

April 1, 1958

Despatch No. 571 from American Embassy Taipei to the Department of State, 'Kuomintang Concern over Certain Tendencies toward Disintegration of Party Discipline'

Citation:

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Summary:

The despatch examines concerns within the Kuomintang (KMT) about the weakening of party discipline, driven by ideological shifts questioning the balance between revolutionary goals and democratic principles. It highlights fears that personal freedom among members undermines the party's unity and effectiveness, endangering the Five Power Constitution and anti-communist efforts. The leadership expresses a commitment to restoring party cohesion through self-examination and renewed adherence to core revolutionary values. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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SUBJECT: Kuomintang Concern over Certain Tendencies Toward Disintegration of Party Discipline.
Direction to DC/R file

The Embassy transmits a copy in translation of an editorial which appeared on March 13, 1958 in the official Kuomintang (KMT) newspaper Chung Yang Jih Pao.

Summary of Editorial. The editorial refers to two earlier periods of disintegration, the first after the 1911 revolution and the second between 1947 and 1948. Today a new stage of disintegration has appeared. This is attributed to two ideologies which will bring about self-destruction if not recognized. One is the concept that revolution and democracy are mutually incompatible and that the practice of democracy has been mistaken as an abandonment of the revolution. The other is the belief that the Constitutional power is superior to and separate from the power of a political party. "If the organization of the KMT is disintegrated in favor of party members' personal freedom, the Five Power System will become a mess and there will be no stability in the political situation, to say nothing of the anti-Communist and resist Russia campaign as well as the counter-attack and national salvation".

COMMENT: This is one of the bluntest KMT statements to date on the question of weakening Party control over its members. It is added confirmation of the deep concern of the KMT about certain aspects of Party discipline. The seriousness with which the view is held is indicated in the final lines of the editorial: "...we find it difficult to talk with the comrades with sweet words. The writing stops here, but the heart remains heavy."

The most conspicuous recent instances of defiance of Party discipline are the decision of the Control Yuan to impeach the Premier, the strong pressure and criticism of cabinet personalities and policies by the Legislative Yuan, and the actions by some local councils in rejecting certain KMT-sponsored candidates for Council Speakers and deputies. In each case the KMT had a clear nominal majority in the membership of the bodies concerned. At the same time many of the government officials most heavily under fire have been firmly established members of the KMT hierarchy. Another irritant has been the recent local elections where from many indications the KMT did not make as impressive a showing as it had expected. Finally, the stripping by the independent press, particularly Free China fortnightly, and the anti-KMT anti-Communist press of

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Hong Kong, has raised the fear that, given the fact of some loosening up of Party loyalties, this situation will be actively exploited by political forces hostile to the Party leadership.

The threat to Party unity exists on two levels. The first threat is directed at the lower levels of the democratic processes and the other at the higher level of the Constitutional Five-Power System of Government.

To meet the threat on the lower level, the KMT has turned close attention to the institution of local elective bodies and offices throughout the Province of Taiwan. It has directed powerful support to KMT-sponsored candidates in these elections in order to maintain strong Party control. In most instances this well-organized and directed effort has been successful. The KMT has achieved and maintained a large majority in most elected bodies and offices. The present concern may reflect a feeling that in spite of this success there is a tendency on the part of many KMT members to attach more importance to their position in terms of local self-interests rather than the basic revolutionary concepts of the KMT regarding national liberation. This editorial blast by the Chung Yang Jih Pao gives a clear warning that the KMT leadership recognizes that some shift has been taking place and is determined to try to re-establish party discipline and to maintain the proper revolutionary spirit. At the local levels the KMT has considerable means for accomplishing its purposes. It is already apparent that heavy KMT pressures have been brought to bear on those newly elected councilmen who voted against KMT-sponsored candidates. It is reported that the KMT members of Taichung Hsien have been carefully investigated for the break in party discipline. Other efforts are being made to force the withdrawal of certain KMT council speakers who were elected over KMT-sponsored candidates. The KMT can also hand out disciplinary punishment and if need be expel recalcitrants from the Party. Furthermore, the KMT can refuse to support disloyal members when the next election comes up. In summary the KMT is unhappy with party discipline in the local elective bodies, but has the capability at this level to take measures to remedy this situation.

At the higher level, involving the Party members in the Legislative and Control Yuans in particular, the KMT is faced with a serious dilemma. Chung Yang Jih Pao bluntly calls on KMT members who are public officials not to use the Constitution as an alibi for defying the Party. The weakness in the Party position, however, stems from the fact that it has no effective means of punishment. The members of the Legislative and Control Yuans were elected on the mainland and no further elections are considered feasible until after a return to the mainland. Consequently, it would do the KMT no good to expel members from the Party, for this would only make relationships more difficult than before. There is no doubt that the KMT members in the Legislative and Control Yuans recognize the strategic position they hold. They probably also feel that in the past year they have greatly increased the prestige of their respective bodies, which reflects on them as well. They presumably feel they have nothing to lose by pursuing their present course. The KMT can exert pressure by persuasion, but that is about as far as it can safely go. President CHIANG and other high KMT officials have had long conferences with KMT members

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in both Legislative and Control Yuan: in a bid to reconcile differences and bring about greater Party harmony. But this did not prevent an assault in the Legislative Yuan on two KMT cabinet members, Finance Minister, P. Y. HSU, and the Minister of Interior, WANG Teh-p'u, both of whom have subsequently resigned.


While the Chung Yang Jih Pao uses the term "disintegration", this does not necessarily mean any real disintegration of the KMT in the foreseeable future. The KMT certainly feels its position of leadership threatened; however, there is every likelihood that urgent consideration is being given to various ways of fending off the threat. There is no likelihood that the KMT is about to fold up and fade away.

ACTION REQUESTED: Department please pass copy to AmConsul HONG KONG and CINCPAC POLAD.

For the Ambassador:



David L. Osborn
Counselor of Embassy for
Political Affairs

Enclosure: 

As stated.



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TRANSLATION

Editorial
Chung Yang Jih Pao
March 13, 1958

Vigilance over KMT Disintegration Tendency

On the occasion of the anniversary of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's death today, all members of the Chinese Kuomintang should solemnly review their shortcomings and strive toward the rejuvenation of the national revolution. As we know, the anti-Communist and resisting Russia struggle calls for an effort to bring about the unification of men of benevolence and persons of determination at home and overseas with the revolutionary masses on the mainland. But the main force which is leading the national revolution and which is dedicated to the national salvation and reconstruction still lie in us, the Chinese Kuomintang, which, regardless of all hardship and all sacrifice, should forcibly push the struggle all way through. There is no reason whatsoever for we Kuomintang comrades to be content or proud of ourselves, nor any reason for us to lose courage or confidence.

The teachings Dr. Sun Yat-sen bequeathed to Kuomintang members ask them to put aside personal freedom and to fight for the freedom of the Chinese people as a whole. It is clearly explained in his letter from Tokyo to the comrades in the South China sea, which reads:

"The organization of Tung-meng-hui (Chinese Brotherhood Society or Kuomintang) recruited comrades under the principle in which they were merely required to have a common faith while the purity of their quality was neglected. At that particular time, they were numerous in number and majestic in influence, but among them, opinions were varied, and a uniform pace was lacking. The spirit of solidarity and self-government was non-existent; the virtue of obedience to orders and instructions was absent. Leaders of the party were like puppets, and the members were like loose sand. When assault came from without, they were immediately crushed. In time of distress, they showed unconcern one to another. When the party was first founded, many indulged in a lavish desire for freedom and equality, because they did not know that a party member in relation to the party is different from the people in relation to their government. The people may ask the Government for equality and freedom when they feel like it, but if every party member does the same with his party, no party can ever exist long in the world. A member of a party must sacrifice his own equality and freedom and seek equality and

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and freedom for the people. Anybody who contributes himself to a revolutionary party for saving the country and the people should place the freedom and equality of the people before his personal freedom and equality. To the party leaders, he should obey orders, to the people, he should sacrifice his own privilege."

In the light of these words of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, we can well imagine what a lamentable tragedy was evolved from the tendency of party disintegration after the Hsin-hai (1911) Revolution. For this reason, Dr. Sun gave an enlightened explanation on party discipline and organized the Chinese Revolutionary Party, following which it was possible to undertake the punitive expedition against Yuan (Yuan Shih-kai) and the campaign for restoring the Provisional Constitution.

The tragedy tending to party disintegration happened for the second time between 1947 and 1948, about which a statement is unnecessary as the memory is fresh. But the mentioning of result is worthwhile. During the period between 1950 and 1951, after the fall of the mainland, our Tsungtsai (Director-General), with his determination and resolution, began to reform the party. He has reconstructed Taiwan from the stage of safeguarding Taiwan into a base for counterattack and national restoration.

Today, we have to say that beginning in the recent year the tragedy of party disintegration has come on the stage for the third time. A comprehensive review of last year's government and party affairs shows that, although a danger not as grievous as that of 1947-48, this disintegration seems to be surpassing its predecessor in queerness. We should solemnly say that if within the party, "opinions are vary, uniform pace is lacking, the spirit of solidarity and self-government is non-existent, and the virtue of obedience to order and instructions is absent," then the consequence of "when assault come from without, they will be immediately crushed" is inevitable.

The tendency toward party disintegration originates from the following two ideologies. If the party comrades who are beguiled by these two ideologies cannot awaken themselves, it is no less than bringing about their self-destruction. The two ideologies are:

1. Revolution and democracy are regarded as two things intolerable to each other; the practice of democracy is mistaken as an abandonment of the revolution, without realizing that the democratic and constitutional Government of this Republic comes from sixty years of national revolution. If the party loses the revolutionary spirit and shelves the revolutionary organization, then the Constitution and the democratic system will become as

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void as a shell and will be certainly destroyed by the Chinese Communists and their fellow-travellers, if opportunity permits.

2. Political party and the Constitution are regarded as two things intolerable to each other. There is a feeling that the exercise of Constitutional power should be above political party's commitment, and that commitment by a political party means the loss of Constitutional freedom, without knowing that a political party must be relied upon as the internal actuating power for coordination and cooperation in the advancement of a democratic system and the progress of constitutional Government. Furthermore, the Constitution merely provides that judges, when independently exercising the power of trial, and persons who are designated to exercise the power of examination in accordance with law, should be above party or faction, but the other Yuans of the Government are not. In other words, the organization and activities of a political party is recognized by the Constitution, and public functionaries who affiliate to a political party should not hold the Constitution to defy the commitment of the party. If the organization of the Kuomintang Party is disintegrated in favor of the party members' personal freedom, the Five Power System will become a mess, and there will be no stability of political situation, leave alone the anti-Communism and resisting Russia campaign as well as the counterattack and national salvation. If this come true, will not it be utmostly agreeable to the Chinese Communists and the fellow-travellers of the neutralists?

The development of the disintegration tendency during the last year has added the greatest shame to the comrades of this party. The party members pin their faith to the Three People's Principles and the Five Power Constitution. During the last eight years, despite the gravest distress the nation has experienced, the Kuomintang has exhausted all its efforts toward the reconstruction of Taiwan into a model province. Meanwhile, it has braved all hardship in preserving the well founded Five Power Constitution. Unexpectedly, the political developments in the recent year have invited ironic criticisms from outside which even implicate the fundamentals of the theory of the Five Power Constitution. This is a great shame for the comrades of this party and necessitates their self-examination. However, a closer examination into the cause shows that it grows from no other than the aforementioned two ideologies which have penetrated into the party as a plague in the form of disintegration over which an utmost vigilance by the party members is paramount.

As said in an old poem, "Honest advice is presented in less sweet phrase." Presenting honest advice on the occasion com-

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memorating the anniversary of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's death, we find
it is difficult to talk with the comrades with sweet words.
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