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 TO IMMEDIATE FCO
 TELNO 234
 OF 290715Z APRIL 86

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO KOREA

1. THERE HAS NOT BEEN MUCH DEVELOPMENT IN THE POLITICAL SITUATION SINCE I SENT MY TELEGRAM NO 146. THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO TOLERATE THE OPPOSITION'S CAMPAIGN FOR THE DIRECT ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT. THE RALLIES ORGANISED IN THE LARGER CITIES, ADDRESSED BY THE MAIN LEADERS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF KIM DAE-JUNG WHO IS KEPT AT HOME (BUT WHOSE RECORDED REMARKS ARE RELAYED TO THE CROWD), ARE APPARENTLY WELL ATTENDED. NOT MANY, HOWEVER, ACTUALLY DARE TO SIGN THE PETITION. THE RALLIES ARE ORDERLY, BUT THERE HAS BEEN A RECENT TENDENCY FOR STUDENT GROUPS TO CAUSE TROUBLE AT THE END AND THERE HAVE BEEN SOME CLASHES AND ARRESTS. THE NEXT RALLY IS AT INCHON ON SATURDAY. THE PRESIDENT HAS ANOTHER LUNCH WITH PARTY LEADERS TOMORROW.

2. AS IS NORMAL AT THIS TIME OF YEAR STUDENT ACTIVITY HAS BEEN INCREASING. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE INCIDENTS MENTIONED ABOVE THE STUDENTS ARE LARGELY STILL KEPT OFF THE STREETS. THE INFLUENCE OF RADICAL GROUPS, WHICH WE HAVE BEEN OBSERVING OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS, SEEM TO BE GROWING. TO THE ANTI-AMERICAN AND ANTI-CAPITALIST TONE WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY REPORTED ARE NOW ADDED SOME NORTH KOREAN SLOGANS (LIKE JOINT HOSTING OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES) AND ANTI-MILITARIST ELEMENTS. STUDENTS HAVE BEEN REFUSING TO DO COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING, EVEN THOUGH THIS LOSES THEM THEIR EXEMPTION FROM CONSCRIPTION. MANY OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS ARE BECOMING MORE VIOLENT WITH INCREASING USE OF MOLOTOV COCKTAILS AND THE NUMBER OF ARRESTS IS WAY UP ON LAST YEAR. THE WORST INCIDENT TOOK PLACE AT SEOUL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY ON 28 APRIL WHERE TWO STUDENTS SET FIRE TO THEMSELVES. THE POLICE ARE STILL TRYING TO CONTAIN THINGS WITHOUT EXCESSIVE FORCE. WHETHER THE DEMONSTRATIONS WILL DIE AWAY WITH THE APPROACH OF SUMMER, AS IS NORMAL, REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE INCREASINGLY ANXIOUS ABOUT THE CONTINUING READINESS OF STUDENTS FROM MAJOR UNIVERSITIES TO RISK THEIR CAREERS AND MORE.

3. ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE, HOWEVER, THINGS REMAIN SUNNY. THE RETURN OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PARTY FROM THEIR EUROPEAN TOUR HAS GIVEN RISE TO A NUMBER OF MEETINGS OF MINISTERS AND BUSINESS LEADERS TO SEE HOW THE RELATIONSHIP WITH EUROPE ABOUT WHICH SO MUCH WAS SAID CAN BE TAKEN FORWARD. THERE IS MUCH TALK ABOUT THE OPENING UP OF NEW CONTACTS AND THE SENDING AND RECEIVING OF MISSIONS BUT, APART FROM THE CONCESSION

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ON WHISKY, WE HAVE YET TO SEE CONCRETE RESULTS. I BELIEVE THAT ON THIS OCCASION THE KOREANS REALLY MEAN IT WHEN THEY SAY THAT THEY WISH A CLOSER AND MORE EXTENSIVE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH EUROPE, BUT WE SHALL HAVE TO WAIT A WHILE TO SEE WHETHER THESE GOOD INTENTIONS SURMOUNT THE BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES AND CHANGE THE LONGSTANDING HABITS OF KOREAN BUSINESSMEN.

4. PRESIDENT CHUN WILL HOPE THAT THE PRIME MINISTERS VISIT WILL STRENGTHEN THE FRIENDSHIP AND GOODWILL WHICH HE SEES AS HAVING EMERGED FROM HIS VISIT TO LONDON, AND FURTHER IMPROVE HIS IMAGE AT HOME. AGAIN THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR HIM WILL BE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS VISITED KOREA: SHE CAN BE SURE THAT SHE WILL RECEIVE A WARM WELCOME. THE PRESIDENT IS UNLIKELY TO HAVE ANY NEW SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, BUT HE WILL HOPE, I THINK, THAT DIRECT EXPERIENCE OF KOREA'S STRATEGIC SITUATION AND OF THE PROXIMITY OF THE HOSTILE NORTH WILL STRENGTHEN THE SUPPORT WHICH BRITAIN IS PREPARED TO GIVE TO KOREA ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE.

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