

Mao seems to have had last laugh on Chiang

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Chinese history leading up to and immediately after World War II was the story of the Republic of China (ROC) under Chiang Kai-shek's (蔣介石) Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) — which was to rule the later People's Republic of China (PRC) — under Mao Zedong (毛澤東).

The KMT and CCP were separate entities, albeit organized along similar lines, both being structured on the Leninist party model. The regimes they control continue their shared history even today, 65 years later, the one ghosting the other.

Former premier Hau Pei-tsun (郝柏村), who served as Chiang's chief aide from 1965 to 1970, is probably his foremost expositor living today, something he himself would freely admit to.

Reminiscing this year on the 77th anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the battle between the ROC army and the Japanese Imperial Army that marked the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War, Hau was keen to make the point that, having entered the Central Military Academy, formerly the influential Whampoa Military Academy, in 1936, he was prevented from returning home by the Liangguang Incident (淞滬事變) of that summer, which he said was caused by prominent military commanders in Guangdong and Guangxi, Chen Jitang (陳炯明), Li Zongren (李宗仁) and Bai Chongxi (白崇禧), sending troops north on the pretext of opposing Japanese aggression, but in reality attempting to attack Chiang. This was a swipe by Hau, ever loyal to Chiang, at Bai, father of Taiwanese writer Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇).

Both the KMT and the CCP marked the anniversary of the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. The KMT has always taken credit for opposing Japanese aggression, while the CCP has always said it was the one who fought the Japanese. Both sides have continued this mantra even after squabbling over the right to proclaim themselves the rightful rulers of China from either side of the Taiwan Strait, and do so now because there is nothing like a bit of anti-Japanese rhetoric to get those nationalist juices flowing, and unite us all under the banner of "being Chinese." Japan must surely regret invading China during its imperialist period. It is still making reparations for that endeavor even now.

Chiang's self-proclaimed spokesman Hau sang an excerpt from PRC National Anthem March of the Volunteers, saying that it was a song about resisting Japanese aggression. So what if it is a song about resisting Japanese aggression? Would he have dared hum that during the

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Martial Law period in Taiwan, when Chiang was ruling with an iron fist and would have spat blood at the mere mention of the Chinese communists?

History is fickle like that. Before, many a person would have come to an untimely end in Taiwan if even suspected of contemplating communist sympathies, and what is Hau saying now? It seems many appreciate his words, of a sense of nationalism uniting the Chinese people, but nothing has changed: The PRC still wants to see the eradication of the ROC, once and for all, while ROC army generals are flocking to the other side of the Strait, now that the Chiang dynasty is over, to return to the shores of the Motherland, the spiritual home of Whampoa.

It is no wonder people say Mao had the last laugh on Chiang. Not only did he send him packing to Taiwan in 1949, but after Chiang died, many of the generals who formerly served under him, not to mention senior members of his own party, have been rushing to the China from which he was exiled, and to which he was never able to return.

The preoccupation with a shared Chinese ethnic background is a drug: It is both a sedative and a hallucinogen. And some people are evidently still tripping. Chiang never stood a chance.

Lee Min-yung is a poet.

Translated by Paul Cooper

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