

December 16, 1955

Despatch No. 342 from American Embassy Taipei to the Department of State, 'KMT Security Measure'

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Summary:

The despatch outlines reactions to the Kuomintang's "Self-Cleaning Movement," designed to ensure loyalty and combat Communist infiltration. Critics compared the measures to Communist tactics, arguing they undermined morale and party unity, with many members, including senior officials, expressing opposition. President Chiang Kai-shek ultimately moderated his stance, signaling openness to revising the movement in response to widespread concerns. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : AMEMBASSY, Taipei DEC 2, 1955 342

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

REF : Embassy Despatch 285, Nov. 16, 1955

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REVIEWED BY *f. Alford* DATE *1/9/82*

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SUBJECT: KMT Security Measure

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Since the despatch under reference was transmitted the Embassy has noted some reports that indicate the Kuomintang is having difficulty implementing its "self-cleaning movement." The movement apparently is designed to insure the loyalty of KMT members and to unify the factions in the party.

It seems that many members of the KMT regard the movement as an invasion of their privacy and a slur upon their loyalty. They apparently have acquired sufficient courage from the boldness of the editors of the Free China to articulate their opposition in private gatherings of the party leadership. It is now said that President Chiang himself has disassociated himself from it.

Only one newspaper in Taiwan has referred to the Self Cleaning Movement since the editorial appeared in the Free China. The KMT Chung Yang Jih Pao on November 29 printed a defense of the Movement by a minor party member, Lin Kuang-mai. Lin is a junior official with the Provincial Government. He does not hold any executive position in the KMT.

A weekly paper in Hong Kong, Sin Wen Tien Ti, criticized the Movement in its November 26 issue. The paper has been circulating in Taiwan without restriction. Anti-KMT individuals had initially feared that the police might repress papers, such as the Free China and the Sin Wen Tien Ti, containing adverse comments on the movement. Not only has no action been taken against the Free China and the Sin Wen Tien Ti, but it was reported in the latter paper that the President listened sympathetically to a criticism of the Self Cleaning Movement and added his own comment as follows: "I was recently told that many members do not approve of the movement. I have read the editorial in the Free China. I expect that all of you will study the problem carefully." The commentary in the Hong Kong paper and Mr. Lin's defense of the movement are enclosed for the Department's reference.

Lin's defense rests on six points which may be summarized as follows:

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1. The Movement provides a political education with a high combat value.
2. It raises fighting morale.
3. It helps members exchange experiences and information with and about Communism.
4. It provides a health check-up of the KMT.
5. It is comparable to a religious revival. It is a manifestation of loyalty.
6. It immunizes the KMT against Communist infection.

Lin said the "Editor of the Free China has no knowledge of the significance of the movement and his arguments are not based on facts but are full of malignancy and prejudice." He also said "the Self Cleaning Movement is more or less a domestic affair of the Kuomintang." He denied the Free China charges that the KMT was using Communist methods to protect itself against Communism.

The Hong Kong weekly said "those who take a firm opposition stand against the movement, including the majority of the members of the Legislative and Control Yuans, declared that the Self Cleaning Movement is no different from the Communist 'self expose' and that the Kuomintang, which is strongly anti-Communist should never identify itself with the Communists." The paper said also the practice of informing against one another "would have a most disastrous effect on party morale."

A copy of this despatch has been sent to Hong Kong.

For the Ambassador:

Paul W. Meyer
 First Secretary of Embassy

Enclosures:

1. Article by Lin Kuang-mai
2. Article from Sin Wen Tien Ti

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Chung Yang Jih Pao, November 29, 1955

IS SELF CLEANING MOVEMENT REALLY UNDESIRABLE?

(A special article by Mr. LIN Kuang-mai)

I have read the editorial in the Free China, criticizing the Self Cleaning Movement as very undesirable. I must say that the editor of the periodical has no knowledge of the significance of the movement and his arguments are not based on facts but are full of malignancy and prejudice.

The Self Cleaning Movement is more or less a domestic affair of the Kuomintang. But as it has now been misunderstood, I would like, as a member of the party, to report to the public my impression of the movement and to point out the fallacies of the Free China regarding the movement.

The Self Cleaning Movement, a well conceived idea put into practice, serves many purposes.

(1) It provides political education with a high combat value. In the movement, every member is required to carefully study a set of instructions composed of three chapters under the titles of "Know Your Enemy", "Eradicate Communist Agents" and "Put Self Cleaning into Practice". These instructions are intended to help each party member analyse communist ideology and behavior, review his own accomplishments and failures, and chart his future work. Should this kind of progressive political education be considered "undesirable", which every political party is duty bound to provide for its members?

(2) It serves to boost the fighting morale of the party members and remind them of their great task ahead. If we still have confidence that our brethren on the mainland will rise up against their oppressors at the time of our counter attack, we must make adequate preparations. The "Mainland Connections Investigation" has a dual purpose: To prevent communist infiltration and to pave the way for our counter attack.

(3) It is a means of exchanging experiences and knowledge in our anti communist struggle. In the movement, each member is required to report his personal experience with communism, and to reveal whether he had ever been contacted, persecuted or held prisoner by the communists. This will give the party members a better understanding of communist treachery. It has the same psychological value as books and articles written by people who have personal experience with the Chinese communists. As a matter of fact, the Free China recently published an article entitled "I Came Out of Red China."

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(4) The movement is a health checkup of the Kuomintang. It does not end with the filling out of forms and questionnaires. There will also be lectures, studies, discussions, selective examinations, commendations and reprimands. No individual will be so foolish as to ignore his own health by self-deceit, and it is an unhealthy idea to believe, as did the Free China that a periodical health checkup will impair one's self respect.

(5) The movement is comparable in a way to a religious revival. To fill out the forms is nothing but a manifestation of loyalty. All governments demand loyalty from their nationals and such a demand is in no way against humanity. There are loyalty investigations in the United States, the champion of democracy. It is therefore entirely unfounded for the Free China to say that the requirement of filling out a few questionnaires is like forcing people to commit self-reproach and self-abuse.

(6) The movement may also be considered as a sensible process to immunize the party against possible poisonous infection of communism. Kuomintang has had over 30 years of experience in combating communist subversion, and it knows how to guard itself against the spreading of such infectious diseases.

So much for my personal impression of the Self Cleaning Movement. Now let us consider some of the exaggerations and prejudices which are so apparent in the editorial of the Free China.

First of all, the Free China declared that the movement required each Kuomintang member to fill out fifteen sets of forms. As a matter of fact, only two sets of forms are required; they are divided into five categories, totaling not more than ten to fifteen pages. To turn fifteen sheets into fifteen sets of forms is certainly an exaggeration. As to the Self Cleaning Declaration, each party member needs only to sign his name. To read through the whole thing may not be ^{very} simple but is certainly not as difficult and complicated as the Free China claims.

The editorial also said it was next to impossible for any one to carefully and fully fill out these forms. That is not correct either. There are instructions on how to fill out the questionnaires. One needs only to return the blank form if he has nothing to say. As to the matter of loyalty, all the members of Kuomintang will consider it an extreme insult if the Free China implies that it is impossible for all of them to be loyal to the party.

The Free China has used such exclusive phrases as "a general feeling of discontent," and "no one does not react unfavorably" in its description of the reaction of the Kuomintang members toward the movement. Perhaps the editor of the Free China got that impression after interviewing several Kuomintang members. But can

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this handful of people, be considered representative of the entire party membership? In any case, the majority of the Kuomintang members in whose loyalty we have not the slightest shadow of doubt, do not find it intolerable to fill out a few forms.

In the editorial, the magazine also asserted that each Kuomintang member feels that the party organization has lost confidence in him, and that it is creating a tendency of self abuse and mutual distrust among party members. It also declared that the movement is undemocratic. As a matter of fact, that is purely unfounded speculation. The movement is carried out in all echelons of Kuomintang and every member, regardless of his rank or position, is to take part in it on an equal footing. There is nothing undemocratic about it, and there is no reason for mutual distrust between the party organization and the members or among the members themselves.

As to the Purge Information Form, the Free China identified it with the concept of "the son testifying against his father for stealing a goat" which is an act against human nature, and declared that such a system will only discourage new membership and cause party disintegration. But as far as I know, the target of such purge information is carefully outlined in the instructions and the submission of such information is strictly regulated by laws. Besides, no party member is required by force to fill out the form. Furthermore, since the informant's name, address and party membership number must be supplied and the information given is subject to close investigation, there is no chance for any individual to utilize the system to prey on some one for his personal gain.

We are not at all clear of the exact motive of the Free China, which is apparent ingorant of the true meaning and significance of the Self-Cleaning Movement, in raising this issue with such exaggeration and prejudice. But history will prove that the Kuomintang will emerge stronger than ever after the movement, that not a single party member will desert his organization as a result of the movement and that who is telling the truth.

Finally, we must say that we do not at all agree with the Free China in its assertion that it is utterly undesirable to combat communism with communist methods. In fighting against our enemy, we must be realistic, and we must acknowledge what is superior in our enemy. The Chinese have an old saying: "To pierce through your shield with your own spear." The lesson we get from this proverb is that often times, we need to fight our enemy with his methods. The communists are using modern weapons for aggression; should we not use the same for self defense and counter attack? They use subversion and infiltration to usurp power; should we not take counter-intelligence measures to consolidate our own security? To deny ourselves of methods which have been adopted by our enemy with effect and which are not at great variance with human rights is

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hypocritic. At the beginning of its editorial, the Free China admitted that the Self-Cleaning Movement is quite different from the communist methods of "self-expose" and "self-criticism." Yet it went on to say that the movement is communistic in nature. It further threatened that the movement unless immediately stopped, will result in grave consequences. But the fact is that the movement is rapidly coming to a satisfactory conclusion and the party is strong and united as ever.

The Free China stated that "the future of the nation is now dependent on that of Kuomintang." We do not know what is the implication, but every member of the party should accept the challenge.

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Sin Wen Tien Ti, November 26, 1955

COMMOTION CAUSED BY THE SELF-CLEANING MOVEMENT

During the last two months, much dispute has been going on within the Kuomintang regarding the "Self Cleaning Movement" which requires each party member to sign a "Self Cleaning Declaration" and fill out fifteen different forms. The most important forms are "Party Member Self Cleaning Form", "Mainland Connections Form" and "Purge Information Form". To completely fill out the first form would be a more exasperating process than to write an autobiography; one has to indicate even what sort of books he keeps and what sort of friends and acquaintances he has. In the "Mainland Connections Form", he has to list all his friends and relatives who are on the mainland and indicate whether their services may be utilized in the event of a counter attack. In the "Purge Information Form", he is required to supply information on his relatives, friends, acquaintances who may be of a shady character in order to facilitate the suppression of communist agents.

Each party member is given a set of these forms to be completed within a stipulated period of time, at the end of which the heads of the party unit to which he belongs will call upon him in person to collect the forms.

The movement has caused two distinctly opposite reactions. According to those who support the movement, the greatest setback in the Kuomintang in the past has been the lack of unity. In this Self Cleaning Movement, the party will be able to have a clear and correct evaluation of the ability, capability and proficiency of its members, if each member will faithfully answer the questionnaire and commit all his connections to the party. This will greatly enhance the strength of the party. In particular, information supplied on the potential influence of their relatives and friends on the mainland and on the suspicious characteristics of those on Taiwan will have much to do with the counter attack and the defense of the democratic bastion.

On the other hand, those who take a firm opposition stand against the movement, including the majority of the members of the Legislative and Control Yuans, declared that the Self Cleaning Movement is no different from the communist "self expose" and that the Kuomintang, which is strongly anti-communist should never identify itself with the communists. Besides, these forms to be filled out by the party members may easily backfire once they are not handled properly. This view was shared by many members of Kuomintang.

The movement, which is fundamentally a domestic affair of the Kuomintang, did not attract much public attention until an editorial appeared in the November 1, 1955, issue of the Free China magazine

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entitled "Self Cleaning Movement is Undesirable." In a desperate tone, the magazine warned that the movement, unless immediately abolished, will cause party disintegration and subsequent complete collapse of Free China. It stated that we are dependent on the leadership of Kuomintang in our anti-communist and anti-aggression campaign and, since the fate of China is tied in with that of Kuomintang, every man has a right to voice his opinion regarding any significant development within the party. Like a bombshell, the editorial caused great consternation both within and without the Kuomintang and aggravated the dispute between the supporting and opposing factions. Party authorities tried to rush party members for the submission of the filled out forms while many of the latter defied party order with their apparently logical arguments.

Some time in the middle of November 1955, the KMT Central Committee invited the Kuomintang members of the Legislative Yuan and Control Yuan to two separate dinner parties with a view to clarifying the situation. All those invited boldly expressed their sentiments. One of them, a Mr. Chen, over 70 years of age, who had been a member of Tung Ming Hui (predecessor of Kuomintang), declared while pounding his chest in great despair: "I am one of the old and useless party veterans. We had followed Dr. Sun in the revolution and will probably follow him to the grave very soon. Yet we are now required to go through a self cleaning movement in which we are to expose not only ourselves but also our grandfathers. Are you presuming that we are not loyal enough, still undependable?" In addition, other arguments were also advanced in disfavor of the movement: If we are faithfully disclose the names of our relatives and friends on the mainland and our connections with them as required by the movement, who will guarantee that such information will be well guarded against communist espionage? We would be betraying them to the communists if some of these forms fall into communist hands. A member at the dinner party cited an incident about a woman teacher of a certain middle school in Taiwan. As a party member, she received a set of the forms to fill out, and she did not know what to do. Her parents and brothers were still on the mainland. If she were to give their names and addresses, she would probably betray them to the communists. If not, she would be defying party orders. Torn between party discipline and filial duty, she almost became a mental wreck. Regarding the Purge Information Form, they argued that filling out the form was just like supplying secret information against their own friends and relatives. Villainous elements within the party will take this opportunity to take revenge against their personal enemies. In such a case, would they be held responsible for false accusation as prescribed by the law? In any case, this practice of informing against one another within the party would have a most disastrous effect on party morale.

At a certain meeting of the Kuomintang officials just three days after the dinner parties for the Legislative Yuan and Control Yuan

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members, President Chiang made a special reference to the self cleaning movement in his speech. He said: "I am informed that many members have expressed their adverse opinions regarding the movement which is sponsored by the party headquarters. These opinions are worthy of serious consideration and it is hoped that all of us will carefully study the problem." Although there is no indication that the party leadership has made any decision on the matter, it is clear that President Chiang himself has not insisted on the enforcement of the movement.

On November 15, 1955, the Kuomintang held a regular meeting at the official residence of the President. At the meeting, Mr. Liang Han-chao, President of the China Broadcasting Corporation made a speech with great emotion. He said that the self cleaning movement, which is being carried out in the Kuomintang, does not conform with the traditional spirit of the party. Kuomintang is founded on mutual love based on "struggle and liquidation." The self cleaning movement, a 100 percent replica of communist methods of struggle and liquidation, should never be allowed to take place in the Kuomintang. Now that both party members and outsiders are watching closely to see if the movement will continue or not, I earnestly hope our leadership will guide us with his wise and enlightening instructions. The President frequently nodded his approval during Liang's speech and later addressed the group saying, "Mr. Liang is quite right in what he said. I was recently told that many party members do not approve of the movement. I have read the editorial in the Free China. I also mentioned the subject yesterday and I expect that all of you will study the problem carefully."

The above news spread quickly after the meeting and all people both within and without the Kuomintang rejoiced over the wise decision made by President Chiang which will no doubt insure our final victory in the anti-communist anti-aggression campaign.

Translated by PHLee

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