

Victims paid for freedoms Ko enjoys

Written by Shih Ming-hsiung
Thursday, 17 October 2019 06:00

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) said in an interview on Oct. 3 with an online news site that “Presidential Office Secretary-General Chen Chu (陳 Chu) is a sinner against democracy: She thinks that just because she was imprisoned in the first half of her life she can get away with doing whatever she wants, however wrong, in the latter half of her life.”

Ko had also said before — to inflate the influence of the Taiwan People’s Party (TPP), the party he launched to boost his own reputation — that the officials surrounding President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) are all corrupt.

Tsai and Chen should consider suing him.

As a political victim of the White Terror era, like Chen, I have no choice, but to voice my condemnation.

My brother, Shih Ming-te (石明哲), who spearheaded the protest that became known as the Kaohsiung Incident in 1979, became a wanted man, described by media across the nation as a notorious bandit leader.

His photograph was displayed on wanted posters, and put up on notice boards and utility poles in all train stations and ports. The secret police and the state security mechanism watched our homes and harassed our family.

The eight defendants accused under military law were all indicted under Article 2, Paragraph 1 of the Punishment of Rebellion Act (叛亂罪), which is punishable by death.

A climate of terror dominated the whole island at that time. Thanks to advice given to then-president Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) by international human rights advocates, as well as local and foreign academics, the outstanding oral argument of the eight brave defendants during the trial, and the mostly objective coverage of the print media, Taiwan received the opportunity to take a step toward democracy after this.

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Even more commendable is that family members and lawyers of the Kaohsiung Incident's victims subsequently ran for office.

If not for the sacrifice of these victims, who after their release from prison fought for democracy and freedom, as well as for citizens voting directly for municipality mayors and the president, Ko, a doctor at National Taiwan University Hospital during the Incident, would not have had the opportunity to be elected as Taipei mayor, nor would he have the chance to run for president.

If not for the help of the Democratic Progressive Party in the 2014 Taipei mayoral election, Ko would not have defeated Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) candidate Sean Lien (連戰), nor would he have the chance to insult Chen and Tsai.

During his 2014 campaign, Ko, fishing for sympathy, said that he was a family member of a 228 Incident victim. He won the election. At that time, he boasted that he would clear up five controversial development projects, but failed to follow through on his promise. He was re-elected last year by a narrow margin of only about 3,000 votes.

Ko now aspires to higher office and has his eye on the 2024 presidential race. Failing to become the People First Party candidate, he established his own party, for which he appropriated the name of a party founded in 1927 by Taiwanese democracy pioneer Chiang Wei-shui (蔣渭水).

He tried to get Hon Hai Precision Industry Co founder Terry Gou (郭台銘), Taiwan's richest man, to sponsor the TPP legislative candidates. On winning enough seats in the Legislative Yuan, the TPP would be eligible to nominate its own presidential candidate, namely Ko.

This ungrateful, pro-China politician becoming eligible to run for the presidency would surely be another disaster for Taiwan. Hopefully, nobody would be blind enough to vote for Ko and the TPP.

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Shih Ming-hsiung is a political victim.

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