

Time to end servile Chiang worship

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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Despite repeated promises from President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) that the government will continue to do everything possible to compensate the families of 228 Incident victims, the majority of them have reacted with skepticism. Perhaps the president should realize that what his administration is lacking is sincerity.

Ma bows, laments, admits that what the government has done is far from enough, yet year after year, the victims' families slam the government's efforts to address their grievances.

If Ma is confused as to why his efforts have not been worthwhile, the answer is simple: Everyone understands that all the hot air is simply part of a political show.

Despite making a show of admitting the mistakes of its past, the government remains reluctant to tell the public who was responsible for the slaughter. We still do not know the names of the military officers or government officials who ordered the massacre — which included the killing and kidnapping of negotiators chosen to represent the public to talk with government officials.

Most importantly, the head of the government at the time is still officially considered a “great man” by the government, and by the president.

Most of the victims' families — as well as historians specializing in the field — would agree that Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) should be held responsible for the massacre, as well as for the decades-long White Terror era that saw the execution and imprisonment of thousands of political dissidents. However, Ma refuses to hold him responsible.

Whenever he speaks about Chiang's role in the 228 Massacre and the White Terror era, Ma says that, though Chiang did some evil things, he still “made more contributions to Taiwan than mistakes,” and each year, on the anniversary of Chiang's death, Ma makes an official visit to his tomb to pay respect.

It is unimaginable that any national leader of a democracy would so explicitly show their

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admiration to a deceased dictator. Try to think how the Germans or people around the world would react if a German chancellor decided to pay respect to Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and say that he has “made more contributions than mistakes?”

What would people think if a German chancellor attended a Holocaust memorial service, and apologized to victims and their families while still showing admiration for Hitler?

Moreover, Chiang’s tomb is maintained by government funds, and his statues can be found across the nation. Chiang’s portrait is still on the nation’s coins and banknotes and a large memorial hall surrounded by gardens built in his name still stands in the middle of the nation’s capital. There is no sign that the government has truly reflected and sincerely admitted to the mistakes of the past.

Other than providing monetary compensation to victims’ families, the government still has a long way to go before there can be true reconciliation over the tragedy.

The people of Taiwan deserve to know what really happened during the 228 Incident and the names of the military and civilian officials responsible for the massacre must be made known. The worship of Chiang must stop, and, while recognizing victims who were wrongfully killed or jailed, those who bravely took up arms to fight against the dictatorship of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) at the time should be honored as heroes.

Only when these steps are followed through can the government say that it has put its full effort into dealing with the 228 Incident, and that there might be a possibility for true reconciliation.

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