



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

Against the background 26 August 1980
described above, content to
approve the message at

Dear Mike, "A"?

MAJ 26/8
Korea

Yes not

It is now virtually certain that the current effective ruler of Korea, General Chun Doo Hwan, will resign from the military in the next few days and be elected President shortly thereafter (Seoul telno 245 enclosed).

By engineering the resignation of President Choi on 16 August General Chun has ensured that the forthcoming election will be carried out under the old Constitution which President Choi had pledged himself to liberalise. Proposals for a new Constitution were to have been circularised in September and put to a Referendum in October. Once installed as President, General Chun will be in a position to control what amendments should be put to the people. Had he waited till later his personal unpopularity in the country might have debarred him from assuming power except by extra-Constitutional means.

However distasteful this and General Chun's treatment of political opponents such as Kim Dae Jung (whose trial on sedition charges continues) we are not well-placed to exert influence. The Americans and Japanese with much closer ties have had little success. It is inevitable that the military (with a standing army of 600,000) will continue to be the dominant power group in Korea as they were under President Park. General Chun believes that only they provide the discipline and probity lacking among politicians and necessary for Korea's security, and its economic and social progress. The UK's principal interests are in Korea's security and stability and in its valuable export market; we may deplore the suppression of opposition but we should also recognise that most Koreans appear to accept the need for authoritarian leadership. The interim Presidency of President Choi has not provided this.

In these circumstances we must accept that General Chun is the man we have to deal with. Given our existing good relations with the Korean Government and our commercial interests (including) our hopes of GEC winning a contract for power generating equipment, about which the Prime Minister wrote to President Choi) Lord Carrington recommends that the Prime Minister should send a message of good wishes to Chun for his Inauguration, likely to be on 1 September. This should be correct and need not be

/too

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/ | too warm. I enclose a draft. The message should be despatched from here on 28 August by which time we should know for certain that Chun has been elected and the date for his Inauguration.

*Yours ever
Chris T. H.*

M.
(P Lever)
Private Secretary

M O'D B Alexander Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON

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GRS 200
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FM SEOUL 190700Z AUG 80
TO PRIORITY FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 245 OF 19 AUGUST
INFO WASHINGTON

OUR TELNO. 243: RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT CHOI

1. AT A REGIONAL MEETING OF OVER 400 SEOUL AND CHEJU ISLAND DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR UNIFICATION HELD HERE YESTERDAY, GENERAL CHUN DOO HWAN WAS CHOSEN AS CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT HE WILL RETIRE FROM THE ARMY ON 22 AUGUST AND THAT THE NCU WILL MEET IN FULL SESSION TO ELECT HIM AS PRESIDENT ON 27 OR 28 AUGUST. HIS INAUGURATION IS EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE ON 1 SEPTEMBER.

2. CHUN'S ELECTION WILL BE IN FULL ACCORD WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE PRESENT CONSTITUTION. WE ASSUME, THEREFORE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WILL WISH TO SEND A MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATION ON THE LINES OF THAT SENT TO PRESIDENT CHOI (YOUR TELNO. 221 OF 17 DECEMBER 1979). THE MESSAGE SHOULD PREFERABLY REACH US BY 29 AUGUST IN TIME TO BE DELIVERED ON 1 SEPTEMBER. THE AMERICANS ARE PROPOSING TO SEND A MESSAGE INTO WHICH, IN VIEW OF THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, THEY WILL PROBABLY INSERT REFERENCES TO DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT. THE NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND AND AUSTRALIAN EMBASSIES EXPECT TO SEND THE SAME MESSAGE AS BEFORE.

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PREAMBLE

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[TEXT]

Your telno 245 : INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT CHUN
 1. Please arrange for the delivery of the following message from the Prime Minister to President Chun Doo Hwan at the appropriate time.
 Quote: I extend to Your Excellency upon your inauguration the wishes of the British Government and people that under your Presidency the people of Korea will enjoy continued prosperity in conditions of social justice and peace.
 I am confident of the further development of the friendly relations so long existing between our two countries.
 Unquote.

26 AUG 1980

