



April 7, 1958

Despatch No. 590 from American Embassy Taipei to the Department of State, 'KMT Considers Remedies for Slack Discipline in Legislative Yuan'

Citation:

"Despatch No. 590 from American Embassy Taipei to the Department of State, 'KMT Considers Remedies for Slack Discipline in Legislative Yuan'", April 7, 1958, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Case Number F-1979-01277, US Department of State Virtual Reading Room.
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/301274>

Summary:

The document discusses challenges faced by the Kuomintang (KMT) in maintaining political discipline and unity within Taiwan's Legislative Yuan and Control Yuan. Although opposition does not threaten government stability, there are calls for reforms, stricter adherence to constitutional procedures, and frustration over the lack of meaningful policymaking channels. The KMT plans to address internal dissent through a registration and purge of disloyal members, alongside the establishment of a new Policy Board to restore order, though concerns remain about the long-term effectiveness of these measures

.This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Chun & Jane Chiu Family Foundation

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

AIR POUCH

CONFIDENTIAL DEPARTMENT OF STATE DO NOT TYPE IN THIS SPACE

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCHED BY

FROM : Embassy, Taipei

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

REF :

OFFICE OF CHINESE AFFAIRS
APR 1 4 1958
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

CLASSIFICATION (S)
DECLASSIFICATION TAKEN
RELEASE DENIED
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

15 For Dept. Use Only	ACTION REC'D 4/10	DEPT. F OTHER 0	RM/R-2 IRC-8 P-5 U/O-P-1-U/O-1 EUR-54/20/8
			CIA-12 OSD-4 OCB-1 USA-10 ARMY-4 NAVY-3

SUBJECT: KMT CONSIDERS REMEDIES FOR SLACK DISCIPLINE IN LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Direction to DC/R file

SUMMARY: Opposition to Government and Party in the legislative branch of Government, while not threatening governmental stability or jeopardizing basic policies, continues to evoke concern. The Kuomintang is unable to enforce discipline on its majorities in the Legislative and Control Yuans, at least with regard to day-to-day business. The Party "small groups" in the Legislative Yuan continue to meet, but no longer serve to produce Party unity, or to convey to higher levels the advice and opinions of lower-ranking Party members. Serious discussions of policy are more likely to take place in informal groups formed without much regard for party affiliation. The strength of opposition to Government and Party varies from individual to individual. Some desire to see the KMT disestablished. The majority remain loyal to the President, and most accept the need for a "special role" for the KMT, but they desire reforms and "house-cleaning", and a stricter adherence to constitutional procedures. They are restive under the present system, which they feel denies them an adequate and appropriate role in policy formulation. At the bottom of this situation is the Party's lack of effective and graduated pressures for use on the legislators; the Party can threaten expulsion, with considerable effect in individual cases, but effectiveness declines if the threat is used too often or against too many people. The Party is now reportedly planning to carry out a registration of loyal Party members in the legislative branch and among top officials of the executive, accompanied by a purge of "disloyal" members; this step will reportedly be followed by the establishment of a new "Policy Board" which will work closely with the Party Standing Committee. While this remedy will probably achieve its purpose at least temporarily, depending on how many members accept registration, it will not eliminate opposition, and may even, over the long run, strengthen it, unless some additional measures are worked out to restore political harmony.

Official Concern:

On March 20, in the course of a courtesy call on CHANG Tao-fan (張道藩) President of the Legislative Yuan, Ambassador Drumright inquired as to the party affiliation of the members of the Yuan. Mr. Chang said that approximately 80 percent of the 527 members now in Taiwan are Kuomintang members, the rest being Democratic Socialists, Young China Party members, or independent. However, Chang commented ruefully, it should not be thought that this predominance

DLO:sporn:elc
REPORTER

CONFIDENTIAL

ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

THIS DOCUMENT MUST BE RETURNED TO THE NM/R CENTRAL FILES

793.00/4-758

CONFIDENTIAL FILE

CONFIDENTIAL

(Classification)

Page 2 of

Encl. No.

Disp. No. 590

From Taipei 4/7/58

of KMT members indicated any lack of opposition within the Yuan. Some of the strongest opposition comes from the ranks of the Party members. This situation created one of the worst problems of his job. As a member of the ruling Party (Chang is a member of the Kuomintang Central Committee), he feels duty bound to support the party position. However, as President of the Legislative Yuan, he has to maintain an impartial position.

COMMENT: Chang's statement was a comparatively mild characterization of the difficulty in the Legislative Yuan; officials of the Executive Yuan speak with some heat of the "irresponsibility" and "obstructionism" of the Legislative Yuan. At the same time, the depth of official concern over the situation in the Legislative and Control Yuans should not be exaggerated. Most of the higher officials in the executive branch regard the opposition to the Government now being encountered in the legislative branch as a major annoyance; it is not considered a threat to the stability of the Government, or to the continuity of basic policies. There is somewhat more concern on the part of the Kuomintang leadership over the slackening of Party discipline.

Organizational Symptoms of Disunity:

Instances of opposition by the Legislative Yuan to policies and measures proposed by the Executive Yuan, and strong attacks on individual members of the Cabinet, have occurred fairly frequently in the past few months. Such instances obviously could not occur if the KMT were able to maintain party discipline within its sizeable majority in the Yuan. The lack of Party discipline is reflected also on the organizational level. Many of the KMT members still attend the Party "small group" meetings once or twice a month. Theoretically these "cell" meetings should serve the purpose of maintaining party unity in regard to specific issues, as well as providing a channel through which opinions of the legislators can be brought to the attention of higher levels in the Party. Actually, according to Legislators who participate in the "small group" meetings, they no longer serve either purpose. WANG Tsun-ying (王雋英), for example, a female legislator who considers herself a member in good standing of the KMT, says that to the extent the "small groups" have any bearing on political opinion within the Legislative Yuan, it is to bring together groups of people of common background or place of origin so that they can agree upon a common viewpoint within the "small group" without reference to the position of the Party as a whole. Miss Wang says that the most important political groups within the Yuan are the "clubs" and factions, some of them most informal, which are formed without too much regard for party affiliation. She herself intends to join one of the "clubs" as soon as she has gotten reacquainted with the situation (she returned recently from a course of study in psychology at Columbia University), and has decided which group best represents her own thinking.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(Classification)

Page 3 of
Encl. No. _____
Desp. No. 590
From Taipei 4/7/58

HSIEH Jen-chao (謝任全), another Party member of rather moderate views and a supporter of Vice President Chien Ch'eng identifies the more important groupings within the KMT majority in the Legislative Yuan as follows: the San-min-chu-i Youth Corps group, comprising approximately 180 persons connected with Vice President CH'EN Ch'eng's Youth Corps on the mainland; the "Party" (tang) group, including most of the older "CC Clique" members, and numbering 120 persons; the "neutral society" (chung she), of about 40 members; and the "Monday-Thursday Association" (i ssu hui), a group of 25 or thirty persons who meet informally on the days preceding the interpellation sessions of the Legislative Yuan. However, Hsieh cautioned that the groupings are not hard and fast. Particularly within the two larger groups, there are numbers of informal groups and factions.

The Lack of Means for Enforcing Party Discipline:

One of the basic reasons for the inability of the KMT to enforce discipline in the Legislative Yuan is the lack of effective graduated pressures or inducements to bring to bear on individual members. Their tenure of office is secure for the indefinite future. Their salaries cannot be stopped. They can cause the executive branch as much or more trouble than the executive can cause them. LI Ch'ing-li (李慶展), an old-time Party member of moderate liberal views, sums up the situation this way: the only way the Party has of lining up the support of Party members for a particular measure is to convince the individual Party members that the Party position is right, and is in the true national interest. Li personally feels the Party generally means well, but it is frequently misinformed. Instead of arriving at a position on the basis of the facts, and consulting the opinion of experts in the Yuan before taking a position (Li is an expert on agricultural matters), the Party tends to take decisions as though it had in fact the means to demand blind obedience from the Party members. This is certainly no longer the case. Many of the Legislators do not understand the facts of the legislation upon which they are required to pass. In deciding their vote, they are as apt to accept the advice of the man who is sitting next to them in the Chamber as they are to accept the dictates of the Party. In Li's opinion, and in that of other "moderate" liberals, it is quite proper for the Party to have a special position in China's present transitional stage; however, they resent "high-handed" tactics of the Party which deny them their proper voice in national affairs.

COMMENT: The Party and the Government are not entirely without pressures for use on members of the Legislative Yuan; most members would be reluctant to accept dismissal from the Party, for example. Also, the Party and Government still symbolize and embody the hopes of all Free Chinese for an eventual return to the mainland; no Yuan member would want to risk being pointed out as an opponent of return to the mainland. This is one reason why it is unlikely the present situation in the legislative branch will go so far as to threaten the stability and basic objectives of the GRC. However, these weapons are of much too large caliber to be used in the day-to-day conduct of business.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(Classification)

Page 4 of

Encl. No.

Disp. No. 590

From Taipei 4/7/58

Further, if the threat of expulsion from the Party is applied against too large a number of persons, it loses its effect; there is comfort, as well as safety, in numbers.

"Constitutionalism":

Li Ch'ing-li sees the present situation as an eddy in the historical interplay between the two main currents in the Chinese ideological reform movement. Ever since the time of LIANG Ch'i-chao and K'ANG Yu-wei, there have been forces in China impelling it toward the development of a political structure along authoritarian lines—first in the direction of Meiji Japan, later in the direction of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The main current, the one favored by SUN Yat-sen as the result of his early experience in America and England, has been moving in the direction of western-style democracy. However, in time of crisis, the attraction of the doctrine that China needs a "hero-leader" as a concrete focus of national loyalties has greatly increased. The Government's arrival in Taiwan was of course at such a time of crisis, and one result was a new impediment in the way of progress toward constitutional democracy. Li is sure President Chiang would like to resume progress in this direction, but does not quite know how to go about it without risking instability. Li believes some of those nearest the President (he says he does not mean only Chiang Ching-kuo, whose main defect is his lack of familiarity with Western institutions) keep the true facts from the President, and play upon his fears that "excessive" democracy would impair the unity necessary for defeating the Communists.

In Li's opinion, the closer Free China comes to returning to the mainland, (he himself anticipates a collapse on the mainland within 3 years) the more imperative it is to strengthen the constitution. "When we go back it will be in a situation of popular revolt, and not by means of a frontal assault. Other leaders and other political forces will have emerged on the mainland. We will not be able to count on a welcome for our leaders, our Government, or our Party. The only piece of baggage we can be sure of taking back with us is our Constitution, which is the only one freely adopted by the whole people of China".

COMMENT: The view that the issue of constitutionalism is involved in the present interplay between Party, Executive, and legislative areas of the Government, and the determination to "protect" the Constitution, appear to be a common denominator in the thinking of many members of the Legislative Yuan, despite differences in opinions and in intensity of feeling on other issues involved.

The "Radical" View

There are at least a few members of the Legislative Yuan who maintain that further progress toward democracy cannot be realized under the present one-party form of government, and who advocate the immediate disestablishment of the KMT. CH'I Shih-ying (齊世英), formerly a prominent figure in the "CC Clique"

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(Classification)

Page 5 of

Encl. No.

Disp. No. 590

From Taipei 4/7/58

within the KMT, expelled a couple of years ago on the ostensible grounds of having broken party discipline by opposing an increase in the electric power rates; WANG Shih-hsien (王世賢), a Democratic Socialist; LIU Po-k'un (劉博寬), a former member of the KMT who alleges his purge resulted from the discovery by Party "spies" of a book on political science in the margin of one page of which he had noted "If the President had understood this point, we would not have lost the mainland"; HSIA T'ao-sheng, a member of the Young China Party; and CH'ENG She-wo (成舍我), an independent, publisher on the mainland of Shih-chieh Jih Pao (World Daily), for example, are all for their respective reasons bitterly opposed to the present one-man, one-party rule. The minor-party members are, of course, motivated in part by the anticipation of important roles for themselves and their parties if a multi-party system is instituted. According to them the Government's claim that there is freedom of assembly and freedom to organize political parties in Taiwan is untrue. Ch'eng is most bitter against the Government because of what he considers its arbitrary control of the press, mainly through the system of allocation of newsprint.

All the persons named above are in agreement that the Government and Party are cynically using the promise of a counterattack as a means of maintaining their position of power and to justify the denial of basic political freedoms. All of them say they would gladly make any sacrifice necessary to realize a counterattack, but they state categorically that President Chiang will not under any circumstances launch a counterattack unless he has been given absolute assurances of full American support. They argue that in any case the sacrifice of political freedoms is not necessary to prepare for a counterattack. They regard political freedom, on the contrary, as an indispensable component of the political strength which alone can enable the GRC to exploit a revolt on the mainland.

COMMENT: The principal difference between the views of the "radicals" and those of the more moderate "defenders of the constitution" is the greater bitterness of the former toward the Party and Government, which leads them so far as to reject the leadership of the President himself. The bitterness seems to stem in most cases from individual frustrations and grievances. In their absence, most members of the Legislative Yuan seem to retain some degree of loyalty to the President, whatever their opinions on other matters.

Measures to Deal with the Problem:

Among the members of the Legislative Yuan, the impression is widespread that President Chiang, during his recent vacation at Sun Moon Lake, gave consideration to the problem of how to restore Party discipline in the legislative branch of government. According to Ch'i Shih-ying, the President even considered a plan to split the KMT into three separate parties: --one part under Ch'en Ch'eng, one under Chiang Ching-kuo, and a third, under Dr. HU Shih, to unite the remnants of the CC Clique, the minority parties, and former KMT members.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

(Classification)

Page 6 of

End No.

Disp. No. 590

From Taipei 5/7/58

Ch'i is positive such a plan was actually prepared within the KMT, but so far as he knows it was not taken up in the Standing Committee. Reportedly, Vice President Ch'en Ch'eng was opposed to the plan, for the obvious reason that it would have given him only one third of a party, while now he stands to inherit control over the entire Party. Ch'i thought it very unlikely that the President would adopt this plan.

COMMENT: HU Shih, during his forthcoming visit to Taiwan, may be useful to the President and the Party as a mediator with the minor-party and KMT opposition elements. The President, whose faith in Hu's loyalty was reportedly renewed by HU's performance at the UN last year, may get Hu's advice on the best means of restoring harmony among political factions in Taiwan.

Judging from several recent fragmentary stories in the press, and from statements of various members of the Legislative Yuan, it appears that the President has decided upon two important steps to tighten Party discipline. These steps have now (according to SHAO Hua - 邵華 - a former CC Clique member and a "radical" though still counted as a KMT member) been approved by the KMT Standing Committee, though action has not yet been initiated. The first step is to be a registration of loyal Party members in the Legislative and Control Yuans and among the top-ranking officials of Government. This registration would involve a "weeding-out" of members of doubtful loyalty. Those who refused to pledge obedience would not be registered, and would in effect be purged from the Party ranks. From among the registered Party members in the two Yuans and in the executive area of government, a new "Policy Board" would be selected and would work very closely with the Standing Committee of the Party. Reportedly the new Policy Board would comprise 25 members from the Legislative Yuan, 11 from the Control Yuan, and 7 from the executive area.

It is too early to predict definitely how these measures, if actually put into effect, will be received by the legislators, and to what extent the measures will achieve the desired effect of restoring Party discipline. Ch'i Shih-ying, a couple of weeks ago, thought as many as half the members of the Legislative Yuan would refuse to sign a pledge of obedience. Shao Hua thought on April 4 that most of the Youth Corps element (totaling 180 persons), a good part of the "tang" (totaling 120 persons), and some members of the assorted liberal or neutral groups would take the oath. If Shao is right, a majority of the Legislative Yuan KMT members will thus accept registration. Judging from the opinions expressed by the more moderate liberals among the legislators, it seems possible a considerable number of legislators would welcome the revitalization of the Policy Board, as it could provide a two-way channel for the communication of the legislators' opinion to top policy levels in the Party as well as for the dissemination of Party policy decisions downward to the legislators.

COMMENT: On balance, prospects are fair for a limited temporary improvement of discipline growing out of these measures. Foreign Minister Yeh and Vice Minister Shen Ch'ang-huan, among others, have

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL
(Classification)

Page 7 of
Encl. No.
Disp. No. 590
From Taipei 4/7/58

remarked on the KMT members' past reluctance to accept banishment from the Party, and on the lack of any political figure capable of "standing up to" the President and uniting the opposition around his personal leadership; these factors will for the time being continue to work in favor of the Party. The crucial question is how many of the Party members in the Legislative Yuan will choose expulsion from the Party rather than sign the pledge of obedience. If a large number accept expulsion, the effectiveness of banishment as a weapon will be greatly diminished. Those who are expelled will probably swell the ranks of the "radicals". In the long run, unless the KMT devises some additional measures for restoring political harmony, the effect of the measures now contemplated might intensify, rather than reduce, opposition in the Legislative and Control Yuans.

For the Ambassador:



David L. Osborn
Counselor of Embassy for
Political Affairs

Carbon Copy:

AmConsul, HONG KONG.

CONFIDENTIAL

700