

Why Ma and KMT must apologize for '228'

Written by Taiwan News Editorial
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President Ma Ying-jeou regrettably failed to take advantages of the opportunity to make amends to Taiwan society on behalf of his rightist ruling Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) for the Feb. 28th Massacre of 1947, in which at least 10,000 Taiwan citizens were killed during the suppression of a spontaneous uprising against KMT rule.

In statements to commemorations in Tainan City and Taipei's 228 Peace Park Sunday, Ma displayed his lack of genuine understanding of the Feb. 28th Incident by claiming that the massacre was caused by "the graft and corruption of the government at the time, which caused loss of lives and restrictions and harm to property and liberty and that, with the addition of the poor handling, created the greatest tragedy in Taiwan's modern history."

In Ma's convoluted passive phrasing, there are only victims and no "subject" or perpetrators for the state - conducted murders of at least over 10,000 Taiwan leaders, intellectuals and ordinary workers, farmers and students.

In a clear reflection of the reformatting of Taiwan's history under the KMT, Ma's remarks made no reference whatsoever to the political or criminal responsibility of the late KMT dictator Chiang Kai-shek to reject negotiation and instead to order the dispatch of KMT troops to suppress the islandwide people's movement and conduct over nine months of bloody "sanitation" and purges to "pacify" Taiwan.

Not surprisingly, Ma's speeches also omitted any references to the pursuit of "transitional justice" for the victims and the achievement of "reconciliation" based on "truth" for Taiwan society generally.

Indeed, in stark contrast to other formerly authoritarian states which experienced similar systematic state crimes against humanity, the KMT in power or in opposition has refused to directly apologize or make reparations for its actions and has blocked all attempts to establish an official "truth and reconciliation" process or released related documents in its party archives.

Instead, Ma and the KMT have moved to "rehabilitate the reputation" of Chiang Kai-shek by restoring the "Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall" with public funds and thus forcing taxpayers who

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are "228" or "white terror" victims to pay for the upkeep of the state temple to Taiwan's executioner.

Ma correctly stated that most survivors or surviving relatives need more than simply "financial compensation" but "justice and rehabilitation."

But the truth of "228" cannot be separated from the following systematic "white terror" nor divided from the identification of the responsible perpetrators and the fundamental truth behind Chiang's decision to authorize such massive force to "pacify" Taiwan.

Moreover, the "228" massacre and the White Terror need to be understood primarily from the standpoint of the victims and not the victimizers.

From the standpoint of the Taiwan people in the mid-1940s, daily arbitrary arrest or executions were absolutely not the "norm" during the five decades of Japanese rule and were not expected in the wake of Taiwan's liberation from Japanese colonialism.

Instead of having an opportunity for the first time for self-government or at least home rule after over three centuries of colonial domination, Taiwan society was faced with the imposition of yet another external and even more oppressive regime.

No victims without victimizers

The Chiang regime's imposition of control over Taiwan and its subordination of Taiwan's political, economic, cultural and social life to the KMT's reactionary "One Leader, One Country and One Party" China-centered ideology and the KMT's partisan priorities in the Chinese civil war were the historical causes of both the corruption of the notorious Chen Yi administration and the Feb. 28th rebellion.

The failure of Ma and the ruling party to admit the specific historical, political and even criminal

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responsibility of Chiang and the KMT party itself as the "subjects" of carrying out and profiting from the 228 massacre and the subsequent four decades of KMT-imposed martial law rule leave open the potential for a KMT leadership to similarly sacrifice the interests of Taiwan's people for their own partisan interests or China-centered ideological goals.

Such concerns are by no means abstract.

Besides taking tangible actions which have significantly rolled back Taiwan's civic and news freedoms, Ma and other KMT leaders are following in the boot steps of their deceased "Leader" by turning a deaf ear to the popular opposition shown in four consecutive elections to the controversial "economic cooperation framework agreement" with the CCP-ruled People's Republic of China and by conducting negotiations on the ECFA and other matters affecting Taiwan's national interests and future with the CCP regime in a "black box."

In this context, the civil suit filed in the Taipei District Court Friday by over 100 "228" victims and surviving relatives for a restoration of their reputations and for the KMT to publically apologize for committing the 228 Massacre and turn over NT\$2.0 billion in party assets to fund the National 228 Memorial Museum has special significance as an attempt to use our judicial system to compel Ma to face his true responsibilities and show whether he is "fit" to be Taiwan's elected national leader.

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