

A Brief Report on Taiwan's National Legislative Yuan Elections, 19 December 1992

by Linda Gail Arrigo*

Gold cows are no longer idols in Taiwan, and the change comes none too soon. After the December 1991 elections for the National Assembly—the first time that body had been subject to full replacement since the 1947 elections in mainland China—it seemed that “gold cows” (moneyed interests bonded to the ruling party) would take up where martial law had left off. But now after the December 1992 elections for the Legislative Yuan, we can see that gold cows are no longer fashionable for public display. Their thick hides have taken verbal abuse from all sides, ruling and opposition parties alike, though those that have survived the test may still be bullish and looking forward to regaining their election investment through construction kickbacks, as usual. It seems the biggest problem for the gold cows is that the electorate can be bought once, twice, or thrice over, but does not stay bought.

That's the heart of the matter. Now let's look at the specifics and their implications.

After major student demonstrations in March and April 1990, the Kuomintang put forth a number of reforms. For the first time since 1947 the Legislative Yuan and the National Assembly, which governs the constitution and elects the president, were to be elected by the populace under effective control of the Republic of China, in other words Taiwan and the offshore islands of Kinmen and Matsu. As if to maintain a figment of the previous structure of the legislature, out of a total of 161 seats in the Legislative Yuan, 117 seats were to be elected from districts in Taiwan, 6 from indigenous peoples, and 2 from the offshore islands, supplemented with 36 seats (6 supposedly representing overseas Chinese) to be apportioned among nominees of

political parties according to the total votes received by their candidates in district races. The effect of this “proportional party vote” system is to give the two major party machines the power to dispense substantial favors through the proportional seats. In addition, the small and dispersed populations of the indigenous peoples and offshore islands are fairly easily controlled by the ruling party. Voting is mostly by plurality, with several seats elected from each district, which might give a chance to small or thinly spread parties, but a two-party habit seems set. In the voting of 19 December 1992, voter participation of those eligible to vote was higher than usual, 72 percent.

Nominees and approved candidates of the ruling party, the Kuomintang (KMT, Chinese Nationalist Party), received 95 seats with 53 percent of the popular vote. Kuomintang members who ran as independents gained another 7 seats with about 8 percent of the votes. Out of these 102 winning KMT candidates, 33 were incumbents. Though still holding onto a comfortable two-thirds of the legislature, the KMT considered the polling such a setback to its accustomed monopoly that the party's secretary-general, James Soong, proffered his resignation. The relative advance of the opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party, was not the only matter for concern.

It seems clear the Kuomintang is now a single ruling party in name only, with its split factions popularly labeled “Taiwanese KMT,” supporting President Lee Teng-hui, and “Chinese KMT,” supporting the retired military officer, Hau Pei-tsun, or “mainstream” and “nonmainstream” respectively. These are the disparate heirs to Chiang Ching-kuo's 1970s opening to the new Taiwanese bourgeoisie and his perfection of a techno-bureaucratic export-economy regime under U.S. auspices. The former faction is still in the majority with about 60 seats, but stinging from electoral defeats of its Taiwanese moneybags nominees; it was also embarrassed by a few defections to an explicit articulation of “One China, One Taiwan” (separate sovereignty of Taiwan and the PRC). The latter faction found big-scoring stars for its New KMT Alliance in

*The author of this article spent December 1992 campaigning in Tainan as the spouse of Shih Ming-teh, who has also been elected minority whip for the current session of the Legislative Yuan.



Lee Chen-yuan, venerated elder of the 1990 students' and professors' democracy movement, endorsing medical doctor Shen Fu-hsiung, the high-scoring DPP candidate in Taipei City. Running mainly lawyers, doctors, and writers who have become well known in the last decade of battles for civil rights, the DPP took a surprising number of seats in Taipei and its surrounding county. In the December 1992 election there was new support from the middle-class and professional sectors of the population, even government-employed clerks and teachers, who are said to have recognized the role of the opposition in the government's cutting back its interference in their work and vying for their loyalty with better salaries and benefits.

may well have been strong-arm methods of soliciting contributions. The financial and moral support of doctors, especially respected in Taiwan, and the endorsement of the venerated elder of the 1990 students' and professors' democracy movement, Dr. Lee Cheng-yuan, was a boon for most DPP candidates. The Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, a modernizing force since its founding in 1873, mobilized as usual to support Taiwan independence champions.

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Overall the election was seen as a symptom of polarization of political opinion among Taiwan's populace. In the words of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the election "hollowed out the moderate, Taiwanese centre of the KMT. . . . But it was also

the wing of the party most identified with heavy campaign spending financed by business groups, reliance on local factional networks and vote-buying." We might suspect that the recent frequent leaking of damaging financial information is a manifestation of decreasing unity within the ruling party and its flagging power to apply discipline. There are also other angles to be seen: With the decrease of Cold War tensions and the need to set practical policies for dealing with China, the "Taiwanese KMT" is increasingly at odds with the "Chinese KMT" and indistinguishable from the DPP; it has seemed to be merely too coy and indecisive to put forward a consistent position. The Wisdom Coalition (Chi Szu Hui), the vanguard of KMT Taiwanization, is now down to 20 seats from their previous 30 in the legislature. But with continual jockeying and defections among ruling party factions that now also pander to public opinion, and the new strong DPP block in the National Legislature, the situation is likely to evolve rapidly. The outcome could be a more explicit overture to the opposition party by President Lee Teng-hui's forces, and in fact that is already rumored.

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Let us return to the prelude to the election. In this last year the issue of gold cows was fed by revelations of stock market manipulation and of dubious government oversight of the new freeway construction, notably a huge disparity in the "Eighteenth Bid": the difference between the total bid and the payments to the subcontractors implied a rake-off of nearly half the bid. A KMT Tainan city councilman who made an unsuccessful bid for the legislature, Wang Tao-fu, charged in a campaign speech that DPP legislator Ms. Yeh Chu-lan violated his human rights merely by naming him in connection with this scandal. The public, with well-honed cynicism, does not believe that any indictment proceeds unless it is exposed to the eye of the media.

In fact, candidates now vie to be crusaders in a cause célèbre, and claim to be the subject of government or other attacks, even to the point of staging their own assassination attempts, as was suspected for one candidate. Being arrested for illegal stock dealings paradoxically appeared to propel one independent with 24K gold cow quality, Oung Da-ming, into the legislature; some of the public is skeptical even of government prosecutions. It is in this context that Jaw Shau-kang, former head of the Environmental Protection Agency, and Wong Chien-hsuan, former finance minister, became wildly popular in their independent bids for the legislature that defied the nomination choices of mainstream-camp James Soong (Sung Ts'u-yu), secretary-general of the KMT. They polled 236,000 and 129,000 respectively, pulling votes away from other KMT hopefuls. Both had resigned from their posts with protests against moneyed interests; Wang had yet to fully unveil his proposal for a tax on land speculation, but it had already set off an uproar. Critics,



Wong Chien-hsuan and Jaw Shau-kang riding off to the Legislative Yuan in the name of land reform and the environment while watched by those they have failed, the environmental student union and advocates of fair housing. Jaw had been the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, and Wong the finance minister; both resigned from their posts in protest of moneyed interests and became wildly popular in their independent bids for the legislature in opposition to the nomination choices of the mainstream KMT camp. This and the next two cartoons are by Tung Chin-mao and appeared in *Lei Sheng* (Lei's voice), no. 11, a magazine published by Lei Yu-ch'i, a candidate who used to be an anticommunist extremist, then flirted with the DPP, and now supports Lee Teng-hui.

including the DPP, charged the proposal was just another scam to fill government coffers, but some social activists reflected that if fairly applied—a dubious “if” in Taiwan’s world of *kuanhsi* (connections and pull)—the tax could perhaps be used to help redress housing inequalities.

The issue of national identity in the campaign brew is complex but may amount to little more than the rationale for holding onto or seeking power in a de facto sovereign state. In December 1991 when the DPP did poorly in the National Assembly elections following fast on its October party congress resolution to advocate establishment of the Republic of Taiwan, the ruling KMT made much propaganda of this supposed electoral rejection of “Taiwan independence,” and even the *New York Times* ate it up. A year later, it seems that moving toward sovereignty for Taiwan is now generally accepted as desirable, and the issue is rather whether and how it can be achieved. President Lee Teng-hui has had difficulty restraining Wisdom Coalition members who publicly promoted a “One China, One Taiwan” policy. Expelling Chen Tze-nan from the KMT perhaps just pushed him up over the margin of victory in a close Kaohsiung race; but the party conveniently forgot the excommunication and listed him as a KMT winner. On the other side, DPP candidates and overseas dissidents seem to compete for the title of most fervent Taiwanese nationalist, with commemorations for victims of the 28 February 1947 massacre and reverent raisings of the proposed new flag.

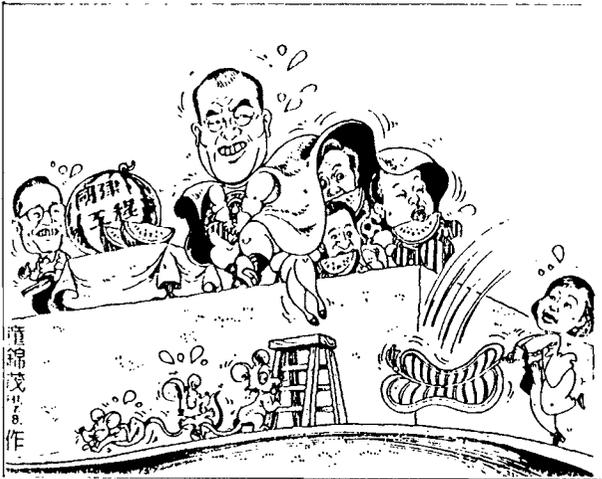
Premier Hau Pei-tsun was the popular target in this campaign, the man everyone loved to hate. While all those supporting Taiwan’s sovereignty were gratified that President Bush

approved sale of F-16 fighter planes to Taiwan over Beijing’s objections, the Taiwan public wondered why Hau had to buy so many at such an inflated price. Election ads by the head of the Wisdom Coalition, Lin Yu-hsiang, lashed out at Hau for holding China dearer than Taiwan. Candidates seemed to be playing to the populace’s accumulated ire at Hau’s past attacks on labor activists and environmentalists, among others. Hau’s admonishments that China would attack if Taiwan declared sovereignty earned him the name of speaking on behalf of Beijing; he and his camp seemed hard put to defend themselves against the renewed charge that they are planning to sell out Taiwan to the People’s Republic. The same was said of the *Lien-ho Jih-pao* (United Daily News) for its constant transmission of threats emanating from Beijing; a DPP-led drive to boycott the newspaper led to a significant decrease in its subscriptions and advertising revenue. To rebut these charges, Lee Ching-hua (Ph.D. in history from New York University, son of elder KMT statesman Li Huan, and a key member of the New KMT Alliance) argued in paid newspaper advertisements in the *Independent Evening News*, on 17 December 1992 (p. 12), that hysteria against those who cherish the Republic of China was a plot of Taiwan independence advocates both in the KMT and in the DPP. Paradoxically, those who were previously the most paranoid about contacts with Chinese communists now must promote fraternalization to revive China nostalgia.⁴ Lee proclaimed his major policy initiative, air and sea links with the mainland, in the shrill idiom of the Red Guards: “Direct transport is without blame! Direct transport is reasonable!”

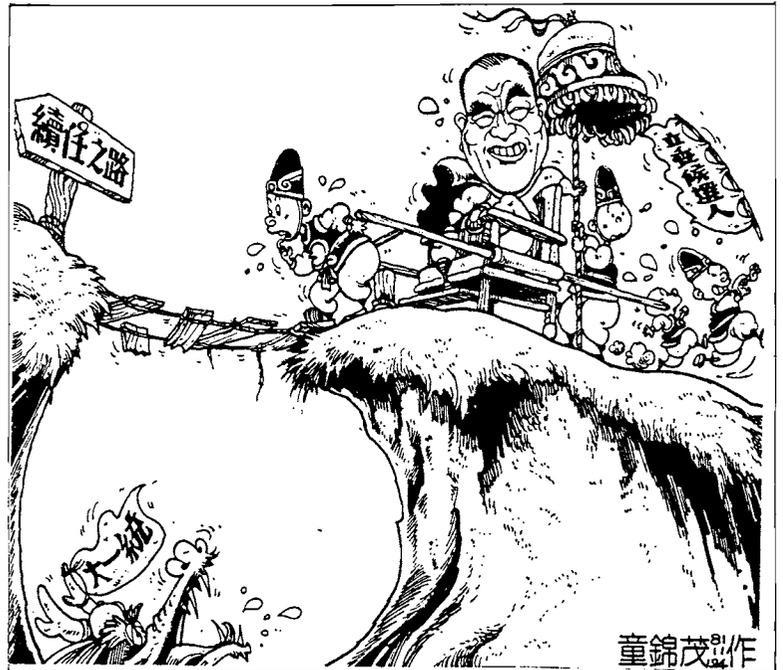
But aside from those of the New KMT Alliance, with its symbol of a dynamic arrow skimming round the party’s twelve-beamed sun, very few KMT candidates flew the party flag, and most seemed to be trying to make themselves over in the style of the DPP with protestations of Taiwanese identity and humble origins. One such candidate in Taipei county appeared on his own poster in the trappings of an old-fashioned farmer: plaited-palm raincoat, round bamboo-leaf hat, straw sandals, and hoe. Ironically, as the candidates closer to the ruling party dressed down, appearing on the streets in jogging suits and tennis shoes, the stars of the opposition increasingly put forward an image of power, wearing dark suits and sharply-pressed white shirts and riding in black smoked-glass sedans. The KMT wants to look as if it is going to the people, and the DPP wants to look as if it is ready to preside and rule, not just march in the streets and have fistfights in the aisles of the legislature.

In the days leading up to the election, even long before the prescribed ten days’ electioneering, the streets in some southern cities, festooned with flags and posters, appeared to already be located in the Republic of Taiwan. Taiwanese dialect is increasingly rendered in writing with homophonic characters—one must understand Taiwanese to read the campaign slogans. Looking back over a decade, it is startling that Taiwanese is now spoken in the commercial and government

4. Lee Ching-hua also stated support for the Chinese democracy movement and ran a picture of himself with Wu-er Kai-xi. This typical recourse of KMT hard-liners to hypocritical displays using the Chinese students who are rendered compliant by means of contributions with strings attached—explains why many Taiwanese have such distaste for the Chinese students, and why there is virtually no cooperation between Taiwanese and Chinese democratic movements.



In the December 1992 election campaign, KMT Premier Hau Pei-tsun was the man everyone loved to hate. In this cartoon DPP legislator Ms. Yeh Chu-lan is shown exposing those carving up the watermelon of national-construction profits under Hau Pei-tsun's cloak. This refers to a huge disparity that became evident between the total bid on freeway construction and the amounts actually paid subcontractors, a disparity that indicated a rake-off of nearly half the bid. The cartoon on the right shows KMT candidates deserting the burden of carrying Premier Hau across the chasm of "national reunification" to a continuing term. Hau's warning that China would attack if Taiwan declared sovereignty led to charges that he and his camp were speaking for Beijing and planning to sell out Taiwan to the People's Republic.



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Taxes being used to buy military equipment thrown away by other countries. Those supporting Taiwan's sovereignty were pleased with President Bush selling F-16 fighter planes to Taiwan over Beijing's objections, but the Taiwan public wondered why Hau Pei-tsun had to buy so many at such an inflated price. Under fire from so many quarters, Hau Pei-tsun ended up resigning under pressure. This cartoon appeared in the election booklet Ah-mao 21 wen (Ah-mao's 21 questions), published by candidate Ch'en Ch'ing-mao.

offices almost as much as in the markets. The sense of transformation was deepened by the hoopla attendant on the recent return of two prominent overseas advocates of Taiwanese nationalism: Peng Ming-min, author of the 1964 declaration of Taiwanese independence, and George Chang (Chang Ts' an-hung), perennial chairman of the World United Formosans for Independence (WUFI). The appeal of these long-banned

overseas dissidents was soon demonstrated. In Chiayi City, Trong Tsai (Ts'ai T'ung-jung), a former chairman of WUFI and founder of the Washington, D.C., lobbying office Formosan Association for Public Affairs, won narrowly over his KMT rival; he reestablished residence in Taiwan last year after more than thirty years in exile.

Government functionaries, especially police, avowed neutrality in the election process, and in contrast to previous years they did not try to squelch rhetoric "in violation of national policy." They appeared eager to negotiate in humble tones over any possible misunderstanding or altercation. On the other hand, vote-buying has only been superficially proscribed, and has increasingly extended to government employees, in at least one case even to a land tax office. In the last few days of the campaign, while DPP candidates continued with their hectic round of parades and evening campaign rallies with celebrated professors flown from Taipei as speakers, many KMT candidates quietly let loose a flood of dollars in payments to the voters (reportedly over U.S. \$10 million in some cases), flowing like irrigation waters through the channels of neighborhood and association heads and vote brokers known in Taiwanese as *thiau-kha*.

The opposition candidates do not try to stop this flow, but only encourage the voters to think of it as their due, a "tax refund" on the misuses of the hard-earned money they submit to the government. This argument seems to have been partially effective. It has been widely perceived that in recent elections monetary inducements have been increasingly substituted for no-longer-enforceable political restrictions, but then the elected representatives of moneyed interests make their



This standard ad of the New KMT Alliance shows the KMT party's twelve-beamed sun and urges people to vote to help KMT candidates—"Live under the sunlight, do not hesitate at the crossroads [the white cross on green of the DPP flag]"; "Reform and reform again"; "Have confidence in living under the brilliance of the KMT." Aside from the New KMT Alliance, very few KMT candidates focused on the party flag during the 1992 election campaign, with most choosing to join the DPP in emphasizing their humble origins and identification with Taiwan.

money back in illicit dealings with government. The going price for a vote in this election was NT \$500, about U.S. \$20, with various middlemen taking perhaps the same amount for the service of distribution. Many voters took payments from as many candidates as possible, collecting as much as U.S. \$100, and then voted for an opposition candidate. Experienced observers say the rule of thumb is that 1 in 7 votes, about 15 percent, stays bought now, down from a previous figure of about 20 percent.

This declining efficiency apparently reflects the current disarray within the ruling party and its inability to discipline its candidates, whether gold cows or not. The KMT party machine hardly served to limit the field, beginning from primaries considerably rigged in favor of the old guard but still nominating a majority of Taiwanese moneyed interests. Nearly a fifth of the newly elected KMT legislators, including the two high-scoring stars, do not owe their path to victory to party nomination. In fact, in trying to control the elections through local interests and networks, the party occasionally stooped to relying on some whose reputations would not bear a public nomination, for example, Shih Tai-sheng in Tainan City who was twice jailed for gangsterism. Shih Tai-sheng, whose campaign poster graced some police stations, came in second in Tainan only to DPP candidate Shih Ming-teh, twice jailed as a political prisoner. Shih Tai-sheng, like other second-generation mainlander candidates, hoarded his influence over "military village" residential areas and institutions such as retired servicemen's homes, while Taiwanese hopefuls passed over in the KMT nominations fought it out with dollars.

According to rumor, the highest-ranking loser in Tainan City (population three-quarters of a million) spent over U.S. \$20 million on his campaign, and he received 46,000 votes. While that sum is certainly not all payouts, it averages out to nearly

U.S. \$435 per vote. U.S. \$20 million seems to be an astronomical sum until one translates it into Taiwan real estate—just a few paltry apartment buildings—and takes in the realization that U.S. \$100,000 is a reasonable payoff for a legislator to fix a land deal for a client. Such is the Alice-in-Wonderland nature of money flows in the Taiwanese business world nowadays.

In contrast, the average successful DPP candidate, both in north and south Taiwan, spent about U.S. \$300,000 and won on 30,000–80,000 votes, in other words, about U.S. \$4–8 per vote. It is likely that supporters provided something nearly equal to that amount in goods and services as well. The major campaign expense for a DPP candidate is printing literature, which now must be in booklet form and in full color to be respected. Half-page newspaper ads in color are also de rigueur. The Taiwan election commission provides government funds to candidates at the rate of U.S. \$1.20 (NT \$30) per vote received, which offsets the expense slightly. Although the DPP cannot itself claim to be entirely free of the influence of gold cows, the December 1992 election with few exceptions sent to office those who are above suspicion. Prominent among these were the central figures of the 1980 *Meilitao* trials, the watershed in recent Taiwan political development: Huang Hsin-chieh, Chang Chun-hung, Yao Chia-wen, Shih Ming-teh, Lu Hsiu-lien (Annette), who served a total of over fifty years imprisonment. Though hardly firebrands—in fact distinctly middling on the international spectrum of political position—their presence in the legislature demarcates the social compromise of the new Taiwan polity.

The new legislature promises to be very different from the First Term Republic of China den of "old thieves," so christened because of the extortionate sums they demanded in 1990 as the price of their retirement from lifelong terms of



施明德之妻抵台助選
 施明德美籍妻子艾琳達，昨日自美搭機
 來台。艾琳達對於台灣當局限令下月十三
 日離境規定，表示不予理會，她預定明年
 一月才離台。(本報台南記者蘇恩恩攝)
 (新聞刊三版)

DPP candidate Shih Ming-teh and his wife, Linda Gail Arrigo, campaigning in Tainan in November 1992. In the December election Shih Ming-teh won a seat in the Legislative Yuan with a campaign platform advocating a better welfare program and affirming that Taiwan is a sovereign, independent nation. He is now the minority leader, a remarkable change of fortune given that he was a central figure in the 1980 Meilitao trials and has been called the "Nelson Mandela of Taiwan" due to the twenty-five years he has spent in prison for his political beliefs. The fact that Shih Ming-teh and others like him are now in such a position of power in the government is a good indication that the times are changing in Taiwan. This photo is by Su En-en and appeared on the front page of the Min-chung Jih-pao (the Commons Daily) on 29 November 1992.

office. Almost all new legislators are young (average age forty-five, the same for KMT and DPP) and have attempted to put forth a populist face to the electorate, articulating in their campaign literature the common grief at urban congestion and disorder, nauseating pollution of the land and air, unregulated real estate speculation, humiliating international relations, and apparent government disregard and inefficacy in dealing with all of this. Even before voting day, the ruling party seemed to try to stem the populist "welfare state" momentum of the opposition with a last-minute promise to introduce national health insurance. Whatever are the real intentions and financial interests, this legislature is now much more accountable to the people, who are not entirely fooled by glossy Madison Avenue-type advertising. Major issues that linger are (1) whether the president will be elected directly by the people of Taiwan in 1996, as agreed in principle at the National Affairs Conference in July 1990, and (2) whether the

KMT will open up its monopoly on television broadcasting and allow real controversy in the legislature to be aired.

The new legislature takes office in late February 1993, and perhaps six months down the line we will know the shape of the future. Premier Hau Pei-tsun, with his bushy-browed visage so reminiscent of the old martial law regime, is already a casualty of this election; he has acceded to resignation under pressure. Despite the electoral setback to his faction, President Lee Teng-hui seems to be moving boldly. It may be surmised that the underlying dynamic of this apparent contradiction is that given the gaping split in the ruling party, the Taiwanese Kuomintang now finds it expedient to move toward some degree of accommodation with the Taiwan Democratic Progressive Party and its large bloc in the legislature.

Comments on the 1992 Elections

by C.L. Chiou

Although some view the election results as a sign of political polarization between pro-independence and pro-reunification forces, others may argue that on the contrary the elections forced both ruling and opposition parties to go to the middle ground and to create a larger Taiwanized political coalition, a much more stable political majority across party lines that would inevitably lead to establishing a clearer and stronger political identity for Taiwan. We should not exaggerate the significance of the failures of the Wisdom faction and the successes of the New KMT. As faithful supporters of Lee Teng-hui, other mainstream groups began growing immediately after the elections. It should also be pointed out that both Jaw Shau-kang's and Wong Chien-hsuan's popularity had more to do with prevalent anti-KMT policy sentiment than with pro-reunification enthusiasm, while John Kuan, Lee Ching-hua, and other New KMT winning candidates barely squeezed through. Without the "iron votes" of the military, Kuan, Lee, and most of their comrades would have lost. This new political reality played a decisive role in the Lee-Hau power struggle in early 1993, in which the mainstream KMT faction, with the tacit support of the DPP parliamentarians, crushed the nonmainstream KMT faction and for the first time Lee got the premier he had wanted since 1990, Lien Chan.

February 1993*

*Some English-language sources relevant to the December 1992 election: *Far Eastern Economic Review*: Various articles by Julian Baum—"Building the Ballot: Enter a New Generation of Politicians," 1 Oct. 1992, p. 14; "Hands Bit Back: Taipei Bourse Reels after Investor's Arrest," 1 Oct. 1992, p. 81; "A Matter of Timing: Minister's Tax Plan Upsets Friends and Foes," 22 Oct. 1992, pp. 16-17; "Split in the Ranks: Issue of Taiwan Independence Haunts the KMT," 24 Dec. 1992, p. 25; "The Hollow Centre: Poll Result Undermines President's Power," 7 Jan. 1993, pp. 14-15. *Asian Wall Street Journal*: Jeremy Mark and Julia Leung, "KMT's Blend of Business and Politics Draws Fire," 2 Dec. 1992, p. 1; and Jeremy Mark, "Taipei Indicts 48 in Probe of Stock Scam," 2 Dec. 1992, p. 7. *New York Times*: Nicholas D. Kristof, "Taiwan Election Helps Opposition: Governing Party's Majority Sharply Pared in Vote—A 'New Era' Is Seen," 20 Dec. 1992.

