

DECLASSIFIED BY/RELEASE AUTHORITY:  
JEFFREY CHARLSTON, SENIOR REVIEWER  
U.S DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
RELEASE DECISION: RELEASE IN FULL  
DATE: MAY 11, 2021

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ACTION EA-12

INFO    OCT-01    ADS-00    CIAE-00    DODE-00    NSAE-00    NSCE-00  
         SSO-00    ICAE-00    INRE-00    PM-05    H-01    INR-10    L-03  
         PA-01    SP-02    SS-15    HA-05    IO-14    PC-01    OCS-06    SY-05  
         SYE-00    DCT-02    /083    W

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O 100943Z JUN 80  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6939  
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KS//BJ-IS  
CHJUSMAG SEOUL KS  
SA CINCUNC KS

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E.O. 12065: RDS-4 6/10/90 (MONJO, JOHN C.) OR-M  
TAGS: SHUM, PINS, KS  
SUBJECT: INSIDER'S ACCOUNT OF KWANGJU RIOT

1. ~~(C)~~ ENTIRE TEXT.

2. THERE FOLLOWS AN ACCOUNT OF THE KWANGJU RIOTS COM-  
PILED BY AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY OF LONG ACQUAINTANCE  
WITH THE AREA. HE WAS IN KWANGJU THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD  
OF TROUBLE AND, IN ADDITION, HIS STATURE IN THE COMMUNITY  
GAVE HIM ACCESS TO THE VIEWS OF A NUMBER OF OTHER WIT-  
NESSES AND PARTICIPANTS. THIS IS THE MOST BALANCED  
RECORD AND ANALYSIS OF INCIDENT WE HAVE SEEN SO FAR.  
WE HAVE SUBSTITUTED "PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONARY" OR "BAPTIST  
MISSIONARY" IN PLACE OF NAMES USED IN THE REPORT. STILL,  
END-USERS SHOULD HANDLE REPORT WITH CARE SINCE IDENTITIES  
OF PERSONS MENTIONED COULD BE SURMISED BY PEOPLE FAMILIAR  
WITH KWANGJU, AND WE DO WISH TO PROTECT AUTHOR AND ALL

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PERSONS CITED IN ACCOUNT.  
BEGIN QUOTE:

ABBREVIATED RETROSPECT OF THE "MAY EIGHTEENTH INCIDENT" AT  
KWANGJU, KOREA.

BEFORE MAY 18TH:

IN THE SPRING OF 1980 IN KWANGJU THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF  
CAMPUS UNREST WHICH WAS FOCUSED ON ISSUES WITHIN THE  
VARIOUS INDIVIDUAL CAMPUSES. WHETHER OR NOT THERE WAS A  
PSYCHOLOGICAL LINK OR ANY RELATIONSHIP, THIS ANTAGONIST  
STANCE WITHIN THE INSTITUTIONS WAS FOLLOWED BY A REVIVAL  
OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY.

ON THURSDAY, MAY 15TH, STUDENTS HELD A LARGE ANTI-GOVERN-  
MENT RALLY WITH SONGS, SLOGANS, MARCHING, AND IN THE EVEN-  
ING A TORCHLIGHT PARADE, ALL DIRECTED AGAINST THE YUSIN

CONSTITUTION AND THE CONTINUED IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW IN KOREA. THE ROUTINE AIR-RAID DRILL HELD ON THE 15TH OF EACH MONTH WAS CANCELLED THIS DAY. RIOT POLICE WERE OUT IN FORCE IN KWANGJU BUT TOOK NO ACTION OF ANY SORT, SIMPLY WATCHING PASSIVELY FROM THEIR POSITIONS.

ON FRIDAY, MAY 16TH, CERTAIN STREETS IN KWANGJU WERE CORDONED OFF, AND RIOT POLICE WERE IN EVIDENCE. IN THE EVENING THERE WAS A TORCHLIGHT PARADE AND SHOUTS AND SONGS AGAINST MARTIAL LAW AND AGAINST CHUN TU HWAN BY NAME. (ONE BILINGUAL HEARER IS CONVINCED THAT THE WORDS HE HEARD TO THE CHRISTIAN PEP-SONG "I'VE GOT PEACE LIKE A RIVER", ETC., WERE OTHER WORDS CHOSEN FOR THE PROTEST.) NO POLICE ACTION APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN. THE RALLY WAS OVER BY ABOUT 9:00 O'CLOCK.

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RELATED OR NOT, MISSIONARIES WISHING TO GO TO TAEJON FOUND BUS TICKETS COMPLETELY UNAVAILABLE AND WERE TOLD THAT IT WAS ON ACCOUNT OF SOLDIERS GOING TO TAEJON. GOING BY TRAIN ON SATURDAY, THEY FOUND LARGE NUMBERS OF ENLISTED MEN ON THE TRAIN, WHOSE BEHAVIOR GREW PROGRESSIVELY UNRULY TO THE PHYSICAL DANGER OF CIVILIAN PASSENGERS AND THE SHEDDING OF BLOOD AMONG THE TROOPS. NO OFFICERS WERE IN EVIDENCE.

SATURDAY IN KWANGJU WAS QUIET. ON SATURDAY, HOWEVER, THE EXTENSION OF MARTIAL LAW AND THE CLOSING OF COLLEGES OF MANY CATEGORIES WAS ANNOUNCED, TAKING EFFECT AT MIDNIGHT. ON SUNDAY, MAY 18TH:

THE KWANGJU MISSIONARIES DO NOT KNOW HOW OR WHEN THINGS BECAME VIOLENT ON SUNDAY, MAY 18. IN THE MORNING THINGS APPEARED QUIET, BUT BEGINNING AT ABOUT NOON--RETURNING FROM ONE CHURCH OR ANOTHER--SOME OF THE MISSIONARIES RAN INTO INDICATIONS OF PREVIOUS TROUBLE. ONE MOTHER (WIFE OF A BAPTIST MISSIONARY) AND CHILDREN, WITH GUEST AMERICANS, SAW NO SIGN OF TROUBLE BUT WERE IN THE WAY OF A HEAVY DISCHARGE OF TEAR GAS, WHICH WOULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN USED FOR A WHIM. HER HUSBAND, IN ANOTHER LOCATION, FOUND STREETS CLOSED WHICH HAD BEEN OPEN EARLIER, AND ALSO DETECTED SIGNS OF TEAR GAS USED EARLIER. OTHER MISSIONARIES SAW NOTHING.

AT SOME TIME ON SUNDAY TROOPS OF AN AIRBORNE UNIT APPEARED IN THE CITY. SOME SAY AT 9:00 A.M., OTHERS AT NOON.

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON THERE BEGAN TO BE UNPROVOKED ASSAULTS BY AIRBORNE UNIT PERSONNEL UPON YOUNG MEN. INCIDENTS WERE PERSONALLY WITNESSED BY A BAPTIST MISSIONARY AND SOME OF HIS AMERICAN GUESTS IN KWANGJU FOR AN EVANGELISTIC CRUSADE. WHATEVER PRIOR PROVOCATION THERE MAY HAVE BEEN, THESE PEOPLE WITNESSED ATTACKS OF GREATER OR LESSER SEVERITY ON

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A NUMBER OF YOUNG MEN SIMPLY WALKING DOWN THE STREETS.  
(DETAILS CAN BE PROVIDED IF REQUIRED.)

AT NO TIME DURING THE ENTIRE MAY 18TH INCIDENT, EITHER ON THAT DAY OR THE DAYS FOLLOWING, DID ANY MISSIONARY SEE OR HEAR EVEN AT SECOND OR THIRD HAND ANY INDICATION OF BRUTALITY BY THE CIVILIAN RIOT POLICE. THE RIOT POLICE WERE SEEN TO STAND AT THEIR POSTS WITHOUT INTERFERING WHILE AIRBORNE UNIT TROOPS ATTACKED PEOPLE. THERE WAS LATER A RUMOR THAT ONE KOREAN POLICEMAN HAD BEEN KILLED WHILE TRYING TO INTERFERE WITH AN AIRBORNE UNIT TROOPER'S ATTACK UPON A PERSON, BUT NO PROOF. A BAPTIST MISSIONARY SAW A CONFLICT BETWEEN A TRAFFIC OFFICER AND AN AIRBORNE UNIT SOLDIER AT AN INTERSECTION, WHERE THE SOLDIER WANTED A YOUNG WOMAN (APPARENTLY) OUT OF A TAXICAB, AND THE OFFICER WANTED HIM TO LET THE CAB GO ON. (THE MISSIONARY NEVER SAW THE OUTCOME, AS HE HAD TO KEEP GOING HIMSELF. IT COULD HAVE BEEN SCARE TACTICS AND NOT AN ASSAULT. AT THIS TIME THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF ANY MOLESTATION OF WOMEN STUDENTS; ONLY THIS INCIDENT SEEN BY THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY.)

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REPORTS ON MONDAY TOLD OF INCREASINGLY WIDESPREAD BRUTALITY ON SUNDAY EVENING. IN THE LATE AFTERNOON OF SUNDAY THE BAPTIST MISSIONARY SAW "NORMAL BRUTALITY" WITH NIGHTSTICKS AND KICKING OF FALLEN MEN (LOOKING FROM THE WINDOWS OF THE KWANGJU TOURIST HOTEL).

A CURFEW WAS ANNOUNCED FOR 8:00 AT AFTER 6:30, BUT THEN CHANGED TO 9:00.

IN ALL OF THIS, THE WRITER WENT TO THE COUNTRY IN THE MORNING, BACK IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON, AND TO CHURCH IN THE CITY IN THE EVENING--EARLY BECAUSE OF THE ANNOUNCED CURFEW--AND NEITHER SAW NOR HEARD ANYTHING AMISS. IT IS A MATTER OF ROUTES AND LOCATIONS.

ON MONDAY, MAY 19TH:

MOST OF THE ACCOUNTS OF BRUTALITY COME FROM MONDAY, AL-

THOUGH THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT SUNDAY HAD ITS SHARE.

THE WRITER'S FAMILY SEEMS SINGULARLY EXEMPT FROM TROUBLE-SOME MATTERS, EVEN AT SECOND HAND. BAPTIST AND PRESBYTERIAN MISSIONARY FAMILIES ARE OUR SOURCE FOR MOST OF WHAT WE KNOW PERSONALLY. (FULLER NOTES, NOT HERE COPIED, GIVE DETAILS AND SOURCES.)

REPORTS OF SEVERE VIOLENCE BEGAN COMING IN ON MONDAY MORNING. PERHAPS BY COINCIDENCE, THE FIRST REPORTED RIOT-TYPE ACTIVITY WAS REPORTED ON MONDAY AFTERNOON, WHEN MR. DAVID MILLER OF THE USIS TELEPHONED AND SAID THERE HAVE BEEN AN ATTEMPT (ATTEMPTS?) TO SET FIRE TO GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS.

SMALL-SCALE RESISTANCE, IF IT CAN BE CALLED THAT, WAS SEEN

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FROM THE FIRST. A BAPTIST MISSIONARY'S FIRST PERSONAL VIEWING OF AN ATTACK WAS ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON WHEN THREE SOLDIERS JOINED IN BEATING A PASSERBY, AND PEOPLE THREW STONES AT THEM, WITH THE RESULT THAT TWO RAN AFTER THE STONE-THROWERS (WITHOUT SUCCESS) AND THE THIRD CONTINUED BEATING THE YOUNG MAN. THERE WAS ALSO STONE-THROWING ON MONDAY.

MONDAY WAS THE FIRST DAY WHEN WE HEARD REPORTS OF AIRBORNE UNIT SOLDIERS ENTERING HOUSES IN SEARCH OF YOUNG MEN. CITY BUSES WERE STOPPED AND YOUNG MEN TAKEN OFF AND BEATEN; PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND EATING PLACES WERE GIVEN THE SAME TREATMENT. IT IS NOT CERTAIN WHETHER PRIVATE HOMES WERE ENTERED OR NOT. (KWANGJU CITIZENS SAY THEY WERE, BUT WE HAVE NOT HEARD OF SPECIFIC CASES.)

A KOREAN PASTOR, WHO CAN BE NAMED IF NECESSARY, HEARD THE AIRBORNE UNIT PERSONNEL SPEAKING WITH A DISTINCTIVELY KYONGSANG ACCENT, AND REPORTS HEARING THEM SAY THEY WERE GOING TO SLAY THE NO-GOOD CHOLLA-DO RASCALS. ANOTHER WITNESS SAW OTHER AIRBORNE UNIT TROOPS BEHAVING WITH A BREAK-DOWN OF DISCIPLINE SIMILAR TO WHAT TOOK PLACE WITH OTHER TROOPS ON THE TRAIN TO TAEJON ON SATURDAY, AND NOTICED THAT THE MEN PRESUMABLY GUARDING THE CHOSUN UNIVERSITY LOOKED DISHEVELED, WERE OBVIOUSLY DRUNK, AND WERE SHOUTING FOR FOOD. (THERE IS A RUMOR CURRENT THAT THE MEN WERE INTENTIONALLY UNDERFED--AND SOME ADD, GIVEN DRINK; AND OTHERS ADD, GIVEN DRUGS--TO MAKE THEM WILD.)

REPORTS OR RUMORS OF GIRLS STRIPPED TO THEIR UNDERCLOTHES HAVE TURNED OUT TO BE NOT FROM THE SOURCES TO WHICH THEY WERE ATTRIBUTED, AND SO FAR HAVE NOT BEEN VERIFIED BY ANY-

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