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A Personal Account of the Taiwan Independence Movement,   
its History in Long Perspective, and a Retrospective Analysis

Linda Gail Arrigo

[linda2007@tmu.edu.tw](mailto:linda2007@tmu.edu.tw) 0928-899-931

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*Romanization mostly in old Taiwan style as used at the time; more Chinese characters will be inserted later to clarify identification of persons described.*

FOREWORD

This is a history critical of the Taiwan independence movement (TIM), 1947-present. It is a history both sympathetic and critical, critical from a leftist analytical perspective, and also critical as measured against the goals stated by the movement, in many organizations. This history is written largely from my own experience and participation in activities since 1970. (Some confirmation of dates and input of Chinese characters calls for thanks to <http://www.taiwannation.org.tw/>, website of WUFI.) It is sympathetic in that it describes people I know and respect, and provides cameos of some unusual biographies to illustrate the sources of motivation. While giving a concise summary of major events through the year 2003, it highlights the points of struggle and contradiction, e.g. between Taiwanese and Chinese nationalism, and between class ideologies and the imperative to mobilize mass support for disruptive change. It sketches in rough detail some interactions I witnessed that are not publicly known; often the organizations and persons involved would not want to talk about them now. All these contradictions are of course played out under the historical context of big power political maneuvering, China versus the United States.

Thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Taiwanese at home and abroad have devoted large portions of their lives to the effort of creating a nation state for this island of 23 million, now still known formally to itself as “The Republic of China (ROC)”. That designation, not recognized in global society, was frozen first by United States Cold War interests in isolating the Peoples Republic of China, thus supporting the Chiang Kai-shek dictatorship, and secondly by the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972. However anachronistic this state, TIM efforts have been constrained for the most part to innocuous and familiar modes of protest entirely within a simple and pro-American framework and ideology. This is so even as the grip of Beijing over Taiwan tightens, and the fiction of “maintaining the status quo” defined in the Shanghai Communiqué betrays an accelerating drift towards control by Beijing.

Now, late in the game, the student “Sunflower” movement, dated from the March 18, 2014 occupation of the national legislature, has awoken the younger generation from their electronic device stupor, and breathed new hope into the TIM of the older generation. This movement appears to reflect the youths’ bleak prospects under capital flight and polarization of wealth in Taiwan, aspects of globalization that force Taiwan into economic integration with China and play into the hands of unificationists. Whether or not Taiwanese self-determination can be achieved, and with the parallel example of the “Umbrella” movement in Hong Kong, it appears that Beijing will not find Taiwan so easy to swallow politically, even if it holds the economic juggernaut.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: THE 1947 MASSACRE AND THE TAIWANESE DIASPORA

When in 1936 Edgar Snow asked Mao Zedong in his revolutionary stronghold of Yen’an what he envisioned if Japan were defeated, Mao said that Japan’s occupied territories of Korea and Taiwan should be independent. That position changed some time during the Chinese civil war, especially after Chiang Kai-shek of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) fled and resettled his Republic of China government in Taiwan, under United States defense. Certainly the bulk of Taiwan’s native population had migrated from south China in the last three hundred years, overrunning the indigenous Austronesian peoples related to those in the Philippines. Taiwan’s “Han” population spoke dialects common in south China, actually closer to ancient Chinese than the northern Mandarin Chinese, influenced by nomadic invaders; but the languages were mutually unintelligible. Moreover, Taiwan had been brought close to the level of modernity of the Japanese heartland in fifty years of colonization (1895-1945), with public education and trains, medical facilities, large-scale irrigation and waterworks, and some industrialization. Thus it was a shock to Taiwanese, most of whom had welcomed “restoration” to China, to find themselves in 1946 helpless under the ragtag Chinese army and plundered by rapacious officials. The civil uprising of February 28, 1947 was put down with both indiscriminant street shootings and systematic extermination of representative elites, by troops ferried from China in US ships, death toll an estimated 18,000. Thus the rallying cry of the Taiwan independence movement is “2-28”.

Some hundreds of Taiwanese leftists escaped to Hong Kong during the turmoil of 2-28. Prominent among the leftist exiles was the founder of the Taiwan Communist Party (founded in Shanghai in 1930), a woman of lowly birth named Hsieh Hsueh-hong 謝雪紅 (the name is characters for “thanks”, “snow”, “red”), and in Hong Kong in 1946 and 1947 she founded organizations seeking self-determination (「台灣民主自治同盟」) and attempted to keep unity with the TIM elites such as William Liao. Most leftists thence made their way to China after 1949. However, they were kept only as tokens of Taiwanese representation in the CCP and lost all ties to Taiwan; during the Cultural Revolution they were severely criticized for narrow separatist tendencies, and Hsieh died prematurely. Su Hsin , who left behind in Taiwan an infant daughter Su Ching-li蘇慶黎, was eventually raised into the Chinese Communist Party hierarchy.

Elites that fled to Japan, such as Liao Wen-yi廖文毅 (William), founded the Taiwan Provisional Government臨時政府. Liao was close to General McArthur, and reportedly attended the 1955 Bandung conference with the assistance of a Taiwanese-Indonesian, Tan Tie-hiong陳智雄 (Chen Chih-hsiung, kidnapped from Japan by KMT agents to Taiwan in 1959 and executed in 1963). But some such elites were later tarnished by their capitulation to the KMT, which held their wealth and their relatives in Taiwan captive. Others, still the mainstream, were the main face of the TIM, but did little open activity for fear of deportation – Japan does not grant citizenship even to Japan-born children of colonials. *Taiwan Youth* was the main publication of the vanguard, founded 1960 under an organization Taiwan Youth「台灣青年社」.

A position of national liberation like national liberation movements around the globe was articulated in Japan by Su Beng 史明 (Shih Ming, “history is bright”, a *nom de guerre*). Su Beng had been part of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) efforts to gather Japanese military intelligence in occupied Shanghai; he masqueraded as a young Taiwanese dandy, with a wife assigned by the CCP and whose real name he never knew – but he underwent a vasectomy at age 28 to made sure family life did not hinder revolutionary commitment. Su Beng made it back to Taiwan in 1949, but had to flee in 1951 when his plan to assassinate Chiang Kai-shek was uncovered. In Japan, Su Beng founded a new intelligence network working out of his noodle shop near a Tokyo subway interchange. He wrote first in Japanese in 1962 a thick volume entitled *Four Hundred Years of Taiwan History*《台灣人四百年史》from a standard leftist national liberation movement perspective, with later Chinese and abridged English versions, and by the late-60’s was engaged in ideological struggle with the TIM elites in Japan. The Chinese-speaking community in Japan in general gradually came into the sphere of influence of the PRC. More about Su Beng later.

Another exile in Japan was Chu Shi-chi (which could be translated as “Red Century”), the orphaned son of Taiwanese communists in Ilan; both parents died in prison in the Japanese period. Impoverished as he was, his relatives still felt obligated to pay for his education in law and send him overseas. In Japan he ran a boarding house through which he sought to indoctrinate Taiwanese students. He made a trip to Moscow and was given honors. KMT propaganda named him as a major enemy, but he was rather inept and isolated, a short, squat, and comical figure, given to wishful thinking. (Chu returned to Taiwan in the mid-1990’s, announced a Taiwan Communist Party with a few followers, bought a wife in China, made a living hawking cell phone accessories on the street, and died of a heart attack at age 69.)

In the late 1960’s Taiwanese doctors and others training in Japan were enthused by the message of TIM, and some were jailed soon after return to Taiwan when they began to spread the word of overseas activities, e.g. Dr. Chen Chung-tong陳中統, ironically named by his father “China Unite” in the Japanese period; sentenced to 15 years in 1967, 1970 played a crucial role in compiling a list of political prisoners. (During the Japanese occupation of Taiwan, modern Western medicine was introduced, and the medical profession was the main one open to Taiwanese, since it involved broad contact with the public and language skills. Till present, doctors are accorded a kind of holy status in the community and are prominent in Taiwanese politics.)

If the population of political prisoners is any indicator of the numbers and ideology of those opposed to the regime, it can be said that the prisoners of the 1950’s held more leftist views, no matter whether they were pro-PRC or pro-TI. Part of this ideology was left over from the anti-colonial social movements in 1920’s and 30’s Taiwan (e.g. Chiang Wei-shui, the doctor who supported labor movements and a leftist newspaper), movements common to Indochina, India, etc. In the 1950’s the nationalism divergence (pro-PRC versus pro-TI) was present but not so sharp, and some Taiwanese nativists expected Beijing to actually have an enlightened view of national self-determination, or argued that Beijing was the only feasible salvation for those suffering under the KMT, given that the secret police of all of China were crammed into Taiwan and trying to justify their existence by creating “communist conspiracies”. In the 1960’s numbers of pure Taiwan nationalists began to increase; this probably reflected the simple backlash against KMT dictatorship that had put mainlanders in high positions to control and exploit native Taiwanese, accentuating the ethnic divide; as well as isolation from any contact with the PRC.

THE WORLD UNITED FORMOSANS FOR INDEPENDENCE

The center of TI activities shifted in about 1968-1970, from Japan to the United States. This was due to the large scale of “brain drain” immigration from Taiwan to the US, beginning a few years earlier. Earlier, in the wake of the Chinese civil war, the highest ROC elites went fairly directly to the US with their hoarded wealth; the low and medium level bureaucrats went to Taiwan but sought American education and green cards for their children ASAP, an escape route in case Taiwan fell to the communists. So until the mid-1960’s most migrants to the US from Taiwan were Chinese “mainlanders”. But in the brain drain period Taiwanese youth educated in science were given scholarships that led to jobs in the US military-industrial complex, and by 1968 TIM activists (specifically, Hong Dze-sheng, a.k.a. Cary Hong) had put together a national mailing list for TIM mimeographed newsletters. In 1970-71 Taiwanese community organizations (Taiwan tong-hsiang hui) speaking Hokkien dialect began to form in major US cities and college towns, despite attempts at infiltration and intimidation by overseas KMT offices and agents. This assertion of Taiwanese identity was also a reaction against the pro-PRC Diaoyutai (Senkaku Islands) movement that broke out in the US largely among the children of the KMT elites; and it could flourish with the declining international reputation of the Republic of China, soon ousted from the United Nations in favor of the Peoples Republic of China.

Behind the rise of coordinated Taiwanese community organizations was a backbone of TI activists which emerged in 1970 as the World United Formosans for Independence 「台灣獨立建國聯盟」，簡稱 台獨聯盟 (Tai-du Lien-meng, or WUFI, “woofy”, combining Japan, Canada, U.S., Europe and later Brazil; earlier U.S. parent organizations with similar names are also dubbed WUFI for ease of reference). Fending off the KMT infiltrators and threats from ROC offices (cancellation of passports, blacklists, denial of return to see dying parents) required a strong hand and secret coordination by the organization. This organization, directed from New York, was a voluntary alliance of Japanese, American, European, and Brazilian TI organizations. Smaller numbers of Taiwanese had gone to study in Europe, but there, in Sweden, Germany, and France in particular, they tinged their Taiwanese nationalism with a vision of social welfare organizations as seen in northern Europe; some even embraced Marxism and Maoism. Migration from Taiwan to Brazil and other South American countries from the mid-1960’s on had been predominantly working-class, and agents connected with the revolutionist Su Beng were more active in Brazil.

But WUFI, led first by a tall and athletic professor of political science, Tsai Tong-rong蔡同榮 (Trong Tsai), and then by the perennial chairman Chang Tsan-hong 張燦鍙 (George Chang), a mild-mannered professor of chemical engineering, was staunchly American in outlook, and sought to model Taiwanese-Americans organizations on Jewish-American organizations and reach a comparable level of influence over US policy – even if George Chang did travel and take a picture with Yasser Arafat in order to manicure his image as a revolutionary. Hong Dze-sheng (Cary) provided some token of left revolutionary spirit within WUFI, a token useful since all national liberation movements in the 1970’s proclaimed uplifting of the poor, but his later challenge to George Chang for leadership was deflected through the secrecy of membership rolls – George held the lists and the money sources. WUFI managed some small businesses to give employment to its secret operatives (groomed and held ready for action against KMT targets; to my limited experience, these did exist, but saw little action) and to grow its capital; but otherwise it relied on donation campaigns when political exiles from Taiwan landed in the US in the wake of some stirring event.

Such a signal event was the escape of Professor Peng Ming-min 彭明敏 from Taiwan to Sweden in January 1970. In September 1964 Peng, an internationally-known professor of aviation law, tall and easily recognizable because he had lost one arm as a child in the American bombing of Nagasaki, attempted to print a flier entitled, “The Taiwan People’s Declaration of Self-Salvation” 「台灣人民自救宣言」, together with his two former students Hsieh Tsung-min謝聰敏 (Roger) and Wei Ting-chao魏廷朝. Tipped off by the owner of the small printing press, police arrested them at a nearby hotel. This was barely known publicly within Taiwan at the time, but gave spirit to overseas advocates. International outcry led to Peng being released from prison to house arrest after only four years; and his escape escapade was engineered by American missionaries, it has recently been revealed (see Milo Thornberry’s autobiography, *The Fire-Proof Moth*, also translated into Chinese). Otherwise, the KMT and others assumed the CIA had transported him on American military planes that were not subject to ROC inspection.

The escape of Peng, an articulate proponent of TI, stirred sentiments to a high pitch and inspired political prisoners at Taiyuan prison台東縣泰源感訓監獄in a narrow valley on the east coast plateau to attempt a breakout and seizure of the Taidung radio station in February 1970. They failed, at the cost of many lives, but their audacity lives on in TI history. On April 24, 1970, a Taiwanese graduate student in sociology at Cornell University, Huang Wen-hsiung黃文雄 (Peter) attempted to shoot heir-apparent Chiang Ching-kuo蔣經國at the New York Plaza Hotel during his visit to the U.S., but narrowly missed. In an unrelated attempt, Brazilian TI activists had prepared high-power rifles with telescope sights to assassinate Chiang on his subsequent visit to the San Onofre nuclear power plant in California, but due to heightened security were unable to get close enough. (This Taiwanese-Brazilian caper has not been made public; this account is from my interview of “Camera Wang”, about 2009).

The arrest of Huang Wen-hsiung and his brother-in-law Tseng Dze-tsai 鄭自才 exposed their WUFI connections – but Peter Huang had actually developed his plan in consultation with the leftist American organization Students for Democratic Society, an organization that may have also assisted his disappearance while out on bail. In forfeiting the US$1 million in bail, many senior WUFI members and contributors lost mortgages on their houses, leading to some crisis for WUFI, and an embarrassing public statement from them that they deplored violence even though they espoused revolution.

Revolutionary bravado aside, WUFI’s main thrust in the late 1960’s and 70’s was lobbying the US State Department and Congress, which was in that era mainly dominated on China issues by the China Lobby of old KMT connections. The ROC regularly purchased large quantities of coal, oranges, etc., at above world prices in order to boost the fortunes of conservative senators who favored the KMT over the PRC, e.g. Barry Goldwater. In 1980 Ronald Reagan’s lawyers Deaver and Hannaford were receiving a monthly retainer of US$5,000 from the ROC government. WUFI’s early main lobbyist in Washington D.C., from about 1967, Wang Neng-hsiang, later split off from WUFI, but the Washington Beltway mentality continued to grow as a generation of Taiwanese-Americans matured, and began to feel their political space and interests within the American framework (e.g. separate immigration quotas for Taiwan and China) – and make sizeable donations to American candidates and congressmen.

Did such lobbying ever have an iota of a chance of making a dent in American policy? In 1980 when I was making the rounds of Capitol Hill in a human rights effort, Carl Ford mentioned that the State Department had in about 1970 considered jettisoning Chiang Kai-shek for a Taiwanese independence solution, but soon concluded that there was no suitable strongman to replace him. And after the United States in 1972 acknowledged “that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China” (Shanghai Communiqué, issued jointly by Nixon and Chou Enlai -- ironically, for Taiwanese, on February 28), there seems to have been no wavering from that “one China” doctrine, as TI hopefuls were rudely reminded.

THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT IN TAIWAN: *FORMOSA MAGAZINE*

It was not until 1975 that people in Taiwan, under martial law since 1949, began to be able to openly state (or at least imply) other opinions, albeit still at the risk of arrest and imprisonment (*Taiwan Political Review*, closed down with three arrests). Let us fast forward to the apex of the democratic movement in Taiwan, the Kaohsiung (a.k.a. Meilidao or *Formosa* *Magazine*) Incident of December 10, 1979. Ms. Lu Hsiu-lien (Annette), founder of the women’s movement in Taiwan and returned to Taiwan from law studies at Harvard, mesmerized the illegal assembly of 50,000 with her stirring speech on Taiwan’s right to self-determination (I was there!). She had written a book, *Taiwan’s Past, Present, and Future*, in preparation for her election campaign. Arrests began on December 13, 1979, and probably hundreds were rounded up, though the initial list of those indicted was about 80 persons. Annette was one of the eight major figures tried in a martial law court; she broke down in court describing how under interrogation she had been shown a picture of an executed political prisoner (Wu Tai-an, shot May 1979). Annette was sentenced to twelve years for sedition, and served over six.

Seemingly due to international pressure mustered by the overseas Taiwanese as well as to the fact that many of the defendants were popularly-elected officials and prominent lawyers, the military court in the *Formosa Magazine* case was opened to international observers and international and local press, and close-to-verbatim transcripts filled the newspapers for ten days in March 1980. The firebrand General Secretary of the magazine, Shih Ming-deh, who had already served fifteen years as political prisoner (1962-1977), made an argument based in international law: “Taiwan has already been independent for thirty years; the only difference is the name of the government.” He was returned to a sentence of life imprisonment. Perhaps the last gasp of the secret police run amok and trying to terrify the populace back into silence, an atrocity shook the public but instead incited anger: On February 28, 1980, the mother and three daughters of defendant Lin Yi-hsiung were knifed in their home; only the 9-year-old daughter survived.

To my analysis, this democratic movement broke out beginning 1977 in the context of the rise of a new native Taiwanese generation and middle class in Taiwan as well as Carter’s erstwhile emphasis on human rights in US international relations; but more specifically in anticipation of US recognition of the PRC, which was indeed finally announced by President Jimmy Carter on December 16, 1979. Many feared that the PRC would immediately invade, perhaps with another bloodbath like 2-28 in 1947. I remember hearing, “If we Taiwanese do not speak out now, we will be swallowed up and silenced forever.” Although thousands of Taiwanese residents, especially mainlanders, fled the island in this period, the international situation was stabilized by the US pledging defense for Taiwan and setting up quasi-diplomatic relations, in the January 1980 Taiwan Relations Act.

Freedom of expression had again been stifled by the crackdown, but the democratic movement bounced back the next year when the wives of those arrested were elected by landslides in limited local elections, and a new crop of outspoken youth emerged. The ten lawyers in the military court case became the new leaders of the democratic movement, which was later formalized as the Democratic Progressive Party in September 1986, despite martial law. Among these was the lawyer Chen Shui-bian, later elected president twice, 2000-2008.

The Formosa Magazine movement began as coalition of local opposition leaders rooted in native Taiwanese society, who saw the political economy in simple ethnic terms, i.e. the settler Chinese mainlanders oppressing guileless native Taiwanese; and mostly-Taipei professionals such as teachers and lawyers, including left-leaning intellectuals who espoused Chinese nationalism and idealized the PRC’s Cultural Revolution. The latter was epitomized in Ms. Su Ching-li蘇慶黎, daughter of a Taiwanese communist who fled to China in 1947 and was eventually given a high position there. Su was the editor of *China Tide* (*Hsia Chao*) magazine, and very active in trying to nudge Taiwan youth, including those working with *Formosa Magazine*, towards social movement consciousness. The pro-independence faction was clearly in control of *Formosa Magazine*, and held the capacity and momentum to rally thousands, although the editorial board list had a larger range. The split between the factions became explicit in April 1979, when Shih Ming-deh proposed a campaign to reenter the United Nations using the name “Taiwan”. During the movement, the government picked off figures from both factions, alternating arrests, as if testing their mettle. The December crackdown initially arrested figures from all sides. Ms. Su was laughingly told by her captors that she faced at least ten years imprisonment, but she was released without charges two months later. Ms. Su died in Beijing in 2004, largely unremembered in Taiwan. The KMT did not allow her to leave Taiwan until her father had died.

From this and from declassified documents released by the National Archives in 2003, it appears that the Taiwan Garrison Command (the martial law enforcer) consciously dropped the pro-PRC figures from the trials – and, unintentionally, left those espousing independence as the heroes of the democratic movement. All the same, the indictment in the *Formosa Magazine* case painted its main sponsor, national legislator Huang Hsin-chieh, as a stooge of Beijing, apparently to justify the sedition charges. This ridiculous scenario of Huang investing in Chinese eel fry for import to Taiwan strained credibility.

THE IMPACT OF THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT ON OVERSEAS TAIWANESE

The democratic movement in Taiwan energized Taiwanese-Americans and their organizations. But new waves of migration to the United States, including well-to-do Taiwanese businessmen who could get a “green card” with investment of half a million dollars, had also diversified the Taiwanese-Americans away from college towns, and brought closer contact between the homeland and the overseas compatriots, because the businessmen crossed the Pacific frequently. The businessmen thought in terms of open civic action, rather different from the clandestine networks of WUFI. For example, *The Voice of Taiwan*, a telephone-recorded-message news network that broadcast news of the democratic movement in Taiwan daily during 1978-81, was founded in Flushing, New York, from a Presbyterian Church information service.

On the other end of the political spectrum, some Taiwanese abroad had been colored by anti-Vietnam War and social movements in the 1970’s, and about 1976 an offshoot of Su Beng’s Marxist-Leninist national liberation line formed clandestinely in the US, with the publication *Taiwan Era* (*Taiwan Shidai*). The salient feature of Su Beng’s distinction from the conservative TIM groups is that he expressly labeled the Taiwanese bourgeoisie who cooperated with and benefited from the KMT rulers as compradors, categorized as enemies.

Before the Kaohsiung Incident trials, pro-PRC and neutral Taiwanese students in the US had also organized to push for democratization. Notably, the Organization for the Support of the Democratic Movement in Taiwan (OSDMT), then recently founded by Lin Hsiao-Hsin in Chicago, compiled a thick booklet *KMT Spies on Campus* reproducing newspaper reports, mostly in English, on campus struggles against the spy network across the US. This booklet did much to inform foreign student advisors and help them act against “professional students”. But after the Kaohsiung Incident trials revealed the leadership of *Formosa Magazine* was all pro-TI, OSDMT ceased to function, though Lin Hsiao-Hsin still had important roles to play with China relations and with Taiwan social movements in future years, as I will describe later. Some of his Chicago associates turned pro-TI.

Another direct impact on Taiwan independence organizations abroad was that exiled leaders from the democratic movement had experience with a mass movement mobilizing the underprivileged, and differed in outlook from WUFI. One of the core leadership of *Formosa Magazine*, Hsu Hsin-liang, elected head of the industrial heartland Taoyuan County in November 1977 but removed from office in July 1979 (for marching in a political protest), was abroad when the arrests hit. In retrospect, Hsu might be seen as a cynical populist (he had obtained a master’s degree in political science in England) – stoking popular unrest when its suited his campaign mobilization, but making deals with moneyed backers for his long-term direction.

A few months after the December 1979 crackdown, Hsu left WUFI headquarters in New York to found a rival organization in Los Angeles and publish a 16-page newsletter on cheap folded pulp paper, *Formosa Weekly*, first issue out in July 1980, with assistance from those critical of WUFI’s conservative position, including some Taiwanese in Su Beng’s network and some pro-PRC. Others, mostly businessmen, who had opposed the clandestine control WUFI held over the Taiwanese-American communities and wanted more open processes also joined up with Hsu, and a group of them later became known as the “California gang” (Chia-chou Bang). Because Hsu was able to smuggle information in and out of Taiwan through his contacts, including businessmen (mail and telephone were heavily monitored by the police), the newsletter quickly showed he was more in touch with the homeland than WUFI. But WUFI still held the purse strings of the overseas contributors, and WUFI’s simple message was a lowest common denominator that still garnered new recruits. WUFI attacked Hsu and his associated co-exiles, Ms. Chen Wan-chen (Stella) and Ms. Ai Lin-da (Linda Gail Arrigo) with aspersions of pro-PRC sentiments through its rumor grapevine. True, Hsu, a Hakka, did propose a “Taiwanese-Chinese” nationalism that did not sharply differentiate the ethnic groups. And in an effort to establish his own revolutionary cache, really merely posturing, Hsu published articles on urban guerilla warfare, which was duly brought to the attention of the US State Department by WUFI partisans.

*Formosa Weekly* made a broadside retaliation by publishing the unsavory details of the “4-24 Incident” of 1970, Peter Huang’s attempt to assassinate Chiang Ching-kuo, and WUFI’s disavowal of involvement. A few months later, about Spring 1981, Su Beng on his first trip to the United States saved *Formosa Weekly* from financial collapse after the few but hard-working pro-PRC participants walked out and formed their own magazine, *Taiwan Si-Chao* (*Taiwan Thought Tide* – note name is similar to Su Ching-li’s *China Tide*, then banned). But Su Beng came to some grief when Hsu Hsin-liang’s glib promises of a “democratic national alliance” proved empty, and Su Beng was roundly roasted by his protégés, *Taiwan Era*, at a meeting in Houston in 1982, for being taken in by Hsu.

In 1980-82, the *Taiwan Era* group began an open campaign to transform the conservative ideology of overseas Taiwanese, though they employed older known TI figures as the face of the critique in annual activities, such as Chang Chin-tse, a local politician who had escaped from Taiwan in 1975XX on a fishing raft. Some other newsletters run by students, such as *Ban Ping Shan* (Half Flat Mountain, a location in Kaohsiung), also carried their message. I cooperated in their project also. They contended that WUFI played on native ethnic divisions (such as representing mainly the majority Hokkien, and not fully embracing the minority Hakka) and did not understand modern nationalism, which amalgamated nations with ethnic diversity in the process of struggle against imperialism; and by cementing citizenship entitlements. They extended this to mean “Chiang Ching-kuo will be seen as the first president of Taiwan”. But the Chinese term for “nationalism”, *min-tsu*, “people-tribe” led to some misunderstanding of their message, and Taiwan Era was alleged to be playing to ethnic sentiments even more than WUFI did. At any rate, it seems that the term *min-tsu* was accepted and incorporated into the overseas lexicon, but not Taiwan Era’s progressive class analysis perspective.

Taiwan Era vigorously recruited newly-arrived Taiwan students to their version of the international Marxist-Leninist line – but apparently with focus only on Taiwan. I would guess they had a hundred or so members. Once at a meeting of thirty people in the basement of a suburban home we sang “The Internationale” in Taiwanese dialect with piano accompaniment. Dr. Chen Wen-cheng, a young and promising professor of mathematics at Carnegie-Mellon Institute in Pittsburgh, was an organizing member of Taiwan Era. On a visit back to his family in Taiwan in July 1981, he was ordered to report for questioning. The next day his body was found thrown off the top of the library at National Taiwan University, though he was dead before that, with small spots suggesting torture with needles. However, his main crime may not have been organizing for Taiwan Era, but impersonating Chiang Ching-kuo wearing a pig head in a summer camp skit.

WUFI also got its thunder stolen from another direction. Tsai Tong-rong, one of the founders of WUFI, in 1982 organized Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) expressly for the purpose of lobbying Congress and the State Department on Taiwan human rights and Taiwanese-American issues. This presented a legitimate and tax-deductible organization separate from the revolutionary mission with its secretive mystique and undisclosed funding sources. Aside from the two old walkup apartments bought within walking distance of Capitol Hill and refurbished, FAPA signed up members throughout the US. It hired a Dutch graduate student who wrote his thesis on submarine sales to Taiwan; and Coen Blaauw remains there till this day. The fact that US officials could not have open contact with ROC officials played into FAPA’s hands; FAPA could and did represent the Taiwanese-American constituency to Congress. A first success was separating immigration quotas for Taiwanese from those for the PRC.

IDEOLOGICAL SPLITS IN THE TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

Cary Hong of WUFI was fascinated with Hsu Hsin-liang, and decided to bide his time within WUFI while organizing a total of 27 left-leaning and more youthful WUFI members to split from George Chang’s control. The splinter group, announced about April 1984, was named Taiwan Revolutionary Party (Taiwan Guh Ming Dang), a label that showed it carried on WUFI’s habit of empty bravado. It also took in Hsu Hsin-liang, when *Formosa Weekly* finally stopped publication, but the newsletter had survived to about 200 weekly issues. At a huge (a few hundred families) summer camp meeting near Philadelphia in July 1984, it appeared that Taiwan Era in cooperation with Taiwan Revolutionary Party would begin to topple WUFI. But WUFI was able to shuffle the board of directors for the meeting, and lay down a muzzle regulation that political organizations could only present their platforms, not criticize past events, and so it deflected the showdown. Around this time WUFI was facing revelations, for example, that it had been infiltrated by the KMT. Taiwan Era boycotted the muzzled sessions, Cary Hong did not.

Events in Taiwan overtook the overseas standoff. Some Formosa Magazine prisoners went on hunger strike, demanding that President Chiang Ching-kuo allow the formation of opposition parties. Cary Hong, the California Gang, and Linda Arrigo answered their call, and set up a hunger strike activity on the lawn in front of Capitol Hill (with required police permission) for two weeks in July 1985. This attracted considerable attention in the Chinese-speaking community, and even some from the State Department. (An off-duty State Department employee divulged that relations of the Reagan administration with the KMT had soured since the Daly City assassination of Henry Liu (pen name Chiang Nan; he had written an unauthorized bio of Chiang Ching-kuo) in November 1983. In accord with this, there were faint signs that the KMT’s agents in the US were acting with less impunity than before.) WUFI boycotted the activity until the closing ceremony, when there was a large Taiwanese community turnout.

A more important outcome of this hunger strike is that the California Gang hatched a plan to organize a political party among overseas Taiwanese and then “take the party back to Taiwan”. A related issue was that the large number of overseas Taiwanese blacklisted from return to their homeland and parents had reached a tipping point – many were willing to openly challenge the blacklist authorities. In nearly one year of preparation, about half a million dollars was raised, with Hsu Hsin-liang and Hsieh Tsung-min (1964 declaration of Taiwan self-salvation; 1971 leaked list of political prisoners; jailed twice with severe torture) and Lin Shui-chuan crisscrossing the USA to rally support. Incidents in the Philippines, i.e. Ninoy Acquino returning to Manila and the subsequent Peoples Power uprising, inspired a game plan thought up by a member of Taiwan Revolutionary Party: Hsu Hsin-liang, wanted for arrest in Taiwan, would personally take the party back to Taiwan.

Then suddenly came the news that a meeting of about thirty at the Grand Hotel in Taipei had announced the formation of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) on September 26, 1986; and they were not arrested. Till now, it is not known how the overseas Taiwanese may have affected this. After celebrations, the overseas group prepared a mass airplane arrival (about 50 people) at the international airport in Taoyuan for Thanksgiving weekend, November XX. Hsu Hsin-liang’s home base was Taoyuan, and the arrival was set to coincide with an impending election. Thousands of his supporters surrounded the airport; instead of arresting Hsu, the authorities would not let him off the plane, a strange show of weakness.

With the promise of incremental advance of democracy in open activities, the support for clandestine revolution dried up. Although Taiwan Era had started a softer line of youth education, by the end of 1986 the organization seemed defunct. Moreover, the focus of activity moved to Taiwan; thousands of the overseas activists returned within the next few years. Its thunder again stolen by Hsu Hsin-liang’s Acquino gambit, WUFI issued a position that they eschewed the weak activities that could be carried out under the fettered local elections, and reiterated their commitment to armed revolution, a statement hardly credible when lip-synched by mild tenured professors; but within two years WUFI changed its tune and began smuggling people in, e.g. to appear suddenly on stage in large gatherings and then disappear again (e.g. Lee Ying-yuan in 1991), the kind of cat-and-mouse semi-open defiance of the authorities that the public loved. WUFI chairman Chang Tsan-hong (George) himself was arrested on airport arrival in XXXX, but only jailed a few months.

THE END OF MARTIAL LAW; TIM OPEN IN TAIWAN

The strategies of the overseas Taiwan independence advocates of course reflected the changing environment within Taiwan. President Chiang Ching-kuo announced the end of decades of martial law, to take effect on January 1, 1988 (CHECK). (My view is that the government had found it increasingly difficult to enforce martial law; not some sudden benevolence.) Moreover, martial law was replaced with national security laws that still criminalized “violation of national policy”, i.e. advocating either Taiwan independence or union with China. However, imprisonment was less than three years rather than ten or more, and torture not general. There remained serious barriers to freedom of speech, much less removal of the rubber-stamp “ten-thousand-year national assembly” frozen in representation of China since 1947 elections. A second-generation mainlander magazine editor publicly laid down the gauntlet: “My name is Tseng Nan-rong, and I advocate Taiwan independence!” He rigged his third-floor office with gas canisters, and let it blow when the police came for him on April XX, 1989. His charred body became an icon of the “New Nation” movement, with offices throughout Taiwan. Police became markedly reluctant to interfere in any opposition action, even pulling over statues of Chiang Kai-shek. The national security laws were finally repealed and representative democracy promised after large student movements in 1990 (Wild Lily Movement) and 1991.

Social movements also broke out in large-scale protests and demonstrations in 1988, as soon as martial law was lifted, and rippled through to 1992: farm, labor, environment, women’s issues, indigenous peoples. This pattern has been seen in other countries following long political oppression. From May 1990, when Lee Teng-hui, the last vice-president to Chiang Ching-kuo and the first native Taiwanese president was elected, and he released the remaining political prisoners, large numbers of blacklisted native Taiwanese returned from the US and took up advocacy of nationalism and social movement causes. Among them were former members of *Taiwan Era* (pro-TI) and of *Taiwan Thought* (pro-PRC). In fact almost all social movements in Taiwan, including the women’s movement organizations, have been polarized by pro-TI versus pro-PRC leadership. The pro-KMT position has usually been part of the power structure and not conducive to reform, and so irrelevant to social movements. But strangely enough, increasingly from 1990, the pro-PRC activists were largely co-opted and became window dressing for the most conservative KMT forces when they wanted to play to public opinion. That is, Chinese nationalism, indirectly given financial reward by the PRC, won out over Marxist principles for these people.

In 1991 the DPP finally passed an attenuated TI party plank stating its goal of establishing the nation of Taiwan by democratic processes. The left wing of the party pushed the plank, the right wing wanted to avoid provocation of China and the US. Hsu Hsin-liang, in and out of the chairman’s seat, championed the wisdom of the Taiwanese businessman in utilizing cheap Chinese labor to replace increasingly expensive Taiwanese labor while they still controlled the middleman position in the US market. He justified this by a kind of imperialist nationalism (the book is titled *Rising Nation*, *Hsin Hsin Mintsu*), depicting Taiwanese as the Dutch mercantile traders of this age. His doctrine was labeled, in short, “Advance west!” to take over China. He and others of the DPP Meilidao faction deplored the environmental and labor activists (including the DPP’s left, the New Tide faction) who, he said, would drive the Taiwanese middle class back to the safety of the military/developmentalist KMT. Later he referred to the TI plank as “a document of past history”.

Members of the California Gang and other Taiwanese-Americans came back to Taiwan first to serve as Hsu Hsin-liang’s staff, and thence entered into DPP politics in general, sometimes with medical and engineering and business management skills, as well as the reputation of being above local division of spoils. Ironically, in the early years after 1990, the conservative overseas WUFI was allied with the DPP’s left wing, and the relatively socially-oriented California Gang was allied with Hsu Hsin-liang despite his turn to the right.

WHY DIDN’T DEMOCRACY BRING TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE?

At the end of 1992 elections were finally held that would entirely replace the 1947 Legislative Yuan elected in China, i.e. representing only Taiwan. Taiwan independence advocates had always assumed that with freedom of speech and a fair ballot box, strong public support would be mustered and the country would soon be christened Republic of Taiwan. What they did not reckon with was the transformation of the KMT from a relatively isolated military dictatorship of mainlanders, to a patronage structure with tentacles reaching deep into native Taiwanese local factions, though mainlanders remained on top. Vote buying was general outside of Taipei, the bureaucracy wanted to keep its privileges, accounts of history had long been distorted, and the habits of obedience to authority were deeply ingrained. Moreover, it was taken as a given that whoever ran the country would have to have the blessings of the Americans. Although the DPP could count on a stable minimum 30-35% of the popular vote, the KMT easily held the majority. Finally, the DPP also lost its luster of moral superiority as opportunistic local politicians and even gangsters were able to capture DPP nominations through buying token party members (ren-tou dang-yuan), estimated at 45% of total membership in 1991, and more later. This led to a later reform that increasingly gutted the party of its political positions, though it is reasonable for winning elections -- using public opinion polls (which can also be manipulated!) to decide nomination runoffs.

The DPP garnered a large minority slice of the new legislature of 1993, but these legislators were also subject to being compromised by the ruling party (gifts, flattery, women, a cut of the deal, stock options), and this probably played a role in the DPP failing in 1994 to stand by the environmental movement and its previous promise to stop Nuclear Power Plant No. 4. Likewise, the DPP did little to protect labor or national property during the privatization of government monopolies in the early 1990’s. In 1996, during Hsu Hsin-liang’s second chairmanship, the DPP’s departments of social movements (women, indigenous, labor, etc.) were all changed to departments of social development, i.e. entrepreneurship. Not surprisingly, the social movements became wary of being identified with either major political party, though clearly they had more historical affinity with and influence on the DPP.

As China’s economic and military power grew and Taiwanese businessmen took their technology to China (e.g. 8-inch and then 12-inch silicon disks for producing computer chips), the DPP increasingly avoided direct statements demanding Taiwanese sovereignty, though it played on ethnic and cultural sentiments. It sought to win the public through good administration and governance, and in this it was fairly successful.

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF CHINESE NATIONALISM

This account has centered on the Taiwan independence camp in the issue of nationalism, but of course the competing nationalism is Chinese, and over the years I have tried to take the few opportunities that arose to understand this position as well. A number of serious activists, mostly those on the left, and even those resolutely TI, felt a deep understanding of China was necessary for building their own perspective. And native Taiwanese who were pro-PRC even more wanted to advise Beijing on how to win the hearts and minds of the people of Taiwan.

But there are structural reasons why the pro-PRC position did not gain ground in Taiwan politics, although the Workers Party and the Labour Party (one party continuing from the other, about 1988-1993, flag was Chinese stars on deep green background, also part of the China Tide group) tried hard and almost got one legislator elected in a Hakka area. The reasons are based in China’s policies and in its relations with Taiwanese, initially those overseas, as can be seen in the life history examples below. In more recent years, the pro-PRC group has held open seminars, generally at Shih Hsin University or National Taiwan Normal University, and at one such meeting in about 2010 the invited labor leader directly repudiated the pro-PRC position – seeing Taiwan labor’s position undermined by capital flight to China.

Back to the early years. Peng Teng-yun of the Taiwan Compatriots Friendship Association came to the US in 1982 and attended a Taiwanese-American summer camp. He was generally given a cold shoulder. It seems that in the early 1980’s the PRC tried to network with overseas Taiwanese, but not to much positive effect. The method of Taiwan Compatriots seems to be individual engagement, the old Chinese “guanxi”, in which the contact is given to think he has obtained a special “in” with powerful people – a kind of cooptation. This is accompanied by a formal banquet in somebody’s honor, too noisy for any real discussion. No significant give-and-take on policy, which is set in stone by higher authorities who must be obeyed. But Peng also spoke of the special incentives to Taiwanese businessmen to invest in China, with much lower labor costs, and by the late 1980’s much of Taiwan textiles and plastics production for the international market had relocated to China.

In 1985 for a large 2-28 Commemoration activity by pro-PRC Taiwanese the PRC sent to New York three Taiwan communists who had actually been there in 1947. They said 2-28 had not been set off by them; they were as surprised by the spontaneous uprising as anyone else. I doubt if this activity made any inroads on the TI camp.

An unusual life story that I heard in some detail is that of Guo Min-nan (English, William; pen name Guo Min; born about 1940). Guo grew up in Panchiao, west Taipei County, where his father was an elected official, and friends with a prominent Japanese-period Taiwan communist who was first elevated to government position and then executed in 1953. Guo joined WUFI soon after he went to the States in 1968, but withdrew when the aristocratic Ku Kuan-min in Japan capitulated to KMT threats and returned to Taiwan. He was a member of the underground organization Taiwan Renmin (Taiwan People) in the US briefly before it split in 1975 into pro-PRC and pro-TI factions, the latter becoming Taiwan Era. He was invited to China four times in the early 1980’s, even though he did not hide his TI position. Then he spent ten years traveling around China to understand the Cultural Revolution. He completed a Ph.D. in history at University of Kunming, and finally moved back to Taiwan for good in about 2011, bringing his young Chinese wife and child. He still advocates independence, but belongs to no organization and writes economic history.

Lin Hsiao-hsin (林孝信, Siao-sin Lin), native Taiwanese born 1947, went to study physics at University of Chicago, but suffered cancellation of his passport and thence removal from university because of his 1970 participation in the Diaoyutai Movement. To my understanding from long-ago interviews with peripheral figures, Lin and colleagues, while staunchly pro-PRC, tried to enlighten Chinese leaders to appeal to the Taiwan populace and participated in the editing of the monthly magazine *Tai Sheng* (Taiwan Voice) produced by the Taiwan Compatriots Friendship Association 中华全国台湾同胞联谊会. However, a confrontation emerged when the PRC’s President Li Xiannian (李先念) commented during his 1985 trip to Burma that if only the Taiwan authorities recognized they belonged to one China under Beijing, they would be allowed to retain their military, economy, polity, and “special” (te), i.e. security/secret police. This fourth dimension had not been included in previous statements, and was objectionable to those oppressed in Taiwan, whether TI or pro-PRC. In Chicago Lin had founded the Organization in Support of the Democratic Movement in Taiwan (台灣民主運動支援會), listed active as 1979-1986 in Chinese Wikipedia. Reportedly, in the fallout of this clash with China, one issue of Tai Sheng magazine was banned, and Lin and others boycotted appearing as Taiwan tokens at PRC activities for a time. In 1997 Lin returned to Taiwan and played a central role in founding the community college system in Taiwan, a springboard for environmental and local history movements across the country; and he acknowledged the support of Taipei Mayor Chen Shui-bian in this.

THE GAINS OF DEMOCRACY WITHIN TAIWAN

Summary:

Election of Chen Shui-bian to Taipei mayorship beginning Christmas 1994, due to split in KMT, New Party conservative splinter. New discipline for city employees, increased layouts for social services and community development, streamlining of government functions and computerization of paperwork, increased efficiency and better service to citizens. Four year term, lost re-election – government employees voted Blue.

1995, National Health Insurance system, resulting I believe from KMT trying to legitimize itself while under DPP attack and mobilization of elders for health care.

1996, split in DPP as party chairmen become increasing compromised (Shih Ming-deh tries to get elected National Legislature head through deal with New Party), Hsu Hsin-liang as chairman changes social movement departments into small business development departments, says Taiwan independence plank of DPP is “figment of history”. Taiwan Independence Party founded December 1996 in reaction, Green Party Taiwan about same time.

Chen Shui-bian elected president, Lu Hsiu-lien vice-president, with 36% of the vote, due to split in KMT. Former KMT chairman and president Lee Teng-hui is secretly happy, KMT corporations begin liquidation. But probably threat of military coup; constitutional crisis when Chen tries to stop Nuclear Power Plant No. 4.

2003 February 28, at 2:28 pm, Hands across Taiwan involves nearly a million people south to north, pushes Chen and Lu to a 50.2% narrow victory for second presidency term. Although the DPP brought systematic benefits for the working class (such as government-managed and transportable pensions, and housing loans) and many advances for environmental cleanliness and livability, there are increasing signs that Chen is the captive of Taiwan capitalists, both in failure to cap CO-2 emissions, and in accelerating flow of high-tech capital to China.

However, the solution of Taiwan’s status by national plebiscite has been stymied by sharp reprimands to Chen Shui-bian from the American masters.

DISCUSSION: WHOSE IDEALS?

This abbreviated but complex account of the interacting forces of nationalism and social class in Taiwan’s post-World War II history does not have a single denouement. We can see an overall evolution, the rise of China since its 1990’s reincorporation into the world economy, and Taiwan being sucked into Chinese control by both economic and political forces. In 1991 Ms. Su Ching-li, studying for a never-finished Ph.D. at State University of New York Binghamton, the home of world systems analysis, and often visiting China to understand the spread of foreign agribusiness, said to me “The Taiwan independence movement will be just a bunch of children playing on the sidelines.” Ironically, she had defied the KMT with her magazine and political activities, but was deeply afraid of the Chinese communists.

Many things that now seem set in stone could not have been known by an external viewer at an earlier point in history. The US could actually have stood by principles of democracy and Wilsonian self-determination, rather than giving Chiang Kai-shek *carte blanche* to rule with an iron fist. But the US actively suppressed revelation of human rights violations in Taiwan – to the point of court-martialing its own intelligence personnel (Ricketts case about 1972). The US seems callous about the fate of small countries, but wants to be able to pull the strings to its whims. Or even at the late date of 2000, it could have stood back while President Chen held a national referendum, instead of pinching off these aspirations in the bud. It is quite likely that because of the fear of attack from China, as well as identity with Chinese language and culture, the populace would not dare to vote for independence – but that would be the decision of the people of Taiwan, not Washington.

China was hailed in 1949 as the vanguard of Third World revolution, and in its propaganda it pledged to stand up for all the oppressed and colonized peoples of the world. China did show solidarity with revolutions against capitalist dictators in Indochina, Thailand, the Philippines, etc., – with a notable break after its rapprochement with the United States. The Kuomintang in 1920-40’s China had set up a police state, with some 100,000 students and activists and intellectuals tortured and killed and buried in six shallow trenches on the hill called Yu Hua Tai (Rain Flower Platform) in Nanjing, the KMT capitol. There is an excellent museum on the site. Who would think that the CCP would want to reconcile with its bitter enemy (of course with ties of native place, classmates, relatives, etc., as common in civil war) rather than with the oppressed people of Taiwan suffering under that enemy? That its supporters would avoid any human rights or democratic movement concern for Taiwan, as early as 1975? Why does the PRC feel compelled to blockade all Taiwanese participation in international forums, rather than use them to develop contacts? And then the infamous statement of Li Xiannian in 1985, implying acceptance of the KMT’s martial law rule over Taiwanese. With a thousand Chinese missiles pointed at Taiwan, why should Taiwanese not love their “compatriots” across the Strait?

In 1978 Beijing released a few dozen of its KMT prisoners in a gesture of reconciliation to Chiang Ching-kuo. (One of them I interviewed in 2003: Da Fei, who claims to be the highest KMT police official left in charge of the prisons in Nanjing when the communists took control of the city in 1949; he served eighteen years in Qinghai prisons. Then he spent six more years imprisoned on Green Island, 1980-86.) We might wonder why, if the KMT is really sincere about Chinese nationalism, it took so long to move towards reconciliation – only after native Taiwanese asserted control in 2000. KMT propaganda shifted quickly from “We are the strong bastion of anti-communism!” to “Don’t say Taiwan independence or they might attack us!” We might suspect the KMT elite are actually more concerned for maintaining their power and profits within “the small island” of Taiwan.

Why don’t the people of Taiwan speak up for themselves? Ironically, Nylon Cheng could go up in flames to underline his adamant demand for freedom to advocate Taiwan independence, but DPP politicians do not want to risk scaring some portions of their constituency, or ruffling their American handlers. Much the same could be said for other TI figures and organizations (e.g. North Society) which were complacent with the ROC moniker and its truncated foreign relations as long as the DPP held the presidency and the funding pot. Their implicit fear to stand up to either China or the US, drawing back from facing the facts of the steady drift towards Chinese control while the US insists Taiwan remain “the Republic of China”, means that they have provided no heroic stance that might have strengthened public resolve. Now the DPP’s TI position has been so watered down that it is impossible to reconstitute it, and it is embarrassing to compare it with the principles and sacrifices of its founders – some of whom, incidentally, have also sold out to China (e.g. the Red Shirt Movement of 2006 that sought to depose the DPP president).

If this discussion sounds rancorous, then I must admit some personal rancor and involvement (a brief bio in English can be found on my website, linda-gail-arrigo.org). I would not want to see this harshly candid article translated into Chinese. The position of myself and my 1970’s generation of human rights workers such as Lynn Miles and Miyake Kiyoko is that we do not advocate Taiwan’s independence *per se*; we have worked for the right of the people of Taiwan to determine their own future. We recognize the efforts and sacrifices of thousands of people who fervently hope for Taiwan’s formal independence, but deplore the limits of their vision. Now the TI organizations are in effect seniors clubs, though they do provide some supports for the younger generation of activists.

Could the outcome have been any different? In a large world systems analysis perspective, probably not. First, Taiwan achieved its admirable economic growth under the auspices of the United States, which designed the export processing zones (e.g. Kaohsiung EPZ 1964) and opened its markets early in the Cold War period to build up its free market bulwark against communism. Taiwanese were thankful when USAID lifted them out of wartime hunger with PL480 flour and soybeans; the flour sacks became underpants. Very few former political prisoners bear rancor against the US for the White Terror inflicted by Chiang Kai-shek. For decades the newspapers had only good things to say about the World Anti-Communist League allies of the ROC, e.g. South Korea and Paraguay, and it is difficult to get an alternative world view in Chinese translation. Secondly, the brain-drain Taiwanese-Americans moved smoothly into service for the US military-industrial complex and other professions, a model immigrant community that realized the American dream and joined the upper-middle class. There was however at least one nuclear science graduate student who joined Cesar Chavez in organizing Mexican tomato pickers during summer vacation; one arts student who visited Nicaragua after the fall of Somoza; and a few others. Taiwanese-Americans who joined the DPP international relations efforts, such as Maysing Yang, wife of a banker, or Chen Tang-shan (Mark), formerly a federal government employee in D.C., shared the dominant American foreign affairs outlook, or even the more conservative Republican outlook. Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) in D.C. presented Senator Jesse Helms with an award at the end of his career. When the DPP set up an office in Washington in 1995, it appointed Prof. Parris Chang (Chang Hsu-cheng) as the first director; Chang had a long history with conservative US think tanks, anti-communist speakers, and also the Rand Corporation, generally known as a CIA cover. So much for international solidarity on the part of the party founded by political prisoners!

I believe there have been some moments when a broader vision might have led to action. After his landslide popular election in 1996, KMT native-Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui could have taken advantage of world revulsion at China’s 1989 Tian’anmen crackdown, and defied the KMT’s hardliners though an earlier alliance with the DPP. His lieutenant told me Lee thought he could control his apparent successor, Lien Chan, and stay the course of nativization. The DPP’s president Chen Shui-bian was in a much weaker position when he took office the second time in 2004, but just at the same time as the US was legitimizing a new constitution for Iraq with a popular referendum, Chen could have insisted on the same for Taiwan. He had already been feisty enough to talk back to the US State Department, “I’m not one of your states!” If overseas Taiwanese had cultivated relations with small and medium size countries across the globe in earlier decades – not the dollar diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – they might have had more capacity to sway world opinion. Although Taiwan has won admiration for its development of democracy, progressives around the world see Taiwan as a peon of the US, with good reason, and accept Beijing’s trope “recalcitrant province”.

Ms. Tsai Ying-wen, formerly on Lee Teng-hui’s staff and now DPP chairman, is in a more secure position to be the next president in 2016; she has already given her assurances to Washington that she will not rock the boat (even as it is drifting towards a drop-off). Time does not stand still. It is, I believe, up to the next generation, the Sunflowers and their offshoots, to stand up and change the status quo, or to make Taiwan very difficult for China to swallow.



蘇慶黎

洪哲勝

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