

Tears, controversy mark 228 memorial

Written by Taipei Times

Sunday, 01 March 2015 08:08 -



Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je, left, and President Ma Ying-jeou attend a ceremony commemorating the victims of the 228 Incident in the 228 Peace Memorial Park in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Liao Chen-huei, Taipei Times

The painful history of the 228 Incident — and the torment and grief that families of its victims still feel — were brought into sharp focus yesterday by Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) when he delivered an emotional speech at the government's memorial ceremony, after which it appeared that he refused to shake hands with President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九).

During his address at the 228 Memorial Park in Taipei yesterday, Ko choked up and was forced to pause several times when talking about his grandfather, Ko Shih-yuan (柯錫淵), who survived the 228 Incident in 1947, but died three years later of the injuries he reportedly suffered after torture and beatings by Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) troops.

Ko's father, Ko Cheng-fa (柯景峰), attended the event.

It was Ko's first time addressing a national audience at a 228 memorial since taking office as the capital's mayor.

Ma, Premier Mao Chih-kuo (毛治國) and other KMT government officials were also in attendance.

Ko is the first Taipei mayor whose family suffered directly in the 228 Massacre, and he was invited to represent victims' families.

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Observers said that his taking the central stage at the memorial was an important occasion, charged with political symbolism and historic meaning for Taiwanese.

“Just how painful was the aftermath of the 228 Incident? It is suffering that went beyond words. My father never wanted to talk about what happened to his father. He did not want our generation to bear the suffering of the older generation,” Ko said.

“We must have the truth; then we may forgive. Only then can we have reconciliation and peace,” Ko added. “We must not allow such a tragedy to happen to our children and our grandchildren. This is the responsibility of our generation. Only when there is justice in government can we have harmony in society — and have a future for our nation.”

“Not knowing much about my grandfather, I learned about him from history and from old photographs. I got to know about my grandfather only by the tears my father shed at each year’s 228 commemoration services,” Ko said.

“During that sorrowful and grieving time of 1947, many Taiwanese lost their families, relatives and friends,” he said. “Society also lost many intellectuals and its elite. It also left a legacy of fear and terror in Taiwan’s history, which resulted in silence and divisions between people, creating an invisible, cold-hearted wall that still divides society today.”

Ko frequently wiped away tears.

After his speech, Ko twice appeared to decline shaking hands with Ma.

As Ma first offered a handshake, Ko waved his hand in a gesture of refusal after leaving the podium. At the end of the ceremony, Ma shook hands with family members of victims and again offered his hand to Ko, who apparently refused again.

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Ko's mother, Ho Jui-ying (何瑋瑋), dismissed speculation over her son's behavior when reporters sought comment later in the afternoon about the episode, which triggered a flurry of media reports.

It would have been rude for Ko to shake hands with the president, because the mayor was holding a soiled tissue, Ho said.

"[Ko] could not just throw the tissue on the ground out there. With the tissue in his hand, he was unable to shake Ma's hand," she said.

During yesterday's event, several groups organized separate protests against Ma and the KMT outside the ceremony venue.

Protest organizers and participants including the Taiwanese National Party, the Organization for Taiwanese National Declaration and the Taijimen group, which led to brief confrontations with police officers deployed to provide security.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2015/03/01](#)