



**April 17, 1951**

**Telegram No. 209 from Taipei to the Department of State, 'Political Report on Nationalist China - March 1951'**

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**Summary:**

This telegram highlights improving morale on Formosa driven by increased US military and economic support and Communist purges on the mainland, which deepened anti-Communist sentiment. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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TO : Department of State

FROM : TAIPEI 209 APRIL 17 1951

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SUBJECT : POLITICAL REPORT ON NATIONALIST CHINA

PRIORITY: AIR BOUGH

APR 15 1951

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Anniversary of the Generalissimo's Resumption of the Presidency.

Direction to DC/R

The month of March was ushered in with Island-wide celebrations of the first anniversary of Generalissimo CHIANG Kai-shek's resumption of the presidency. The event was marked by parades, speeches and fireworks. All newspapers ran anniversary supplements. Participation on the part of the populace was not highly enthusiastic, nor was it entirely perfunctory. The visible resentment among the local populace one year previously at being called upon to participate in the celebration of Chiang's resumption of office was not in evidence on March 1, 1951.

- RANGOON
- TOKYO
- HONG KONG
- SAIGON
- MANILA
- BANGKOK

Return to the Mainland Theme.

The above celebration was the occasion for statements by leading government officials on the return to the mainland, a theme which had been continually emphasized in Nationalist propaganda for some months. Addressing troops near Kaohsiung, the Generalissimo said: "If every one of us is determined to do his utmost in wiping out the Communists, we shall be celebrating on the mainland next year." Premier CH'EN Ch'eng declared in Taipei that he was certain that the celebrations could be held on the continent in the following year. Governor WU stated: "I hope that we will be celebrating in Peiping a year from today." The Government Spokesman, SHEN Ch'ang-huan expressed confidence that the mainland would be recovered before next March. He based his confidence upon the Kuomintang's "political and economic reforms of the past year." He also felt that Chinese Communist reverses in Korea and their mass purges at home would facilitate the Chinese Nationalist comeback.

Conviction that increased United States aid was coming, (at least to the extent necessary to defend the island) was universal in Formosa in March, and such prospects seemed heartily approved by all circles, including anti-Kuomintang Formosan elements. This conviction increased the hopes of the Nationalists that aid eventually would also be afforded on a scale which would add realism to their oft-repeated promises to liberate their mainland compatriots. There was no doubt that the concept of an eventual return to the mainland was basic to the very continued existence of the Nationalist Government, and essential to the maintenance of troop morale and

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effectiveness. There were signs, however, that overemphasis by Chinese Nationalist leaders on the imminence of this return, if such promises should not be realized within a reasonable period, could well lead to popular disillusionment of proportions which would prove damaging to their cause.

Sufficient United States backing and cooperation for an attack against the mainland was less universally advocated in Formosa than was aid purely for defense of the island, but the idea of a Nationalist counterattack had appreciably more supporters than was the case a few months previously.

#### Effects of the Chinese Communist Purge.

One of the chief causes for the change noted above seemed to be the deep impression made on the Island by the wholesale slaughter instituted by the Chinese Communists on the mainland, which distressed the mainlanders whose relatives were involved and shocked many Formosans into a re-evaluation of the Communist menace. Anti-Communist sentiment was stronger than at any time since the Nationalists took over the island. The increased support for the Nationalists which resulted was in general reluctantly given; it was for the most part simply a natural concomitant of a further disenchantment with Communism. General TANG Tsung, Vice Minister of Interior in charge of police and close associate of CHIANG Ching-kuo, stated privately that the problem of Communist subversion had been serious in the spring and summer of 1950, but that it had subsided steadily thereafter and dropped to a new low in February and March 1951. He stated with surprising frankness that the official explanation was that this was the effect of Kuomintang reform and effective Nationalist propaganda, but that he minimized the effectiveness of both of these considerations and believed that reports of mainland conditions from letters and travelers were chiefly responsible for the improved security situation.

Meanwhile, the Nationalists set about to make the most of the powerful propaganda furnished them by the Communist purge. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was compiling material on the mass killings for possible use by the Chinese United Nations delegation. The Legislative Yuan, the Control Yuan and the Anti-Atrocities Youth Association (composed chiefly of school representatives and reportedly organized by Chiang Ching-kuo) all made appeals to the Free World on humanitarian grounds, calling for immediate sanctions against the Chinese Communists, in an attempt to prevent the wholesale slaughter of innocent people. A drive for five million signatures protesting against the Communist purge was started on the Island, to be presented to the United Nations through T. F. TSIANG.

Effects of the Belief in a Brighter Future for the Nationalists.

While the Nationalist regime was little if any better liked per se by various elements in Formosa than it was a few months ago, it was unquestionably more solidly backed. Most Formosans in politics were unwilling actively to support the National Government (evidence of such support had proven to be political suicide in recent elections on the Island) but they were far less vituperative in their attacks on the Government than had been true the previous year. In addition to the factor mentioned in the above section, the seemingly brighter future for the Chinese Nationalist cause prompted many opportunistic Formosan businessmen to attempt to climb on what they interpreted as the new Nationalist bandwagon to be propelled by the United States. Most mainlanders, whether government workers, businessmen or troops, simply wanted to go home. They had many misgivings about their Government, but supported it, even if complainingly, as by all odds the better of two alternatives. There was every indication that they, including the troops, would continue to support it as long as it seemed to have a good chance for survival. They did not, however, support it with sufficient zeal to produce many martyrs or heroes if the odds should at some future time turn heavily against the Nationalists.

Prospects of a brighter future, however, produced the most noticeable effects among Nationalist military and government leaders. Whereas during the previous year the Nationalists felt that forces largely beyond their control were shaping their destiny and as a consequence developed an almost paralyzing pawn complex, in March there were signs of the development of an indispensability complex. While the Nationalists' notion of indispensability was annoying, and indeed potentially dangerous if unbridled, it at least was evidence of a more positive and healthy atmosphere in Formosa which, if properly exploited and controlled, could measurably enhance the Island's political and military value in the camp of the Free Nations. At the same time, politically articulate native Formosans and mainlanders increasingly approached Embassy officers with warnings that the Nationalists had "sighted the gravy train" and with pleas that new aid be "checked, checked and double-checked by the United States, all the way to the end user." Under such conditions there appeared to be universal approbation of further aid, particularly if it was evidence of a broader and co-ordinated effort to combat Communism in Asia.

Nationalist Fear of a Third Force.

The Nationalists were very much in favor of a co-ordinated effort on a broad front to combat Communism in Asia. They

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reiterated during the month that their offer of troops for Korea still stood, and continued to make statements favoring a defense pact for the Pacific area. They were extremely sensitive, however, to any reports which indicated that any Chinese elements not under their control might significantly figure in the picture. Persistent reports from Hong Kong that within the next few months there was a fair chance of various non-KMT parties and cliques succeeding at long last in effecting a coalition (perhaps under Carson CHANG) were particularly disturbing. LEI Chen, long-time trusted KMT member who nevertheless maintained a position sufficiently independent to gain the respect of some critics of the Party, was sent to Hong Kong during March to report on the Third Party front. Although his mission ostensibly was to set up machinery for the evacuation of certain pro-KMT elements anxious to come to Formosa, his real mission was reliably reported to be to induce key KMT "defectors" to return to the fold. He was reported to have gained the promise of a few men to come to Formosa, among them TU Yueh-sheng, Shanghai underworld king, CH' IEN Sun-chih, former chairman of the Board of Directors of the Bank of Communications, and CHANG Kia-ngau, younger brother of Carson Chang.

#### Air Defense.

Considerable publicity was given during the month to defense against possible Chinese Communist air raids against Formosa. Ushering in Air Defense Week on March 4, Governor Wu in a broadcast said that while military, political and economic improvement on Formosa had lessened the danger of an invasion, the possibility of nuisance air raids was great. He urged those who could to reside outside the city, and those who remained to prepare shelters and reserve receptacles for water storage. Despite full play by all newspapers, air-defense-consciousness seemed to be little awakened among the people. Nationalist reports that the Communists had removed strategic personnel and supplies from a 200-mile area inward from the coast opposite Formosa due to Communist fear of an invasion, seemed to convince the people that there was nothing to worry about. The argument that the Communists may be preparing for two-way air raids made little impression.

#### Jealousy Between the Premier and the Governor: A Boon to "The Prince".

With Chinese Nationalist prospects generally improving, internal jealousies were accentuated during March. A difference over personnel in the Bank of Taiwan between Governor Wu and Premier Ch'en was followed by a speech given by Foreign Minister YEH on the anniversary of Ch'en's assumption of the premiership on March 15, which reportedly irritated the Governor. The speech was highly laudatory of the Premier's leadership during the year

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based on "defense of Formosa and counter-offensive on the mainland." Two usually reliable sources close to the Generalissimo stated that in several recent disagreements between Wu and Ch'en the President had followed Ch'en's advice almost every time. It was reliably reported that Governor Wu submitted his resignation for the fifth time, but that--as expected--it was not accepted. Many Chinese observers in a position to judge felt that the day was nearer when it might be accepted, however. Most Westernized Chinese felt that Wu's passing, if it should come, would be a great loss. Many of these admitted that they considered Wu an opportunist, but felt that he had contributed much toward the betterment of Formosan conditions. Most Formosans, on the other hand, understand Ch'en better, and felt that he was more honest. They admitted that he had little understanding of democracy, but stated that he was fair, and--to the Chinese mind--predictable, whereas Wu was not.

The average politically conscious Formosan and mainlander alike were alarmed at the rapidity with which the Generalissimo's elder son, CHIANG Ching-kuo, was gaining control of many strategic organizations in both the military and civil hierarchies, through his control of the secret police and the cadre of "political indoctrination". Members of the two minor parties particularly expressed concern that he was instituting methods of control which "exactly paralleled those of the Soviets." (They often referred to the fact that Chiang Ching-kuo received training in Russia.) It was claimed by several Chinese observers close to the Generalissimo's cabinet that the overwhelming defeat of the Kuomintang in the first few months of elections on the Island was a major factor in the Gimo's allegedly giving his son the green light for widespread tightening of control measures "on the Soviet pattern". A number of Formosans, including several members of the Taipei City Council, were of the opinion that the Government had gained considerable ground in drawing public support as a result of the early elections, but that it had been lost gradually in the elections since December 1950. These same Council members agreed that the recently increased support for the Premier on the part of many leading Formosans was largely due to their feeling that he was the most effective opposition to Chiang Ching-kuo. It was generally felt that "The Prince" had benefited by the differences which often cropped up between Ch'en Ch'eng and K. C. Wu. One incensed Democratic Socialist leader said that it was a "swindle that Chiang Ching-kuo's police state methods were winning out with his father, at a time when the Nationalists were beginning to cash in on democratic progress (although he considered this superficial) carried out largely by K. C. Wu."

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Visit of T. F. TSIANG.

T. F. TSIANG was met by several hundred people at the airport on his arrival in Taipei on March 20. He received a spontaneous and enthusiastic ovation from the crowd as he stepped from the plane. His visit was an outstanding success, both from a personal standpoint and as a morale boost for the local populace. His stature seemed to increase as he made innumerable speeches to various groups all over the Island. In general he spoke with common sense and with considerably more reserve than was characteristic the Nationalist propaganda line in some matters, although he was not out of line with official policy. His most recurrent theme was that the Nationalist position had risen in the world during the past year due to reforms in Formosa and an increasing awareness on the part of the Free Nations that the Chinese Communists were tools of the Kremlin. He stressed, however, that there was still danger that Asia, which he considered the crucial area in the Communists' program of world conquest, might be sacrificed to the "Europe-First Policy". Tsiang, in conversation with a close friend, reportedly expressed satisfaction that there was more evidence of progress on Formosa, both politically and economically, than he had expected, but he expressed concern that the Government was "failing to attract promising youth to Government service."

Christian Affiliations of First Family.

It was noteworthy that the Christian activities of Generalissimo and Madame Chiang associated with services at Easter time received heavy play in the press. This was in marked contrast to the previous two or three years, during which time Christian (and, indeed, almost any foreign) influences on the First Family were soft-pedaled. This may have been part of what appeared to be a shift in the Nationalists' presentation of Chiang from that of a strong, determined, "Chinese" Chinese capable of leading the nation through adversity without friends, if necessary, to that of a full-fledged partner in the Western camp of enlightenment. At any rate, wide publicity was given in all parts of the Island to the fact that President and Madame Chiang led in Good Friday prayer services which were received by radio in churches throughout the Island, and that they both fasted on that day. Later in the month the Generalissimo made several public statements commending the Christian faith to the people and approving a Bible distribution program for the Island.

Optimism Prevailed.

The Nationalists could point to a number of developments during the month which were heartening. The Chinese Communists had suffered severe reverses in Korea, thereby losing much face

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in Asia. The blood purge, while sincerely deplored by all elements, many for very personal reasons, was widely expected to boomerang on the Communists. That further United States aid was coming was a generally accepted fact. The public was encouraged by statements of Vice Admirals STRUBLE and MARTIN that the United States Seventh Fleet was strong enough to prevent an invasion of Formosa. The National Commander of the American Legion had brought words of comfort and encouragement to the Nationalists during the month, as had their own representative at the United Nations. The Nationalist cause was gaining wider publicity with a count of thirteen foreign correspondents in Taipei at the end of the month. The public was quick to note that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had moved from a crowded building in disrepair to a presentable and spacious edifice across from the President's Office. These and other factors doubtless prompted the Generalissimo to make in his Youth Day broadcast on March 29 the most categorical promise he had yet made with respect to the liberation of the mainlanders from Communist oppression. He called upon the mainland youth to struggle unceasingly against the Chinese Communists and their Russian masters and promised "In the not distant future I will lead the soldiers and people of Free China to your aid and rescue."

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Department please send copies to Tokyo, Hong Kong, Manila, Saigon, Bangkok and Rangoon.

For the Charge d'Affaires:

*Alfred le S. Jenkins*  
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Second Secretary of Embassy

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