

Roots of repression lie in Ma's family line

Written by James Wang 王健

Friday, 04 April 2014 08:21

I was impressed by the words of a certain young person who said during the Sunflower protest that their parents gained the right to vote because their grandparents started a revolution, but because their parents then voted unwisely, the young generation are now having to revolt again.

These words are not only moving, but also a fair approximation of the truth. However, they are not words that apply to President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and his parents and grandparents.

A look back at the past few generations of the Ma dynasty reveals that the family is reactionary through and through — it is in their political DNA.

Ma's father, Ma Ho-ling (馬鶴齡), fell foul of the communist revolution in which Chinese President Xi Jinping's (習近平) father was involved, and fled to Taiwan as a reactionary exile; a fact he often proclaimed after arriving.

Ma Ho-ling continued resisting revolutionary movements after fleeing China, except this time it was the push by Taiwanese to secure democracy and human rights that he attempted to stamp out with violence. He had no need for votes: His power was derived entirely from his family background and his status. Ma Ho-ling believed these were sufficient entitlements to permanent power that could not be challenged — except, as it turned out, by a revolution.

True to the saying “like father, like son,” the reactionary patriarch sired a reactionary heir. The exiled Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) regime to which the elder Ma belonged suppressed the popular democracy movement in Taiwan, leading to the 1979 Kaohsiung Incident. Father and son tried to demonize the democracy movement — Ma Ho-ling in Taiwan and his son from the US, where he wrote misleading articles on behalf of the KMT that were packed with untruths characterizing the democracy activists as a “mob” and arguing for the need to suppress them.

According to US diplomatic reports from that period, the authorities in Taiwan orchestrated a riot, employing hired thugs to infiltrate a crowd of protesters and provoking police officers to incite violence. Concurrently, the police were instructed not to retaliate, even if they sustained heavy injuries, so as to highlight the thuggish elements within the “mob” in order to turn public

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opinion against the democracy activists.

Ma Ying-jeou was not only opposed to revolution during the Formosa Incident — as the Kaohsiung Incident is also known — he was also opposed to giving people the right to vote in 1991 when then-president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) championed direct presidential elections in response to students' demands for democratic reform, preferring to maintain indirect elections.

Because some of the parents of the Sunflower movement's generation "voted for the wrong person" by supporting the reactionary Ma Ying-jeou, the students have been forced to take to the streets again for the sake of democracy.

From his position of power and his arrogance, the president has reacted to the Sunflower movement much the same way as he did to the Formosa Incident: violently suppressing protesters, distorting the truth and attempting to shift the blame onto the demonstrators.

Fortunately, the rise of social media, the lifting of martial law and the end of media censorship, all of which were won by the previous generation, has prevented the likes of Ma Ying-jeou and his father from being able to conceal the truth from the public. The Sunflower movement has shone a spotlight on the flaws of the nation's constitutional government and the non-transparent way in which it works. It has revealed Ma Ying-jeou and the people around him to be insincere, anti-democratic, unrepentant reactionaries.

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Translated by Paul Cooper

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2014/04/04](#)