

**November 18, 1958**

**Despatch No. 225 from American Embassy Taipei to the Department of State, 'KMT Doctrinal Adjustment to Modification of GRC Position on "Counterattack"'**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

The document addresses the Kuomintang's (KMT) ideological adjustments regarding its longstanding policy of counterattacking mainland China. It highlights a shift in rhetoric, de-emphasizing immediate military action in favor of political strategies and the notion of revolutionary war led by popular support within the mainland. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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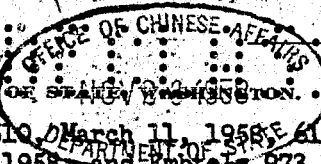
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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

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Embassy Despatches 519, 519 March 11, 1958, 619 April 17, 1958 163 October 1, 1958 and 206 October 30, 1958, and Embats 973 May 13, 1958, 663, 689, 694, 696, 707, 712.



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SUBJECT: KMT Doctrinal Adjustment to Modification of GRC Position on "Counterattack"

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It might appear that at this time the practical question of the manner in which the GRC is to accomplish its declared mission of restoring freedom on the mainland, whether by the use of force or by non-violent means, lies entirely within the realm of hypothesis and conjecture. True, most mainlanders on Taiwan whatever their political persuasion, would agree that if, at some future time, there develops on the mainland a situation offering the opportunity of successful exploitation by the use of force from Taiwan, the GRC must and will unhesitatingly employ whatever force it has, regardless of what construction may now be placed upon the Joint Communiqué of October 23. However, the political significance of the question of "non-use of force" considerably transcends practical questions relating to the ultimate actual means of restoration. The issue is joined in defining the doctrinal basis of the GRC's present political structure. The threat to political stability on Taiwan which the GRC might grow out of too radical a modification of its position on the hypothetical question of a return to the mainland partially accounts for its resistance to major alterations in the restoration theme. The doctrinal question may be simply posed: is the GRC in a "revolutionary" situation, or is it not? The ruling Kuomintang, holds that China is in a revolutionary situation, and that it (the KMT) is the sole custodian of the revolution, thereby justifying its political dominance and all the curbs upon unauthorized political activity that a revolutionary situation implies. The ubiquitous slogan "Counterattack the mainland!" is a necessary part of this tenet. For the GRC to adopt a posture of merely inspiring and encouraging, rather than uniting and leading, revolutionary forces in being on the mainland, would be to symbolize abandonment by its major constituent, the KMT, of its revolutionary custodianship and evaporation of the justification for its privileged role.

The political forces in opposition to the KMT (apart from the "Taiwan for the Taiwanese" element), of course, do not view the present situation in a revolutionary context and maintain it does not justify KMT dominance. They argue that with the effectuation of the Constitution in 1948, marking the termination of the period of political tutelage prescribed by Dr. SUN Yat-sen, the KMT should have been disestablished, and that it should have become an "ordinary" political party. While they would not question a Government policy of mainland restoration, they do accuse the KMT of utilizing the "counterattack" slogan to justify what amounts to a prolongation of the tutelage period.

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Recent developments causing the GRC to modify its position on the use of force to liberate the mainland have intensified the doctrinal conflict. While other issues play their part, the KMT's ability to accommodate its doctrine to the current de-emphasis on military force and the acceptability such accommodations gain within and without the Party and at home and among overseas Chinese may, over the next year or so, have a decisive effect on the local political scene. At the present time, as this despatch will show, the accommodation appears to be fairly successful. However, there is no question but that the forces of the opposition have been given potent new arguments, (see Embassy Despatch 510, March 11, 1958, for an account of their earlier contentions and the manner in which they were received by the KMT) and the realities of free China's international situation would appear to be on their side. With the National Assembly scheduled to meet and elect a President in 1960, the "opposition" may be expected to redouble its efforts to disestablish the KMT.

President Chiang Kai-shek, both as chief of state and the leader of the party, has been the leading spokesman and defender of the mainland restoration policy and the means to carrying it out which, in turn, have formed the justification for KMT dominance of the GRC. Enclosure number one of this despatch contains a selection of his public statements, the earliest taken from an interview in the fall of 1956 and the latest taken from his September 29, 1958, press conference, dealing with the subject and method of counterattack. The "hard" line on counterattack was characterized by two premises; 1) Armed assault upon the mainland would constitute the first move in the mission of restoration and would provoke popular uprising in its support within three months. 2) Military action against the mainland would be mounted from Kinmen and Matsu. The President's September 29 press conference reversed both of these premises and announced the "soft" line on counterattack.

Even before September 29, the need for a de-emphasis on the use of force, out of deference to United States public opinion, had been recognized by the GRC, at least at the top. President Chiang's remarks, quoted in enclosure one, in his NBC TV interview of May 6, 1958, contained the seeds of the "soft" line, but it is also worth noting that this was not distinct enough to be publicly recognized. The opening paragraph of a resolution passed by the National Assembly on September 15, 1958, (see Embassy Press Summary 11 of September 16, 1958) demonstrates careful adherence to the hard line a scant two weeks before the President's Press Conference. "Kinmen and Matsu being springboards of our counter-attack and advance posts for the defense of Taiwan, the Pescadores, as well as the whole Western Pacific, their importance is quite apparent," read in part the opening paragraph of a resolution setting forth the Assembly's demand for the defense and supply of then beleaguered Kinmen.

The significant modification of GRC public posture which President Chiang's remarks of September 29 represented required KMT theorists to quickly trim the Party's sails to this new tack as the enclosed editorials amply demonstrate. Nevertheless, The National Assembly resolution and the length of time which elapsed until the appearance of the first coherent attempts by official editorialists to recast Party doctrine on the "counterattack" in the light of the President's statements would indicate that lower levels in the KMT were quite

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unprepared for the shift. The Chung Yang Jih Pao, official organ of the KMT, on the morning of September 30, had to content itself with cataloguing the various points in the President's remarks deserving the appraisal "momentous" — the "springboard" renunciation among them. The only other paper to comment that day was the Hsin Sheng Pao, authoritative organ of the Provincial Government, which rather lamely underscored the President's remarks that the Communists dared not expand the war lest they hasten their inevitable collapse.

Other events, notably Secretary Dulles' press conference of September 30, followed President Chiang's press conference, tending to divert attention from it. The fact that the Secretary's reference to the GRC's return to the mainland as a "hypothetical matter" received no comment in either the Party or the official press indicates that, during this period, a firm definition of the KMT position on "counterattack" was lacking. Those few papers touching upon the "counterattack" appeared to accept the new position at face value, making no attempt to interpret or discuss it. By October 4 KMT theorists had recast the counterattack policy in the light of the President's remarks. The new definition took the form of an editorial in the Chung Yang Jih Pao on that date. (Enclosure 2).

"Our base for counterattacking is on the mainland and the allegiance of the people as a whole there is the main condition for our counterattack and national recovery." Although this might appear "a mysterious statement," said the editorial understanding "the nature of this war of counterattack and national recovery" would demonstrate that no dilemma existed. "Our war of counterattack and national recovery . . . is a revolutionary war of the people of the Republic of China as a whole . . . The foundation of this revolution is in the masses of the people. Since the President had previously defined "counterattack and national recovery as the third phase task of the national revolution" and since the KMT, according to the editorial, had never done anything "but that which represented the demands of all the people of the nation," then, in accordance with the teachings of Dr. SUN Yat-sen the first step (in the third or any other phase of a revolution) . . . is to unite force with the people and the second step will be to place force within the province of the people. The national revolution must of necessity then succeed." The implication, of course, is that the proper role of force in revolutionary war, according to Dr. Sun, is to place itself in the service of an already rebellious populace not to create a rebellion. In citing the 1911 revolution, the Northern Expedition and the War of Resistance against the Japanese, the editorial declared that the KMT had always acceded to the popular will and placed its strength at the masses' disposition. Counterattack and restoration must be considered in the same context.

Carefully drawing the boundaries beyond which lay heresy on this point, the editorial further stressed the dogma of party response to popular will. "If anyone thinks that our war of counterattack and national recovery relies entirely on present available military force and uses Kinmen and Matsu as springboards it will not only be a wrong observation, (because it denies the superior importance of popular will), but also tantamount to admitting that our

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goal is difficult to reach (i.e., in view of the great disparity between the military strength of the GRC and that available to the mainland regime.)

The Sino-American communique issued October 23 in Taipei involved a still more explicit revision of the past doctrine on "counterattack". The GRC's expression of policy on this point and the reaction to it has been the subject of several other communications. (See Embtels 663, 680, 694, 696, 707, 712 and Despatch 206). It soon became evident that this reaction had gotten out of hand, the surface implication being that not only was it no longer Government policy to regard Kinmen and Matsu as springboards for a counterattack, and to predicate military action upon a prior civil uprising, but that military action had been permanently forsaken. Failure to counter this impression would allow the KMT's position to be challenged all over again.

The second editorial, "Revolutionary War and Force", which appeared in the Chung Yang Jih Pao for October 30, (Enclosure 2) calls upon the same interpretation of Party doctrine introduced by the earlier editorial. However, its function, unlike that of the first which sought to make a new concept of the counterattack acceptable, is to deny that counterattack per se has been renounced forever and under all circumstances. It admits indirectly that force now available to the GRC is inferior to that of the Communists, but argues that this is no handicap because once it is "united with the masses," a "conflagration" will consume the Communist regime and the entire mainland will be restored at one stroke. The vital condition requiring fulfillment is a "mature revolution" under conditions of which force may be united with the masses. It is quite clear that fulfillment of this condition is something for which the masses on the mainland must be responsible—popular will again manifesting its desire for KMT leadership. Meanwhile, the editorial proclaims the KMT's right to its revolutionary custodianship. "We represent not only a correct ideal, but also the interests of the entire citizenry . . . We have acquired the basic conditions for a revolutionary task enumerated by Dr. Sun and certainly need not be entirely dependent upon force to reach our goal of counterattack and national recovery."

These two editorials, the first introducing a new interpretation of doctrine and the second at once trying to shore up that new interpretation while preventing it from becoming a runaway, describe the theoretical boundaries within which the KMT feels it must remain in order to sustain its power position in the GRC. It must be observed, however, that this position represents very nearly the extreme in flexibility of the revolutionary aspects of Party doctrine.

For the Ambassador,

  
David L. Osborn  
Counselor of Embassy for  
Political Affairs

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October 4, 1956 in an interview with A. T. Steele of the New York Herald Tribune.

"It is our firm belief that for the Chinese Government to launch military operations against the mainland would not lead to a general war . . . Moreover there is no doubt in my mind that the people on the mainland would rally to our cause, probably within three months after our landings."

Soviet Russia In China, page 338 - "On the other hand, if the anti-Communist peoples in the East are given moral and material support by the world-wide anti-aggression front, and launch coordinated counterattacks against Communist satellites in East Asia with the Chinese Communists on the mainland as their target, such a war in the Far Eastern theater will become a national war as well as a revolutionary war. As a national war, it will ignite a movement for independence and freedom on the part of all Asian peoples; as a revolutionary war, it will inspire all anti-Communist people behind the Iron Curtain to rise and fight the Communists with us for their own liberation."

Interview with Scripps Howard Jim Lucas - April 16, 1958 Despatch 619 4/17/58.

"In seeking to recover the mainland, we are using both political and military means. In the political field, the progress and achievement we have made here in Taiwan in these few years have not only made Taiwan the beacon of hope for people on the mainland, but also have generated anti-tyranny uprisings on the mainland. It is my firm belief that as soon as we start our military action of liberation the Communist regime will begin to collapse from within. Therefore our task of recovering the mainland is by nature purely a national revolution."

NBC TV Interview - May 6, 1958 - Embtel 937, 3/13/58

"I must first point out the nature of the military takeover. We have never conceived of the struggle with the Communists in the form of a war whereby the armed forces of one country are pitted against the armed forces of another . . . This is a revolutionary struggle for deliverance (of the people on the mainland) from Communist tyranny, and we shall use 30 percent military strength and 70 percent political strength to attain our objective. In other words, the strength of our struggle will lie in the strength and desire of the people to be free from Communist persecution. . . The Hungarian type of revolt is not only possible in the future. That type of revolt has been happening unceasingly for the past two years . . . There is . . . general hate and resentment of the regime and I feel sure that once these feelings become crystallized the time will be for the national revolution against Communism not only on the mainland but in our efforts to help liberate the people there."

Excerpt from President Chiang's Press Conference September 29, 1958

Q. "Is the Republic of China using Quemoy and Matsu Islands as bases for its projected counterattack on the mainland? What are the main conditions for

the counterattack on the mainland?"

A. "No. We are not using Quemoy and Matsu for this purpose. The bases for our counterattack against the mainland are on the mainland itself. The principal condition for our national recovery is the loyalty of the people on the mainland. Therefore, the bases for our counter-attack are not on Quemoy and Matsu . . . We are defending Quemoy and Matsu because these islands constitute a shield for Taiwan and not because we intend to use them as springboards (underscoring supplied) for our counterattack against the mainland . . . I repeat that today's Quemoy and Matsu are a shield for the Taiwan Strait and not bases for our counterattack . . . With the anti-Communist situation on the mainland being what it is, if the Communists should dare to enlarge the scope of hostilities in the Taiwan Straits or prolong the fighting, we definitely believe that within three months anti-Communist revolution will break out there to shatter the totalitarian regime. The fusion of the fight in the Taiwan Strait with the revolution on the mainland will mark the beginning of our People's holy war against aggression and Communism . . . The principal condition for our counter-attack, therefore, is not another world war, which we want to avoid. The foundation for our counterattack is built upon an anti-Communist revolution by people on the mainland. Any today, the Chinese Communists are being pushed toward the brink of revolution."

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OUR COUNTERATTACK BASE IS ON THE MAINLAND

Chung Yang Jih Pao

October 4, 1958

If viewed from the geographical situation alone, it is unavoidable for people to think that we shall use Kinmen, Matsu and other offshore islands as springboards for counter-attacking the mainland; during the present Kinmen-Matsu war, there have been many overly anxious deductions that we may develop this war into a war of counterattack on the mainland. Thus, many people have become suspicious and scared, fearing that further development of the Straits situation will lead to the outbreak of the third world war; there are even those who brand Kinmen and Matsu as "obstacles to peace." In order to eliminate such unnecessary suspicions, fright and wrong views, the President had made a detailed clarification in his September 29 press conference. The President particularly pointed out that Kinmen and Matsu were shields of the Western Pacific and not the bases of our counterattack. Our base for counterattacking is on the mainland and the allegiance of the people as a whole there is the main condition for our counter-attack and national recovery. Our September 30 editorial had also clarified this. In his speech before the United Nations Assembly, Dr. Tsiang Ting-fu, our Chief Delegate to the United Nations, made a similar clarification. They not only served to give a correct interpretation of the present Kinmen-Matsu problem to the world at large, but also provide them with a correct view of the problem of our counterattack and national recovery.

Why do we say that our counterattack base is on the mainland? This is by no means a mysterious statement. In order to understand the reason, it is necessary to first know the nature of this war of counterattack and national recovery. Our war of counterattack and national recovery is not a war of one nation against another nation, it is not a war of one country against another country, nor a war of one class against another class or a war of one group against another group; it is a revolutionary war of the people of the Republic of China as a whole, including those in Taiwan, Penghu, the mainland, abroad and even those awakened elements in the Chinese Communist Party, against the atrocious and brutal traitors' regime which sells out its people and country. The foundation of this revolution is the masses of people and the demand of this revolution represents the demand of the people of the entire nation. The President had pointed out previously that the counterattack and national recovery is the third phase

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task of the national revolution. This is a most far-sighted and correct revelation.

During the past fifty years since Dr. Sun Yat-sen started the revolution and President Chiang succeeded to its leadership, nothing that has been done by this party but that which represented the demands of all people of the nation. The 1911 revolution which overthrew the Ching Dynasty and founded the Republic, the Northern Expedition which defeated the northern warlords and unified the country and the Japanese War which resisted aggression and defended the nation were all carried out against superior enemy forces. We finally scored victories in these wars because we represented the demands of the people of the entire country, carried out their will and enjoyed their support and backing. This was the case in the past and it will be so in the future. Today, what we rely on to reach the goal of counterattack and national recovery is not entirely the present available military force but the allegiance of the masses of people on the mainland which though now concealed, will ultimately explode and become irresistible. If anyone thinks that our war of counterattack and national recovery relies entirely on present available military force and uses Kinmen and Matsu as springboards, it will not only be a wrong observation but also tantamount to admitting that our goal is difficult to reach. We recall that before long there were those who compared our military strength with that of the Chinese Communists and thus thought the probability for counter-attack victory was very small. This is also because they are ignorant of the nature of the revolutionary war.

We who have read Dr. Sun's manifesto in November, 1924 before he left for the North should remember the following passage: "We may draw further proof from this point: force which unites with imperialism cannot but fail; while force which unites with the people to accelerate the national revolution will triumph. Today should mark the beginning of a new era for the national revolution in which the phenomenon of the combination of force with imperialism will be caused to forever disappear from this country. The first step in the new phenomenon which will arise to take its place will be to unite force with the people and the second step, will be to place force within the province of the people, the national revolution must of necessity then succeed."

It is just because of this reason that we firmly deem that the Chinese Communists are sure to perish, that the Russian invaders are sure to fail, that the counterattack is sure to triumph, and that the national recovery is sure to succeed.

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In recent years, the mainland people, who have thoroughly realized the true face of the Chinese Communists, not only entertain an attitude of loathing toward the puppet regime, but are also gradually and extensively pushing forward the anti-atrocity revolutionary movement. When our contacts with them become more close and the time when we fight shoulder to shoulder with them comes, the puppet regime will collapse immediately and our revolutionary task of counterattack and national recovery will promptly succeed. As Dr. T. F. Tsiang said: "When our people on the mainland rise to revolt as the Hungarians did two years ago and appeal for our help, we naturally will fight shoulder to shoulder with them and secure freedom for them. This is our plan for recovering the mainland."

Here, we wish to repeatedly and solemnly tell the people of the world who are concerned over our affairs that it is definitely untrue that we cannot counterattack without using Kinmen and Matsu as springboards, that we have many channels through which to launch our counterattack, and that our base for counterattack is on the mainland. The masses on the mainland and their revolutionary force have long been calling us!

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REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND FORCE

Chung Yang Jih Pao (KMT)

October 30, 1958

In the Sino-American joint communique simultaneously released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the American Embassy in China on October 24, there was the following passage: "The Government of the Republic of China considers that the restoration of freedom to its people on the mainland is its sacred mission. It believes that the foundation of this mission is founded in the minds and hearts of the Chinese people and that the principal means of successfully achieving its mission is the implementation of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles (Nationalism, democracy and social well-being) and is not dependent upon (armed) force." Thus, quite a number of people single this passage out from the rest and, giving it a distorted interpretation, think that our Government considers that it has "renounced the use of force." Some overseas publications also have not failed to express their doubtful opinions of this announcement. In fact, if we carefully study the total sense of this passage, basically, there is no point deserving of doubt. During the last few days Foreign Minister Huang Shao-ku and Ambassador Yeh Kung-chao (George Yeh) have given explanations when interviewed by the press and now this paper would like to comment on the basis of our own understanding.

It is our opinion that in order to understand the correct meaning represented by this passage, it is necessary first to understand the dissimilar natural rationale of revolutionary war and ordinary war. Dr. Sun Yat-sen said in "Sun Wen's Theories" that "A task which is favored by natural laws, conforms to human feeling, and is adapted to world trends, is in accord with the needs of the masses, and which prophets are determined to accomplish, cannot but be accomplished. This is true of the undertakings of revolution, revival, reform and national reconstruction in old as well as modern times." Since the development of a revolution fulfills the basic conditions of "being favored by natural laws, conforming to human feeling, being adapted to world trends and in accord with the needs of the masses," the ability to defeat counter-revolutionary enemies in a revolutionary war would not need to be entirely dependent upon force nor upon a force necessarily superior to that of the enemy for victory. The President has repeatedly told the people that counterattack and national recovery war in which we are engaged today is the third-phase task of the national revolution. In other words, the basic spirit of this revolutionary war is in no respect different from that of the 1911 revolution which

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overthrew the Ching Dynasty, the Northern Expedition which downed the northern warlords and the War of Resistance which defeated the Japanese warlords. Our constant goal is to implement San Min Chu'I (The Three People's Principles), to establish a democratic republic with a government of the people, by the people and for the people, and to struggle unceasingly against all counter-revolutionaries and those who obstruct our realization of this goal. In the present phase of resisting the Chinese Communists, our doctrine has not been defeated though the Government suffered serious setbacks on the mainland bringing about its retreat to Taiwan. We represent not only a correct ideal but also the interests of the entire citizenry and are striving to implement the people's demands for survival, freedom and national independence. We counter hatred with love, slavery with freedom, and tyranny with democracy. Thus we have acquired the basic conditions for a revolutionary task enumerated by Dr. Sun and certainly need not be entirely dependent upon force to reach our goal of counterattack and national recovery. If it is said that a revolutionary goal cannot be reached without depending entirely upon force, then how were all the tyrants and aggressors of history overthrown?

We do not need to cite ancient historical precedents; we can look back upon the developments of the national revolution which we personally experienced. In the case of 1911 revolution, the members of the revolutionary party can be said to have been basically unable to organize a proper and gigantic (armed) force. They devoted themselves solely to evangelizing their doctrine in order to enlighten the minds and hearts of the people with the result that as soon as the revolutionary flag was hoisted in Wuchang, the whole nation reverberated and the Manchu Dynasty which had ruled China for more than three hundred years collapsed in no time. In the case of the Northern Expedition, the strength of the revolutionary army could in no way be compared to the armed forces of the northern warlords, and yet less than a year after this expedition set forth from Canton it was watering its horses in the Yellow River and subsequently unified the whole country. In the War of Resistance against Japan, people the world over considered that since we were weak and Japan was strong, we could not possibly win. Yet, after eight long years of bitter fighting, we won final victory. All these examples suffice to prove that victory in a revolutionary war definitely does not depend entirely on force; the odds of victory are decided by the allegiance of the people and not by weight of arms. From either the angle of theory or of actuality, there is no need to doubt the correctness of the sense proclaimed by that passage in the sixth paragraph of the Sino-American joint statement.

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Finally, we want to specially point out to our readers that to say "not depending on force" is not to say "renunciation of force." Ambassador Yen Kung-chap has made an appropriate explanation of this point. This also means that although our revolutionary war does not depend entirely on force to gain victory, we definitely cannot renounce the use of force on occasions where its use is necessary. Dr. Sun instructed us on methods of using force: the first step is to unite force with the mass; the second step is to make force become the force of the mass. In other words, it is essential that revolutionary force and the revolutionary mass merge into one body since only then will the revolutionary force exercise its potentiality to the full. When the revolutionary force of the mainland people has developed to the extent where our immediate response by force is required, the time for our revolutionary force and the revolutionary mass to unite and merge into one body shall have arrived. The progress of this revolutionary war can never be an ordinary war of sporadic battling for cities or places. When the time is mature, this war will promptly turn into a hurricane or a conflagration which consumes the puppet regime and recaptures the entire mainland. This is the special significance of revolutionary war as well as the special nature and capability of revolutionary force. Only when this is clearly understood, can there then be no misunderstanding over the phrase "not depending on force." Our President has on numerous occasions since he succeeded Dr. Sun in leading the revolution though surrounded by immense difficulties, saved the nation from the perils of extinction. His judgments and policies are forever correct. If we all trust him and faithfully obey his leadership, all difficulties will be surmounted without confusion or fear and the final goal of the revolution and national reconstruction will be reached! When the time comes for us to use force for our counterattack and national recovery, the time when completely successful victory in this revolutionary war of ours is assured will be at hand.

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