

The KMT and Taiwan
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Prof. Myers, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

This is really a very honored moment for me to speak to such a distinguished group of participants. Today's occasion -- the opening of the Chinese historical archives of the KMT to the public use -- is a very important step not only for Hoover Institution but also for the KMT party. The Hoover Institution is worldly known for its archives for academic research. And the KMT is a party of 111 years of history. I think marriage between the two obviously would benefit many historians around the world.

I was elected party chairman in July last year and was inaugurated, on the 19th of August. Ever since I became chairman of the KMT, I have attached a lot of importance to the history of our party. The idea is very simple: We want to make sure that if we only know about our history and when we push ahead our reform, pretty much like what Chiang Kai-shek and his associates did in the early 1950s' as Prof. Myers referred to as the party's central reform committee, we will remember the glory and the failures of our party in the past, and have a strong conviction of what we can achieve in the future.

Today, I would like to share with you some of my thoughts about the Kuomintang and Taiwan. As you know, the KMT in its original form of the Reviving China Society (興中會) was established on the 24th of Nov. 1894, in Honolulu, Hawaii. It was a very small society, with slightly more than 30 people. And the head of the society was actually an accountant of a local bank. Many of the members were restaurant or laundry shop owners. Nobody would have predicted that 18 years after the founding, the new China -- the Republic of China -- the first republic in Asia, would be born.

1894 was a very difficult year for China, because in the month of Oct. China was defeated by Japan in the Sino-Japanese War, either on the land or on the sea. The forces of the Qing Dynasty were completely defeated. One American was invited to become a mediator for ceasefire and the eventual conclusion of the Treaty of Shimonoseki.

At the time, Taiwan had been a province of China for 10 years, because in 1884, made Taiwan a province of the Manchu Dynasty. It used to be a part of Fujian province. 1894 was the year the famous governor of Taiwan, Liu Ming-chuan(劉銘傳), had left Taiwan for three years. As you know, Liu Ming-chuan was the first governor of Taiwan and was probably by far the most successful, the greatest governor, of Taiwan. By the way, he was one of my role models. I hope that 120 years from now, people would still remember who the Taipei mayor was in 2006. He was the person who turned on the first electrical light in Taiwan, in Taipei city, not far away from the Presidential Palace now, in the West Gate (西門町). And he was the first one to build a railroad in Taiwan. Just a little bit earlier than the first railroad was built in Mainland China. He didn't have the money to build it. Actually, he asked some German and British firms to provide the funding. So, the railroad was built on a BOT basis. That was something very unusual in those years, but pretty fashionable these days.

In 1888, the minister of the United States in Beijing (駐華公使), Charles Denby went to Taiwan and had a tour of the island. In his report to the State Department in 1888, he said Taiwan should be considered “the most modern province of China”. And he referred to Liu Ming-chuan as a great governor of Taiwan. So you can see Taiwan was a quiet and very modernized place among all the provinces of China when Dr. Sun Yat-Sen founded the Reviving China Society. No one in Taiwan would have thought that it eventually became an object of reparations for the war as a result of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894.

The negotiations continued. Actually, Prime Minister Lee Hong-zhang himself was the negotiator with the Japanese prime minister. Eventually they reached an accord on April 17 for the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Taiwan was ceded to Japan. There was an immediate uproar in Beijing. Many people said, “No! You can't do that to Taiwan. That's unfair.” But nothing could be done. And the Japanese forces actually started to take over Taiwan after landing in the northern part of Taiwan on June 17th. So the date of June 17th was considered by the Japanese as the day when their rule of Taiwan was founded (始政日).

About four months later, Dr. Sun Yat-sen decided to launch the first uprising in Guangzhou. So if you look back, you can see that the founding of the Reviving China Society – was a result of the defeat of China by the Japanese. At the time, he was extremely disappointed with the corrupt and incompetent rule of the Manchu government. In the following year, when he heard that Taiwan was being ceded to

Japan, he decided that he had to put his revolutionary ideas into practice. So he started the first uprising – Guang Zhou Qi Yi -- in Oct. 1895. Two years later, a very famous revolutionary, Chen Shao-bai -- a very close associate of Dr. Sun Yat-sen-- came to Taiwan, and started to recruit members for the Reviving China Society. There were at least three whose name we know.

One of these gentlemen, 吳文秀, happened to be a resident of Taipei City. We have already found his old residence in Taipei. So it was quite interesting,

As you know, the Reviving China Society was later merged with other anti-Manchu organizations and became Tong Meng Hui, or the Alliance Society (同盟會). There were 69 Taiwanese who joined Tong Meng Hui, including people like Chiang Wei-shui, Weng Jing-ming, and Du Cong-ming. These people eventually became very prominent figures in modern Taiwanese history. Particularly Chiang Wei-shui, who later founded the first political party in Taiwan in 1927 -- it's called Taiwan Min Zhong Dang. If you have a chance to look at the flag of the Taiwan Min Zhong Dang (台灣民眾黨), it just resembled the national flag of the Republic of China.

In 1912, the Republic of China was officially founded. In a press conference for local and foreign reporters, Dr. Sun Yat-sen presided over the ceremony. There, he said, he wanted to get Taiwan back. That was the first time when the revolutionary Chinese leader referred to Taiwan. After the ceremony, another one of his close associates, Dai Ji-tao, introduced a Taiwanese to him. That Taiwanese was named Luo Fu-xing. He was from Miaoli County. He personally participated in the Huang Hua Gang Uprising about nine months earlier.

Luo Fu Xing met with Dr. Sun Yat-sen and Dr. Sun told him that Taiwan must be recovered; “Otherwise, I could not face up to the Chinese nation.” After Luo Fu-Xing went back to Taiwan, he started another uprising against the Japanese, and was caught and hanged to death in 1914.

Throughout the later years, from the Northern Expedition till 1933, Chiang Kai-shek in his diary also mentioned that he also wanted to get Taiwan back or restore Taiwan, and it became a resolution adopted in 1937 when the KMT convened the sixth plenary session of the party congress.

And everybody knows what happened then. The Sino-Japanese War broke out. When the war broke out, the Chinese side didn't really declare the war till the day after the

Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, that is, Dec. 7, 1941. Why? Because China didn't have the strength to declare war against Japan. If China did, then countries like the United States and Great Britain would have to remain neutral. And that would have a devastating effect on the war materials coming through these two countries. So China alone fought the Japanese for four years before war was declared, right after the United States declared war against Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

And when China declared war against Japan, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek made it very clear that all treaties concluded between China and Japan, including the Treaty of Shimonoseki, would become null and void. Although the announcement alone would not constitute the direct legal effect, that was a very important record, because it was referred to later in 1952, when Taiwan and Japan concluded a separate peace treaty, after the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty. So at the time, it was nothing, but more than 10 years later, it became a very important historical statement.

I have to mention the Cairo Conference of 1943, when Chiang Kai-shek, Roosevelt, and Churchill met in Cairo. There, they jointly declared in the Cairo Declaration that the territories Japan has stolen from China – namely, Manchuria, Taiwan and Pescadores (Penghu) -- "shall be returned to the Republic of China." I quote that verbatim. The document was later referred to in the Potsdam Proclamation in 1945. And eventually it was accepted by the instrument of surrender on Sept. 2nd, 1945 and became binding on the Japanese.

Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek sent his people to Taiwan on 25th of Oct. 1945, to accept the Japanese surrender there, and early in the following year, by an executive order, the all Taiwanese were restored to Chinese nationality.

Unfortunately, two years later, the tragic 2/28 incident occurred. Thousands of Taiwanese were rising against the government as a result of a widespread discontent with the economic situation, with government corrupt, and other things that had made the lives of people quite miserable. So far, as evidence was indicated by the 2/28 committee, so far 858 people who were considered either dead or missing, received the highest compensation according to a law passed in 1993 on the 2/28 incident.

That figure, 858, is so far considered by the committee to be the only figure that they could have. There are reports about deaths of more than 10,000 or even more. But the committee has been established for almost 11 years, and the highest compensation is six million NT dollars. So we don't know whether more will be coming forward, but

so far the people who have come forward in recent years become fewer and fewer. But in any case, that was 2/28, a very tragic incident in Taiwanese history. And certainly the KMT should be held responsible for mishandling the situation.

And this is why, beginning about six or seven years ago, I started to apologize to – either the victims or their families, for the mishandling of the event by the then KMT government. Obviously, my apologies are really sincere, because although I was born three years after the incident occurred, I, as the chairman of the KMT, feel that when something like this happened, it obviously was attributable to the general situation which the people resented and the way the government handled it.

After 1949, when the central government relocated to Taiwan, Taiwan had already been under martial law by the KMT provincial authorities. Obviously the civil war brought more confrontation, more repression within Taiwan. Actually the period referred to as "the period of white terror" -- much more people were arrested, tortured, executed, or jailed for sentences. I met some survivors during the 2/28 memorial service; the one named Lin Shu-yang had been jailed for 35 years, the longest political prisoner in Taiwan. Again, this was also an occasion when I, as chairman of the KMT, should apologize when I went to the memorial service in the last five years.

Lat September, I went to bow three times to the portraits of these people who died and their families, trying to console them, hoping that they could forgive the KMT. Also, I called upon the authorities in the Chinese mainland that same reconciliation should also occur between the Chinese Communist Party and the KMT members or officials and their families. We consider that this is a reconciliation that should be done, not just in Taiwan, but in other parts of China as well.

So you can see that we sometimes have a tragic part of history, but after that, Taiwan would embark on a program of rapid industrialization. And eventually, affluence of the people and the education they receive contribute to the emergence of a solid middle class, which demanded more participation in the political process.

Although no election at the central government level was held, local elections began as early as 1950. It was something that I felt quite amazed when President Chiang Kai-shek decided in July 1950 to have local elections in Taiwan.

He was himself back to power March 1st that year. Before that, he was out of the government. The government was under Lee Zong-ren, the acting President. But

Lee went to the United States. There was no government. The premier actually took over the government. In March, Chiang returned to his presidency. And he made an announcement in July, barely two weeks after the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950. It was really astonishing why he did that? If he hadn't done that, nobody would have blamed him because it was a very perilous time for Taiwan. I didn't understand why. But I did have a chance to talk to one of the officials in Taiwan's provincial government responsible for holding local elections. They didn't know how to do it because it had never been done in Taiwan. So they got really a lot of headaches to hold the elections.

And they decided maybe they should start with some remote counties. So they chose Hualien, in the east coast. They figured that if something went wrong, Taipei might not know that immediately. There it went. It was so successful that Hualien County Council was elected at the end of that year, and the candidate for magistrate, I remember his name was Yang Zhong Jin, was elected. And the following year, the mayor of Taipei city was elected. That gentleman was named Wu San-lian. He was not even a member of KMT. But had been an appointed mayor before that. He resigned and ran for mayor, and was elected with more than 60 percent of the vote. It was better than I did when I ran for the first time.

In any case, that was phenomenal, because in a very difficult time in Taiwan, when the letter of credit issued by the Bank of Taiwan was rejected abroad and we still had elections. Why was that? I was always puzzled. I remember the whole process very vividly because I was born in July.

So, later on I looked at the history of 2/28 and I think that was a compensatory move to let the Taiwanese people know that something like the 2/28 incident was really, really, something that should not have happened. So, after the KMT central government came to Taiwan, I think they wanted to make it up, to do something for the local people. So they decided to have local elections.

You don't know how important local elections were to Taiwan's democratization. Without local elections, Taiwan would not have generations of politicians who know how to conduct election politics. And generations of the former Dang Wai (outside of the party) politicians actually came from local elections.

Although Taiwan did not have central level elections until 1969, local elections were held regularly. Then came something really unexpected -- our withdrawal from the

United Nations on Oct. 25, 1971. The voting on the resolution to expel -- using the jargon of the United Nations -- "the Chiang Kai-shek clique" and to admit the People's Republic of China was passed by 76 to 36 or something like that, on Oct. 25, 1971. Taiwan was out. But actually before the result came out, our foreign minister Zhou Shu-kai walked out of the conference room after delivering a statement of withdrawal.

It was really a very sad day for Taiwan, because ever since then, Taiwan's international status has been seriously endangered. Before that, Taiwan, at the peak, had 64 countries that maintained formal diplomatic ties with it. But after that, the number continued to shrink, one after another. And in 1979, the U.S. joined other countries in recognizing PRC as the sole legal government of all China. The action taken by the United Nations gave Taiwanese an added sorrow of feeling being an orphan. And this is a reason for some of the sentiment for Taiwan independence in Taiwan.

First, it came when the cession of Taiwan to Japan in 1895. Some history books said Lee Hong Zhang made some inappropriate comments about Taiwan. He said that the flowers there were not fragrant and the birds did not sing (Niao Bu Yu, Hua Bu Xiang) -- that kind of comments really antagonized the Taiwanese.

When the Taiwanese themselves organized resistance armed against the Japanese, they were quelled by the Japanese -- from April to about November. A famous local figure -- Qiu Feng-jia -- had to flee from Taiwan to the mainland. He wrote a long poem -- "Zai Xiang You Quan Neng Ge Di, Gu Chen Wu Li Ke Hui Tian" or "The Prime Minister Had the Power to Cede the Territory, We as Inferior Officers Cannot Reverse Taiwan's Fate." I read that poem many years later, and could still feel the sorrow and the feeling of Qiu Feng-jia. He could have never dreamed that 50 years later, Taiwan was restored to the Republic of China.

But those who welcomed the arriving Chinese army in the piers of Keelung would have never thought that two years from then, the 2/28 incident occurred. That had really destroyed all the image, all the trust, all the credibility of the Nationalist rule in Taiwan.

And again, what happened in 1971 -- Taiwan's expulsion from the United Nations further added the agony of the Taiwanese. And this is one of the reasons why in the last couple of days when I was talking about how to structure a new relationship with Mainland China in terms of cross-Strait relations, I specifically wanted to address the

international status of Taiwan.

Without a proper treatment, a proper handling, I think the problem of Taiwan seeking permanent separation will continue indefinitely. That is why I suggest that in our future dealings or detente with Mainland China, we should develop a modus vivendi regarding Taiwan's participation in international affairs, not based on the zero-sum game, but on pragmatism. Hopefully, Taiwan's identity could be maintained, and the relationship could continue on that basis.

And this is utterly important for Taiwan who has undergone the historical events that I just referred to.

I think we are lucky now we have an opportunity to restructure what history will be in the future. If we are lucky enough to succeed, I am sure we'll be able to address some of the problems that many Taiwanese have very strong feelings about -- the three things: the cession of Taiwan to the Japanese in 1895, the 2/28 incident, and Taiwan's expulsion from the United Nations in 1971.

But now, for those of us, particularly people like myself, our relatively young age in the KMT shows that we don't have the political baggage some of our elders had. So we could start to rebuild the party, to reform the party in a way that could adequately address the concerns of many Taiwanese, and to rebuild the relationship between the KMT and the Taiwanese.

I've been doing that for a few years now, and I am seeing some of the positive results. And I think if we continue that, maybe we could find a way out. This is probably necessary to be done, and if we could do this in connection with our efforts on cross-strait relations, we might be able to solve that problem -- a problem left over by history and a problem left over to those of us who are now working to reform the party and rebuild a new relationship. Thank you very much.