNATION, ONE MUST CONCLUDE THAT THE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE GENERALS TO PUSH THROUGH A GOVERNMENTAL FORM TO THEIR LIKING HAVE INCREASED

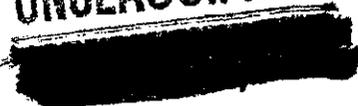
PAGE 02
SEOUL 09043 04 OF 04 150745Z

DECISIVELY. NO ONE WE HAVE TALKED TO BELIEVES, UNLESS THE EFFORT WERE UNBELIEVABLY CRASS, THAT THE KOREAN POPULATION WOULD REJECT A CONSTITUTION PUT TO THEM IN REFERENDUM --PROBABLY EVEN UNDER MARTIAL LAW. IF MARTIAL LAW WERE NOT IN EFFECT AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE ALLOWED, THERE ARE STILL FEW WHO THINK A NEGATIVE VOTE WOULD BE A REAL POSSIBILITY. THE ALTERNATIVE, OF COURSE, IS THE CONTINUATION OF THE YUSHIN CONSTITUTION.



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25. THERE IS INCREASING DISCUSSION OF MULTI-PARTY POLITICS, PERHAPS FOUR--TWO GOVERNMENT, TWO OPPOSITION--AND A DUAL-HEADED GOVERNMENT. THIS LATTER WOULD HAVE THE PRESIDENT (EMPEROR) DIRECTLY ELECTED AND TECHNICALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, NATIONAL SECURITY, AND THE APPOINTMENT FOR THE PRIME MINSITER (SHOGUN), WHO WOULD BE CHARGED WITH ALL OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS.

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27. SUMMING UP: KOREA IS BASICALLY AN UNHAPPY AND GRUMPY COUNTRY AT PRESENT; BUT ONE THAT IS PERHAPS COMING TO TERMS WITH THE REALITY OF THE PRESENT SITUATION. BUT, GENERAL UNHAPPINESS LEADING TO DIRECT CONFRONTATION CANNOT BE

PAGE 03 SEUL 09043 04 OF 04 150745Z

RULED OUT AND INDEED REMAINS THE HOPE OF A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PEOPLE. OFFSETTING THIS IS THE NEED TO GET ON WITH LIFE AND ACCOMMODATE WITH THE POWERS, EITHER DIRECTLY OR BY THE PASSIVENESS THAT IS PRESENTLY MORE IN EVIDENCE. THE LONGER THE GENERALS CAN KEEP THE SITUATION QUIET, THE GREATER BECOME THEIR CHANCES OF COMING OUT OF THE TUNNEL WITH A GOVERNMENT GARBED, ALBEIT THE SMALLEST OF BIKINIS, IN SOME FORM OF CONSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY. MONJO

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