

TEXT OF TELEGRAM BOSEOUL 009638

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INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING
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SA CINCLC KS
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E.O. 12065: RDS-4 07/28/00 (MONJO, JOHN C.) OR-M
TAGS: PINI PGOV SHUM KS
SUBJECT: THE PURIFICATION DRIVE

REF: SFOU 9434 AND PREVIOUS

1. (#)

AFFECTED OR WILL
AFFECT VIRTUALLY EVERY SEGMENT OF KOREAN SOCIETY. GENERAL
CHUN AND HIS PURIFICATION COMMITTEE HAVE BEEN QUITE
SUCCESSFUL IN GAINING PUBLIC APPROVAL OF INITIAL OUSTERS.
IN ADDITION, ALMOST ALL KOREANS FAVOR THE EMASCULATION OF
THE KCIA AND ATTEMPTS TO ELIMINATE THE PRIVATE

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RID OF MANY OF HIS ENEMIES
AND WILL PRESUMABLY BE SUPPORTED BY THOSE WHOSE CAREERS ARE

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ADVANCED BY PURIFICATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, MANY MILITARY
MEN FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THEIR NEW POLITICIZED ROLES,
AND WITH GENERAL CHUN'S POLITICAL POWER. JUST AS THOSE WHO
MOVE UP WILL SUPPORT CHUN, THOSE OUSTED ARE LIKELY TO BEAR
A GRUDGE FOR THEIR PUBLIC DISGRACE. KOREANS ARE AWARE OF
CERTAIN HYPOCRITICAL ASPECTS OF PURIFICATION, AND MAY NOT
TAKE KINDLY TO LARGE-SCALE MEDDLING WITH INSTITUTIONS LIKE
THE MEDIA AND UNIVERSITIES. MOST AT LEAST PARTIALLY
APPROVE OF WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR, BUT THIS COULD EASILY

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CHANGE AS THE TARGETS GET SMALLER IN NUMBER AND HARDER TO EXPLAIN. END SUMMARY.

3. THE SWEEPING CHANGES WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN RECENT WEEKS UNDER THE RUBRIC OF "PURIFICATION" HAVE HAD AND WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE FAR-REACHING EFFECTS ON KOREAN SOCIETY. (THE CHANGES IN THE ARMY LAST DECEMBER SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD SOMEWHAT DIFFERENTLY--SEE BELOW.) THERE ARE A NUMBER OF FACTORS MOTIVATING THE PURGES: THE STATED WISH OF A GROUP OF FAIRLY PURITANICAL GENERALS TO ELIMINATE AT LEAST SOME OF THE MOST BLATANT CORRUPTION IN VARIOUS SECTORS OF SOCIETY; THE WISH TO REMOVE THOSE PERCEIVED AS ENEMIES BY GENERAL CHUN (M-R: CHON TU-HWAN) AND HIS COTERIE OF GENERALS; A DESIRE TO GET RID OF SOME OF THE DEADWOOD IN THE BUREAUCRACY; AND A FEELING THAT IT IS TIME FOR KOREA TO BE RUN BY A YOUNGER, "FRESHER" GROUP (ALTHOUGH THIS IS COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT SOME OF CHUN'S STAUCHEST SUPPORTERS LIKE THE CURRENT ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF PRECEDED HIM AT KMA.) FINALLY, CHUN SEEMS TO BE CASTING ABOUT FOR WAYS OF GARNERING SOME POST FACTO PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HIS SEIZURE OF POWER.

4. FOLLOWING IS A LOOK AT WHERE PURIFICATION STANDS SO FAR.

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THE BUREAUCRACY:

IN ADDITION TO THE EARLIER PURGE OF THE KCIA, 234 OFFICIALS (232 PREVIOUSLY REPORTED PLUS TWO ATTACHED TO THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER WHICH WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DISCLOSED) OF GRADE 2 OR ABOVE; 4,810 GRADE 3 AND BELOW (4,760 IN THE ADMINISTRATION AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES, PLUS 50 IN THE JUDICIAL BRANCH); HAVE BEEN PURGED. THE EFFECT OF THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN TO FURTHER IMPEDE THE BUREAUCRATIC PROCESS, ALREADY MOVING SLOWLY SINCE PRESIDENT PARK'S ASSASSINATION, SINCE NO ONE WANTS TO TAKE AN ACTION THAT COULD COME BACK TO HAUNT HIM. FURTHERMORE, THE QUESTION OF LINES OF AUTHORITY WAS COMPLICATED BY THE FORMATION OF THE OVERSIGHT SUB-COMMITTEES UNDER THE CONSM. AT THIS POINT IT REMAINS UNCLEAR WHETHER BUREAUCRATIC MORALE HAS REACHED ITS NADIR. IF OFFICIALS BECOME CONVINCED THAT PURIFICATION WAS INDEED A ONE-SHOT STRIKE, THEIR FRAME OF MIND WILL IMPROVE. IF PROMOTIONS ARE MADE FROM WITHIN, THE BENEFICIARIES WILL BE HAPPY, AND BECAUSE OF THE CHAIN REACTION EFFECT, PROMOTIONS SHOULD BE REASONABLY NUMEROUS. IN ADDITION, THE LOSS OF EXPERTISE WOULD BE MINIMIZED, AND THE BUREAUCRACY MIGHT ACTUALLY EMERGE IMPROVED FROM ITS PRESENT STATE OF SHOCK. THERE ARE CONFLICTING RUMORS ABOUT REPLACEMENT BY UPWARD MOBILITY VERSUS THE USE OF RETIRED MILITARY. IN LINE WITH PURIFICATION, THERE ARE PERSISTENT

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RUMORS OF A PLANNED RESTRUCTURING OF SOME GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES. SOME HAVE IT THAT A SIZABLE PERCENTAGE OF BUREAUS WITHIN MINISTRIES WILL BE ELIMINATED.

STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES AND BANKS:

THE PURIFICATION OF GOVERNMENTAL OR QUASI-GOVERNMENTAL SECTORS ENDED JULY 22 WITH THE OUSTER OF 1,819 OFFICIALS IN STATE-OPERATED ENTERPRISES AND BANKS. UNLIKE THE PURELY GOVERNMENTAL SECTOR, WHERE 15 OFFICIALS ARE BEING

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INVESTIGATED. NO LEGAL PROCEEDINGS WILL APPARENTLY BE

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BROUGHT AGAINST ANY OF THE EX-EMPLOYEES IN STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES OR BANKS. THE PRESIDENTS AND DIRECTORS OF SUCH ENTITIES WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE QUOTA OF THOSE TO BE OUSTED, AND THEIR OWN STATUS WAS APPARENTLY PARTIALLY DEPENDENT UPON HOW THEY MET THESE QUOTAS. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY THE SENIOR AMERICAN REPRESENTATIVE IN JOINT-VENTURE WITH THE ROKG THAT THE COMPANY WAS PRESENTED WITH A LIST OF CRITERIA WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY PURIFICATION OUSTERS. ALL OF THOSE EVENTUALLY REMOVED, HE SAID, WERE DEADWOOD, ALTHOUGH NONE WAS ESPECIALLY GUILTY OF CORRUPTION AS SUCH. ANOTHER AMERICAN REPORTED MUCH THE SAME PROCEDURE IN HIS COMPANY, BUT DID NOT SEEM TO FEEL THAT THE OUSTERS FROM HIS COMPANY HAD IMPROVED OVERALL PERFORMANCE.

THE MILITARY:

THE PURGE IN THE MILITARY PREDATED THE CURRENT PURIFICATION DRIVE, AND HAS NEVER BEEN LINKED TO IT BY THE ROKG. IT WAS NEVERTHELESS RELATED TO WHAT WE SEE AS ONE OF GENERAL

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CHUN'S MAJOR AIMS--TO DEVELOP A RESPONSIVE LOYAL BASE WHICH COULD BE USED AS A NUCLEUS FOR SHAPING OTHER INSTITUTIONS. IN ACHIEVING THIS GOAL OF CONSOLIDATION WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES, CHUN QUICKLY PURGED THE MILITARY OF PERCEIVED THREATS TO HIS NEW ORDER, ESSENTIALLY THROUGH JUDICIOUS FORCED RETIREMENTS AND REASSIGNMENTS (68 GENERALS HAVE RETIRED SINCE DECEMBER 12). THESE MOVES WERE REINFORCED BY AN EFFECTIVE EFFORT TO EXPLAIN WHY THE MOVES HAD BEEN TAKEN AND WHAT THE FUTURE HELD FOR CHUN'S FELLOW OFFICERS.

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IN WHICH CHUN PLAYED HEAVILY ON HIS COLLEAGUES' SENSE OF DUTY. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE A FEW MINOR CRACKS IN THE MILITARY, CHUN HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN CONSOLIDATING HIS FELLOW OFFICERS INTO A POWER BASE.

POLITICIANS:

WITH THE EARLIER OUSTER OF 9 ASSEMBLYMEN, INCLUDING DRP PRESIDENT KIM JONG-PIL (M-R: KIM CHONG-P'IL), THE LIST OF 14 MORE ASSEMBLYMEN "PICKED UP FOR QUESTIONING" JULY 19, AND THE RUMORED ACTIONS AGAINST OTHERS, THE POLITICIANS ARE NERVOUS AND FRIGHTENED. EVEN SUCH FORMERLY (AND PERHAPS AGAIN TO BE) POWERFUL DRP FIGURES AS PARK CHOON-GYU (M-R: PAK CHUN-KYU) SEEM SHAKEN. EX-MINISTER OF DEFENSE JUNG NAE-HYOK (M-R: CHONG NAE-HYOK) TOLD EMBOFF RECENTLY THAT HE MIGHT HAVE TO TAKE OVER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE DRP. "I DON'T WANT THE JOB," HE SAID. "IT'S TOO TROUBLESOME." THERE ARE ENOUGH SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET OF VIRTUALLY ANY ELECTED POLITICIAN TO BE A THREAT, AND MOST SEEM TO BE IN THE POSITION BUREAUCRATS WERE TWO WEEKS AGO--KEEPING THEIR HEADS DOWN AND HOPING THE AXE FALLS ELSEWHERE. SOME POLITICIANS EVEN DOUBT WHETHER THE DRP AND NDP WILL BE ALLOWED TO CONTINUE. MONEY HAS COMPLETELY DRIED UP, THEY SAY, AND THE GENERALS MAY USE THIS LACK OF FUNDS TO KILL

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BOTH PARTIES. ONE THEORY HAS IT THAT A NEW PARTY ON THE RIGHT WOULD BE FORMED DRAWING OFF THE "GOOD" (AND YOUNG) PARTS OF THE DRP. ANOTHER HAS IT THAT PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS WILL BE PROHIBITED FROM RUNNING IN ANY ELECTIONS AT ALL. PERHAPS THE MOST STRIKING COMMON THEME ABOUT OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH POLITICIANS IS THAT EVEN THOSE WHO ARE USUALLY WELL-CONNECTED HAVE LITTLE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT. SOME POLITICIANS SAY THEY ARE SURE OF ONE THING--THAT CHUN IS DETERMINED TO BE THE NATION'S LEADER.

BUSINESS:

THE PRIVATELY-OWNED BUSINESS COMMUNITY HAS BEEN ASSURED FROM THE OUTSET THAT IT WILL BE EXEMPT FROM THE PURIFICATION DRIVE, AND GENERAL CHUN HAS REPEATED THESE ASSURANCES. THE PRESIDENT OF THE KOREAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY TOLD 1,500 BUSINESSMEN WHO HAD BEEN ASSEMBLED IN SEJONG HALL JULY 16: "AS PROMISED SEVERAL TIMES BY THE GOVERNMENT, THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY REMAINS INTACT, THANKS TO THE LENIENT ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT TOWARD BUSINESS INSTITUTIONS." AT THE SAME MEETING, ACTING PRIME MINISTER PARK CHOONG-HOON (M-R: PAK CHUN-HUN) CONTENTED HIMSELF WITH EXHORTING BUSINESSMEN TO "SEEK PROFITS IN A JUST WAY" AND TO UPROOT "INEFFICIENT ELEMENTS HAMPERING THE NATION'S ECONOMIC GROWTH." SOME TRIMMING OF STAFF SEEMS TO BE

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OCCURRING IN SOME ENTERPRISES, BUT THIS IS APPARENTLY AN ECONOMIC PHENOMENON ASSOCIATED WITH RECESSION, AND REPORTEDLY INCLUDES SOME VERY SENIOR PEOPLE (NOTABLY AT SAMSUNG). THE DECISION TO EXCLUDE PRIVATE ENTERPRISE FROM THE PURIFICATION DRIVE IS PROBABLY SOUND, SINCE THE CONSEQUENCES IN TERMS OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY AND FOREIGN

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CONFIDENCE IN THE KOREAN ECONOMY COULD BE DEVASTATING.
NEVERTHELESS QUESTIONABLE, ILLEGAL, AND ANTI-COMPETITIVE
PRACTICES ARE ENDEMIC IN THE KOREAN BUSINESS SECTOR, AND
THE EXCLUSION OF THIS SECTOR FROM PURIFICATION HAS CAUSED
ADVERSE COMMENTS FROM SOME KOREANS.

THE MEDIA:

THE PURIFICATION OF THE MEDIA IS STILL IN PROGRESS.
SIXTY-THREE PEOPLE ABOVE THE TECHNICIAN LEVEL HAVE BEEN
DISMISSED FROM KBS. THESE APPEAR MAINLY TO HAVE BEEN
DEADWOOD. OVER 100 HAVE BEEN OUSTED FROM KYUNGHYANG
SINMUN/MPC TELEVISION, INCLUDING 7 REPORTERS AND 2 DESK
EDITORS WHO WERE ARRESTED FOR "SPREADING FALSE RUMORS"
DURING THE KWANGJU DISTURBANCES. UNLIKE KBS, THESE
DISMISSALS WERE HEAVILY POLITICALLY-MOTIVATED. HAPDONG
HAS HAD 6 OF ITS STAFFERS DETAINED, AND SEVERAL STRINGERS
FOR FOREIGN MEDIA OFFICES WERE DETAINED JULY 24. RUMORS
PERSIST THAT SOME BASIC STRUCTURAL CHANGES ARE IN THE
WORKS, THE MOST CURRENT BEING THAT SEUL SINMUN AND

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KYUNGHYANG SINMUN PLUS THE TWO WIRE SERVICES (HAPDONG AND
ORIENT PRESS) WILL BE CONSOLIDATED. THE SAMSUNG-OWNED
CHUNGANG ILBO AND TBC WILL REPORTEDLY BE SEPARATED, AND
IT IS RUMORED THAT PROVINCIAL NEWSPAPERS WILL BE PROHIBITED
FROM CARRYING NATIONAL NEWS.

ACADEMIC:

THIS IS A NUMERICALLY SMALL TARGET BUT POTENTIALLY ONE OF
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THE MOST IMPORTANT. SEVERAL WHO SIGNED THE MAY 8 DECLARATION BY 134 INTELLECTUALS (ABOUT HALF WERE PROFESSORS) AND OTHER SIMILAR DECLARATIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN PICKED UP. SOME OF THOSE HAVE BEEN INTERROGATED AND RELEASED, BUT SOME HAVE BEEN FORCED TO RESIGN. KNOWLEDGEABLE KOREANS ESTIMATE THAT 100-150 WILL EVENTUALLY BE OUSTED FROM THEIR POSTS. PUBLIC REACTION TO THIS IS MIXED, WITH EDUCATED KOREANS DEPLORING IT AND THOSE OF A HARD-HAT MENTALITY APPLAUDING THE CAMPAIGN. THE MOVE TO ELIMINATE PRIVATE TUTORING, HOWEVER, HAS WON ALMOST UNIVERSAL PUBLIC APPROVAL. NO WONDER: A PROFESSOR RECENTLY TOLD US THAT TUTORING FOR HIS HIGH SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN WOULD RUN 400,000 WON PER MONTH PER CHILD. THE LONG-RANGE EFFECTS OF THE PURIFICATION OF ACADEMICS, HOWEVER, WILL PROBABLY BE HARMFUL. KICKING OUT OVER 100 PROFESSORS WILL CLEARLY BE A MAJOR LOSS, EXPATRIATE KOREAN PROFESSORS WILL THINK TWICE BEFORE COMING BACK TO KOREA TO TEACH, AND THE PROVINCIAL UNIVERSITIES WILL PROBABLY BECOME EVEN POORER ACADEMICALLY THAN THEY ARE NOW. IN ADDITION, NO MATTER HOW LAUDABLE THE GOAL OF PROHIBITING TUTORING, THE END RESULT MAY BE THAT THE PRACTICE MERELY GOES UNDERGROUND.

THE CHURCHES:


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THIS IS PERHAPS THE TOUCHIEST AREA OF ALL TO "PURIFY." WHILE ONLY A SMALL NUMBER OF CHRISTIANS ARE ON WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS THE RADICAL LEFT, MANY OTHER, MORE TRADITIONAL CHURCHGOERS COULD BE EXPECTED TO RESIST IF THEY FELT THE MAINLINE CHURCHES WERE THREATENED. IN ADDITION, THE CHURCHES HAVE A VERY INFLUENTIAL CONSTITUENCY OUTSIDE KOREA. WHILE SOME CHRISTIANS, NOTABLY SIX CATHOLIC PRIESTS FROM KWANGJU, HAVE BEEN ARRESTED, WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF A SYSTEMATIC MOVE AGAINST THE CHURCH. NEVERTHELESS, FATHER SKILLINGSTAD OF SOGANG TOLD US JULY 24 THAT HE FEELS THERE WILL BE PRESSURE (AT A MINIMUM) ON THE UNIVERSITY BECAUSE OF ITS CATHOLIC SPONSORSHIP.

5. WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE PURIFICATION? FROM GENERAL CHUN'S POINT OF VIEW THERE ARE SOME REAL PLUSES: HE HAS CREATED A LARGE GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO OWE THEIR JOBS TO HIM AND HAS GOTTEN RID OF MANY ENEMIES. PEOPLE HAVE RESPONDED WELL TO THE DRIVE, AND THE RELATIVE EMASCULATION OF THE KCIA HAS BEEN WELCOMED BY KOREANS. THE APPARENTLY GENUINE ATTEMPT TO ABOLISH THE PRACTICE OF TUTORING HAS HIT A VERY RESPONSIVE CHORD.

6. THE MINUSES ARE ALSO MANY: THE ARMY IS HEAVILY INTO POLITICS AND IS ATTEMPTING TO SUPERVISE THE BUREAUCRACY, SOMETHING ABOUT WHICH MANY MILITARY MEN FEEL EXTREMELY UNCOMFORTABLE. WHILE CHUN WILL CREATE A GROUP OF INSTANT

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LOYALISTS IN THE BUREAUCRACY IF THEY ARE MOVED UP, HE HAS
CREATED AN EVEN LARGER GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN
PUBLICLY DISGRACED, AND PRESUMABLY WILL HARBOR A GRUDGE
AGAINST HIM. THE CURVE OF APPROVAL SEEMS LIKELY TO GO
DOWN AS THE PURIFICATION DRIVE EXPANDS. MANY KOREANS WHO
APPLAUDED THE OUSTER OF HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS WERE LESS



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COMFORTABLE WITH THE PURGING OF THE LOWER LEVEL, WHO WERE
SEEN AS FEIJLOW WORKERS.

7. ALONG WITH THIS, THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION ASPECT OF THE
PERVASIVE DRIVE IS ALSO TROUBLING TO KOREANS. THERE ARE
MANY EXAMPLES OF ANGER AMONG CITIZENS WHERE INSTITUTIONS
LIKE THE MEDIA OR UNIVERSITIES HAVE BEEN MEDDLED WITH IN
THE PAST, AND THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SIMILAR
RESENTMENTS WILL NOT BE FELT THIS TIME.

8. FINALLY, THERE IS AN AIR OF HYPOCRISY ABOUT THE
PURIFICATION DRIVE THAT RANKLES. IN ADDITION TO THE
EXCLUSION OF BUSINESS FROM THE MOVEMENT, THE RESUSCITATION
OF PEOPLE LIKE YUN PIL-YONG (M-R) AND THE IMMUNITY SO FAR
OF OTHERS WIDELY-BELIEVED TO BE CORRUPT COLORS THE WAY
KOREANS SEE THE MOVEMENT IN ITS ENTIRETY. IT IS TOO
EARLY TO SAY WHETHER THE MOVEMENT WILL WORK IN CHUN'S
FAVOR, BUT IT HAS UNQUESTIONABLY TOUCHED OR WILL TOUCH
AT LEAST THE TOP LEVEL IN EVERY FACET OF KOREAN SOCIETY.
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