

Ma is blind to roots of terror in Taiwan

Written by Taiwan News Editorial
Monday, 19 July 2010 00:29

President and ruling rightist Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) Chairman Ma Ying-jeou displayed Thursday a dangerous blindness to the historical roots of the "White Terror" inflicted by the KMT on Taiwan during the nearly four decades of martial law rule that threatens to pave the way for a future tragedy.

Not including the over 10,000 Taiwanese who were killed by KMT troops during the Feb. 28th Massacre of 1947, over 29,400 political cases were unjustly tried in KMT military tribunals from the imposition of the martial law decree on May 19, 1949 to July 15, 1987, with several thousand executed and over 140,000 imprisoned.

During remarks made during a music concert held at the Memorial to the Victims of the White Terror opposite the Office of the President in Taipei City Thursday evening to commemorate the 23rd anniversary of the 38-year martial law decree, Ma expressed regret on behalf of Republic of China government to "to all the victims of the White Terror and their survivors."

Moreover, Ma stated that his administration's drive for "reconciliation" with the People's Republic of China's ruling Chinese Communist Party, including the June 29 signing of a controversial "Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement" (ECFA), was the best path to ensure that such events never occur again in Taiwan.

Ma believes that the pervasive violation of the human rights of the Taiwan people, including the right to life of thousands, was caused by the Chinese Civil War of 1946-1949 between the KMT and the CCP in the late 1940s, a conflict which Chiang Kai-shek's KMT regime lost.

Ma excused the KMT's actions during the four decades of its "suppression of the Communist bandit rebellion" by stating that human rights and the rule of law are regularly sacrificed in the midst of war, citing the English saying "All is fair in love and war!"

Ma's habitual use of this worn cliché to whitewash the execution of several thousand persons and the imprisonment and persecutions of tens of thousands more Taiwan citizens is both ignorant and perverse.

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First, all is not "fair" in war.

The Geneva Conventions, which also apply in civil conflicts, specifically require that all persons taking no active part in hostilities not be subjected to "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture" such as the KMT party-state carried out routinely against Taiwan citizens during the martial law period.

Moreover, Ma ignored the fact that most "White Terror" victims had little or nothing to do with the small CCP underground organization, which the KMT's secret police organs squashed in the early 1950s, but included advocates of Taiwan independence or self-rule to democratic activists or liberal dissidents to persons innocent of any genuine political involvement.

In sum, the KMT regime's massive use of state terror and decades of pervasive restrictions on human rights and basic freedoms was not for the prosecution of a civil war but aimed to crush opposition in Taiwan society to the KMT's imposition of a new colonial regime.

The seeds of tragedy

Ma also made no mention of any official effort to redress the situation in which there are tens of thousands of "White Terror" victims, but not one official identified as having political or legal responsibility as a "victimizer."

Instead, Ma's only offering on the question of "transitional justice" was to tout the KMT-CCP "reconciliation," including the ECFA, as the road to "peace" and therefore as assurance that events such as the "White Terror" would not be repeated in Taiwan.

Unfortunately, it is by no means certain that the rush of the two China-centric cross-strait neo-authoritarian parties to embrace after decades of bitter and bloody hostility will ensure that state repression or even state terror will not be repeated on Taiwan's soil.

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There has already been a worrisome "rollback" of human rights in Taiwan in "convergence" with PRC standards, as shown by the KMT government's ending of a five year moratorium on the execution of death sentences, growing government and party interference in news freedom and its imposition of arbitrary bans on entry into Taiwan by persons disliked by Beijing, such as exiled Uyghur activist Rebiya Kadeer.

An even greater threat lies in the secretive KMT-CCP dialogue and the KMT's exclusion of substantive legislative monitoring or citizen ratification of the ECFA, which point toward an emerging tacit KMT-CCP "co-governance" of the Taiwan Strait.

Ma is also sowing dangerous seeds with his claims that Taiwan is not a "state," that the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait "belong to the Chinese race-nation" and that cross-strait issues will be resolved on the basis of the wisdom of "Chinese culture."

A craven "peace" that masks the imposition a new colonialist KMT-CCP "co-governance," rolls back human rights standards and denies the 23 million Taiwan people their right of democratic self-determination will not bring "peace in our times" but open a political Pandora's box that could well end in a new era of state repression or terror.

Source: [Taiwan News Online - Editorial 2010/07/19](#)