

Taiwan bans publication of new political magazine

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The Taiwan Government has banned a controversial political magazine after five months of publication, indicating that it will not tolerate dissent beyond certain bounds. This was despite previous indications of a move toward liberalization of the communications media after the passing of Chiang Kai-shek.

The Taiwan Political Review, with a circulation of 15,000 copies, was ordered to stop publication for one year on charges of "inciting rebellion." But staff members say they doubt the Review will ever be published again.

No staff members are known to have been arrested to date, but deputy editor Chang Chin-tzu faces trial on charges of corruption while serving as a local official several years ago. Fellow staffers note that the indictment against Mr. Chang was brought only after the magazine had been banned and they see it as an attempt to attack those associated with it.

The banning of the Review came as no surprise here. Observers think that the government was reluctant to take action against the magazine before the Legislative Yuan elections of last Dec. 20, fearing that such action simply would provide the few independents (non-Kuomintang, or ruling party, members) in the race with an embarrassing issue with which to attack the government. These observers also think the government of

Premier Chiang Ching-kuo was reluctant to ban the magazine before President Ford's December trip to China, but that it was anxious to have it out of circulation before the January issue, fearing that it would contain allegations of election fraud.

The order banning the magazine cited as its grounds an article analyzing alternative futures for Taiwan. The offending material quoted a man identified only as Professor Liu, who said: "The only two ways by which the Taiwanese can be masters in their own land are armed rebellion to overthrow the Kuomintang dictatorship or peaceful unification with the motherland" — mainland China.

However, the author of the article, Chiu Tsui-liang, went on to criticize both of Professor Liu's proposals, advocating instead political reform to strengthen Taiwan's position in the world community.

Observers say the circumstances behind the selection of the Chiu article are puzzling. Professor Chiu, who holds a U.S. passport and a PhD from an American university, is known to be an anti-communist and to have connections with the Kuomintang. He fled to Hong Kong when the ban went into effect and was refused permission to reenter Taiwan early in January. A Review staff member said he thinks that the government did not want to be put in the embarrassing position of arresting someone with Kuomintang links who also holds American citizenship, but neither did it want to allow him to circulate freely in Taipei when his article was the supposed reason for the ban.