

## A lesson in what White Terror was

Written by Shih Ming-hsiung 謝明興

Sunday, 07 January 2018 06:22

---

After Martial Law had been promulgated and imposed throughout the nation at the end of 1949, Taiwan formally entered the White Terror era.

People who held the slightest grudge against someone could simply file a report with the police and the relevant special agency, saying that this person had complained about the government, read novels written by left-wing writers, participated in meetings with a reading group; or that they had either been held captive by the Chinese Communist Party's Eighth Route Army or stayed in an area occupied by the communists on the mainland yet had never turned themselves over to the authorities in Taiwan.

The person would become a target, hunted down and caught up in the iron net cast during the White Terror era.

Although martial law was lifted more than 38 years later and Taiwanese have experienced several transitions of political power since then, and democracy, freedom and human rights are cherished and valued, history textbooks in schools still never clearly explain the facts of the White Terror era, which are horrendously brutal and cruel.

As a result, figures like New Party spokesman and youth wing executive Wang Ping-chung (王平仲) pop up in the political scene, showing very little understanding of the true horrors of the White Terror era and even glamorizing this horrible past.

Having personally experienced political persecution and survived the White Terror era, I believe I am fully justified in giving a personal account of what the White Terror era was really like to the "Wang Ping-chungs" of the world.

First, I would like to ask New Party Chairman Yok Mu-ming (楊慕明), Wang and those of his ilk: Is the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the other side of the Taiwan Strait an enemy of Taiwan?

## A lesson in what White Terror was

Written by Shih Ming-hsiung 謝明興

Sunday, 07 January 2018 06:22

---

Not long ago, Li Kexin (李凱欣), a minister at the Chinese embassy in the US, in a speech at the embassy openly threatened both Americans and Taiwanese when he said: “The day that a US Navy vessel arrives in Kaohsiung is the day that our People’s Liberation Army unifies Taiwan with military force.”

As a high-ranking diplomatic official, Li should have been a messenger of peace. Making offensive and threatening remarks with a swaggering attitude and defiant tone such as this, one can only wonder if Li still bears the UN Charter in mind and if he really cares about democracy, freedom and universal human rights.

“You just can’t repeat the White Terror by using the National Security Act (国家安全法) against these kids,” Yok said when Wang and his New Party colleagues were detained for questioning after the search of their homes. “What do you think they are able to subvert at such a young age? It seems to me that they were only collecting information.”

Soon after Yok’s comments, the whole pan-blue camp — having never experienced real White Terror — shouted in anger: “The DPP government is implementing White Terror! It’s Green Terror! They are Nazis!”

These people would never care to do a little bit of research and read through the documentation on White Terror victims, and they do not have the slightest idea about what kind of suffering the White Terror brought to people in the past.

Ignorant as they are, they think the Ministry of Justice’s Investigation Bureau (MJIB) is bringing back the White Terror era by conducting searches at people’s residences backed up by summonses and warrants.

Moreover, they overlooked the facts that Wang and his colleagues were released without bail after a few hours of questioning and that Wang earlier that day was able to film his confrontation with the MJIB officials for an online live broadcast when he was requested to open the door.

## A lesson in what White Terror was

Written by Shih Ming-hsiung 許雪姬

Sunday, 07 January 2018 06:22

---

The day after their release, Wang and his colleague Huo Han-ting (許漢廷), another New Party youth wing executive, held a news conference at which they condemned the “Green Terror” and announced their decision to run for Taipei city councilor in the upcoming elections, as if the act of defecting to China and promoting unification were heroic.

It never seems to have occurred to Wang and his colleagues that they might just have immediately been shot if they had lived during the White Terror era. They would have been unlikely to survive, let alone allowed to return home in one piece and deliver a brazen news conference afterwards.

As a political victim myself, I would like to delineate for these “Wang Ping-chungs” the scenes of plainclothes special investigation officers coming to homes and arresting people on the spot during the White Terror era. It seems ridiculous to me that the “Green Terror” they have been shouting about consists of special, free shuttle bus transportation, perhaps even snacks provided during questioning, pauses allowed for a bathroom break and an intermission to take a rest.

Back in 1962, I returned to my home in Kaohsiung for the summer vacation from the National Defense Medical Center, where I studied. One day, upon being identified by the district police officer, my elder brother Shih Ming-cheng (許明成) was forcefully carried away without warrant by several strong bruisers.

About 30 hours later, as I was walking out of the shower, the same police officer brought a few more bruisers with him, shouting for “Shih Ming-hsiung.” As soon as the police officer pointed at me, two of these big guys rushed forward and violently grabbed me, one on each side, again without showing any summons or warrant.

“Please allow me at least to wear something,” I told them.

“There is no need for that. You will be back soon,” they shouted in reply.

With only a pair of khaki pants and blue-and-white slippers on, I was taken away. It was not

## A lesson in what White Terror was

Written by Shih Ming-hsiung 許雪姬

Sunday, 07 January 2018 06:22

---

until five years later that my elder brother and I returned to Kaohsiung from Taiyuan Prison in Taitung County.

I was accused of helping establish an insurgent group named the “Taiwan Independence League” (台灣獨立聯盟) and the evidence they provided against us was simply that we were having a meal prepared by my elder brother in the fall of 1959 for my younger brother Shih Ming-te (許明燾) and a few of his classmates from Kaohsiung Senior High School, as Shih Ming-te, who had just graduated from the artillery school, was preparing to leave for duty as an artillery officer on Kinmen.

With the exception of my elder brother, who was 23 at the time, the other people who were arrested — regardless of whether they attended the meal — were no older than 18 and were harshly interrogated and forced to make confessions under duress: The five who were given the lightest sentences were sentenced to five years in prison; four received 12-year sentences, others were given seven and 10-year sentences, and two even received life imprisonment.

One of Shih Ming-te’s classmates was studying at the Republic of China Military Academy (國軍軍校) at the time, and for that reason alone the special agent decided to arrest all students at the academy who were registered as hailing from Taiwan. It was not until the superintendent of the academy appealed to the higher authorities that a large group of these students were released.

Among other victims in this case, 32-year-old Sung Ching-sung (許清松), a worker with only an elementary-school education, was sentenced to death.

Having worked as a staff reporter of the Taiwan Tribune (台灣新報), a dangwai (黨外, “outside the party”) newspaper founded by Lee Wan-chu (李萬居) and other eminent figures, Sung was first charged with an offense carrying a minimum 10-year sentence in accordance with Article 2.3 of the Act for the Control and Punishment of Rebellion (叛亂條例), but in the formal verdict, he was sentenced to death in accordance with the infamous Article 2.1 of the same act.

These kinds of atrocities and misconduct are what really happened during the White Terror era and should be documented in textbooks.

## A lesson in what White Terror was

Written by Shih Ming-hsiung 謝明雄

Sunday, 07 January 2018 06:22

---

When the “Taiwan Independence League” case appeared, Shih Ming-te was transferred from Little Kinmen back to Taiwan, where he passed through several torturing institutions. When a military court finally sentenced him to life imprisonment, he had already had numerous teeth broken during torture. He was not allowed to write home, let alone see a dentist. In his early 20s, he had very few teeth left.

Here is another true story: In 1954, a crippled and illiterate old man named Kuo Chih-kao (郭奇高) was farming on a mountain. One day a stranger came to his house and asked for some water to drink, and Kuo, a generous man, invited the stranger to share a meal — a meager meal of only rice with sweet potato and preserved radish omelet — and to stay in his little cottage overnight.

A couple of weeks later, the district police officer brought along several burly grim-faced men and detained Kuo, bringing him to the MJIB. The special agent claimed that the stranger Kuo had invited to dine and stay overnight with him was a “communist bandit.” Kuo was subsequently charged with “assisting communist bandits” and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

In 1962, as Kuo was serving his time in the Ankeng Military Prison (安康監獄) in Sindian (新店), where he was assigned to tend the pigs in the open prison, he applied for bereavement leave with a monitor staff member to accompany him after his mother died. His application was rejected. Desperate, Kuo secretly ran away and went home, but he returned to the prison just in time for the roll call that night.

After this incident, Kuo was given extra prison time on account of his “inclination to escape” and was detained in the same cell as me. Humpbacked, crippled, illiterate and handicapped after having fallen from a tree as a child, Kuo was never set free by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government. He had to serve 10 years in prison only because of his kindness to a stranger.

That is what an abhorrent regime it was.

To make this incident even more horrendously ridiculous, Kuo was soon transferred back to

## A lesson in what White Terror was

Written by Shih Ming-hsiung 謝明雄

Sunday, 07 January 2018 06:22

---

the open prison to tend pigs, because nobody else was taking care of the livestock, the selling of which made officers and soldiers some extra money.

During the White Terror era, there was no such thing as a summons or a warrant for arresting and killing people. A few ruffians would appear out of nowhere, rush into anyone's home and bust people on the spot.

As political power has shifted, the Ministry of Education should require that the suffering and the prosecution of political victims under the White Terror is documented in detail in textbooks on the modern history of Taiwan. That way, posterity would gain a better understanding of what the White Terror really was, and Wang Ping-chung and those of his ilk would be able to cherish more the basic human rights, democracy and freedoms they enjoy.

Succumbing to the authoritarian regime of the PRC will do them no good at all — and the Taiwanese government will definitely not treat them the way China has treated Lee Ming-che (李明哲).

*Shih Ming-hsiung is a political victim.*

Translated by Chang Ho-ming

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2018/01/07](#)