

December 1, 1955

Despatch No. 881 from American Consulate General Hong Kong to the Department of State, 'Comments of Chang Kuo-t'ao on Sun Li-jen's Involvement in Plot to Overthrow Chiang Kai-shek'

Citation:

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Summary:

Discusses an alleged plot to overthrow Chiang Kai-shek, with references to a conversation involving Zhang Guotao (Chang Kuo-t'ao) and a representative reportedly connected to Sun Li-jen. The document examines whether this contact indicates genuine involvement by Sun Li-jen or manipulation by government agents and includes speculation about American influence in the political dynamics

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PRIORITY

(Security Classification)

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

793.00/12-155

108

FROM : American Consulate General, 881 Hong Kong

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, D.C. December 1, 1955

REF : DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, D.C. December 1, 1955

DEPARTMENT OF CHINESE AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
1955

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	12-13	CIA-7 USIA-4 ARMY-4 NAVY-3 AIR-3 OCB-2

SUBJECT: Comments of Chang Kuo-t'ao on Sun Li-jen's Involvement in Plot to Overthrow Chiang Kai-shek

Enclosed is a memorandum of conversation regarding an approach made to Chang Kuo-t'ao, allegedly by a representative of Sun Li-jen, to participate in a plot to overthrow Chiang Kai-shek. Chang reasons that whether the man who approached him actually did represent Sun Li-jen or was an agent of the Chinese Government, there was probably a plot in which Sun Li-jen was involved. It should be noted that during another conversation the source of the information expressed implicit faith in Chang's statement that he was contacted as claimed.

The memorandum also reports a belief now current in Hong Kong refugee Chinese circles that Sun Li-jen was definitely involved in an attempt to unseat Chiang Kai-shek, with American interests acting behind the scenes to "master-mind" the plot.

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REVIEWED BY *P. Aylward* DATE *2/9/82*

Enclosure: As stated above

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Action Assigned to
Action Taken *None*

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

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Subject: Conversation with Robert Burton, USIS

Participants: Mr. J. H. Holdridge, Political Section
Mr. Robert Burton, USIS

Although Robert Burton is temporarily working for USIS while that office awaits new personnel, he is continuing to do private research in Hong Kong. His research, which is the history of Chinese Communism as seen through the eyes of former Chinese Communist leader Chang Kuo-t'ao and which is being carried out in collaboration with Chang Kuo-t'ao, puts him in touch with many Chinese in Hong Kong. These Chinese contacts frequently pass on pieces of information of possible political significance to Burton, who in turn makes them available to the Political Section, Burton visited the Political Section on November 23, and in a conversation with me passed on the following items given to him by Chinese friends:

1. Shortly before the Sun Li-jen case broke in Taiwan, Chang Kuo-t'ao was approached by a Chinese who claimed to be a representative of Sun Li-jen and asked if he would be willing to take part in a plot to overthrow Chiang Kai-shek. Chang refused. However, from this approach Chang reasoned that if the representative actually was sent by Sun Li-jen then there certainly was a plot; if the man was in reality an agent of the Nationalist Government or of Chiang Ching-kuo, then the people loyal to Chiang Kai-shek were worried about a plot and were carrying out an investigation. In either case, Chang concluded, there probably was some sort of a plot afoot involving Sun Li-jen.

2. There is a fairly widespread belief among politically conscious and better educated Chinese in Hong Kong that Sun Li-jen was definitely involved in a movement to unseat Chiang Kai-shek. According to the story, the plot against Chiang was "master-minded" by an American Colonel named Lansdale, who had achieved a remarkable record as "kingmaker" in the Far East, first in the Philippines and more recently in South Vietnam. In the Sun Li-jen plot, Colonel Lansdale was thought to have provided the planning, while Sun Li-jen furnished the military force necessary. The purpose behind the plot was to replace Chiang Kai-shek with someone less inflexible and less adamant about returning to the mainland. Burton stated that this story was given to him by four different Chinese sources.

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