

Although running for the presidency nearly three decades after the end of the Martial Law era, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Eric Chu (朱立倫) seems to be unable to forget the party's "glorious" authoritarian past.

Yesterday marked the 27th anniversary of the death of former president Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國), and President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) — along with Chu — traveled to Chiang's mausoleum in Taoyuan's Dasi Township (大溪) to pay their respects.

At the event, both Ma and Chu praised Chiang's contributions to Taiwan, with Chu urging all KMT members to stand together — keep Chiang's spirit in mind — and work hard right until the end of the campaign.

"The spirit of Chiang," was the virtue of being able to face up to challenges and difficulties, Chu said, adding that as then-premier Chiang in 1974 announced the "10 Major Construction Projects," which seemed an "impossible" task at first, but were eventually completed.

It is somewhat chastening that Chu — the KMT's chairman and presidential candidate — is openly praising such an authoritarian leader.

Chiang Ching-kuo succeeded his father, Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石), as the leader of both the KMT and the nation after his father's death.

He might have appeared to be a little more open-minded, but he showed no reluctance in repressing the pro-democracy movement, while interfering in elections to generate favorable results for the governing party.

He was involved in the Kaohsiung Incident in 1979, in which several political dissidents, such as former vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮), former Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) chairman Haung Hsin-chieh (黃信介), veteran activist Shih Ming-te (石明哲), former Examination Yuan president Yao Chia-wen (姚嘉文), and Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu (陳菊) were arrested, tried

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in a military court and given harsh sentences.

In addition, a person — whose identity still remains unknown — broke into former DPP chairman Lin I-hsiung's (林義雄) house and stabbed his 60-year-old mother and twin daughters to death in 1980.

In 1984, writer Henry Liu (劉以鬯), who had migrated to the US and became a naturalized US citizen, was shot to death at his own home in California by a gunman sent by a military intelligence agency in Taiwan, allegedly because he was writing a biography of Chiang Ching-kuo that exposed issues that the government did not want the public to know about.

Aside from repression of political dissident, Chiang Ching-kuo did not have the democratic process in mind when it came to making major decisions either.

Late economics minister Li Kwoh-ting (李國鼎) — who served in Chiang Ching-kuo's Cabinet — said that no one knew about the launch of the 10 Major Construction Projects until Chiang Ching-kuo made the formal announcement.

Chu seems to have the same mindset when it comes to making policy decisions.

On Tuesday, when asked by al-Jazeera about her stance on cross-strait relations, DPP presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said in English: "It's a matter of communication, communication and communication."

Chu later criticized Tsai's remark, saying that a national leader must be determined and should not always try to solve problems via meetings and communication.

Is there anything wrong with a democratically elected leader attending meetings and communicating with different parties when it comes to solving problems?

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If making unilateral decisions and the veneration of a dictator are what Chu advocates during his election campaign, it is a relief he is unlikely to be voted in as the KMT's next autocratic ruler on Saturday.

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