

## **A BRIEF REPORT ON TAIWAN'S NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE YUAN ELECTIONS, DECEMBER 19, 1992**

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Gold cows are no longer idols in Taiwan, and the change comes none too soon. After the December 1991 elections for 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 National Legislature, 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 making back 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. The National Assembly, which governs the constitution and elects the president, and the Legislative Yuan were to be elected by the populace under effective control of the Republic of China, i.e. Taiwan and the offshore islands of Kinmen and Matsu -- for the first time since 1947. As if to maintain a figment of the previous structure of the legislature, 117 seats elected from districts of Taiwan, six from the indigenous peoples, and two from the offshore islands were supplemented with an additional 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. Total Legislative Yuan seats are 161. The effect of this "proportional party vote" system is to give the two major party machines the power to dispense substantial favors, 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; that might give a chance to small or thinly-spread parties, but a two-party habit seems set. In the voting of December 19, 1992, voter participation was higher than usual, 72%.

Nominees and approved candidates of the ruling party, the Kuomintang (KMT, Chinese Nationalist Party), received 95 seats with 53% of the popular vote. Kuomintang members who ran as independents gained another 7 seats with about 8% of the votes. 33 of these were incumbants. 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 cleaved factions popularly labelled "Taiwanese KMT", supporting President Lee Teng-hui, and "Chinese KMT", supporting military-man-in-retirement Premier Hau Pei-tsun, or "mainstream" and "non-mainstream" 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". The latter faction found big-scoring stars for its New KMT Alliance in two government-groomed second-generation mainlanders (Jaw Shau-kang and Wang Chien-hsuan, detailed below) who championed reform and also railed out against "gold cows"; the Alliance took eleven seats. The military-linked "Yellow

Restoration Party Section (huang fu xin dang bu [1])" also eased the way for 34 contenders, of whom 28 were successful. Among "non-mainstream" successful candidates, veteran officials such as John Kuan (Guan Zhong ) have made loud noises about democracy -- now that the old guard mainlanders are a minority within the KMT -- while soliciting huge sums for their "Democracy Fund" war chest; they have learned a great deal since 1987, the end of the era of martial law.

The opposition party, the Taiwan Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), received 50 seats with 31% of the popular vote, its highest ever, and a big advance over its poor 24% showing in December 1991. At least one more seat [2] remains contested following revelations of ballot box-stuffing: in Hualien the seat originally awarded to a KMT candidate will probably soon be conceded to Huang Hsin-Chieh, a former chairman of the DPP. The new assurance of the opposition is even more marked in that DPP candidates placed first in 14 out of the 25 main races. Seven seats were won by independents, two of whom are in close cooperation with the DPP. It is intriguing that heterodox religious sects fielded at least two candidates this year, but such special interest organizations, rapidly expanding in Taiwan in recent years, have apparently not taken a seat as yet. Some philanthropic organizations made announcements of endorsement lists that followed no party line, illustrating the public's tendency towards increasing scrutiny and discrimination among individual candidates.

The DPP, after putting its own house in order in July following accusations of delegate vote-buying in previous internal party primaries, appeared united and forward-looking with new positions on social legislation that appealed to retirees, farmers, and labor. There also appeared to be new support for the DPP from middle-class and professional sectors of the population, even government-employed clerks and teachers, who have been said to recognize the role of the opposition in abating the previous interference of security agencies in their work, and also in spurring the government to vie for their loyalty with better salaries and benefits. One small sign of this was that a bank employees union threw in its lot with the DPP after a dispute with a KMT party organization (Independent Evening Post December 17, 1992, p. 3); the underlying issue 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. The DPP, running largely lawyers, doctors, and writers who have become well known in the last decade of battles for civil rights, took a surprising number of seats in Taipei, the capital city, and its surrounding county. Among the victorious there were lawyers Hsieh Chang-ting and Chen Shui-bien, medical doctor Shen Fu-hsiung, and professor of international relations Lu Hsiu-yi, as well as fiery Taiwanese nationalists Lin Chuo-shui and Ms. Chen Wan-chen. The DPP, like the KMT, has little means to restrict the numbers of candidates bearing its standard and is rife with prima donnas and personal rivalries; but the chance for gain is less of a factor in attracting candidates, and DPP supporters seemed to display independent sagacity in apportioning the vote.

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 (ji zi 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 by President Lee Teng-hui's forces to the opposition party, and in fact that is already rumored.

Let us return to the prelude before 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 sub-contractors implied a rake-off of nearly half the bid. A KMT Tainan city councilman who made an unsuccessful bid for the legislature, Wang Dao-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 except if opened to the eye of the media.

In fact candidates now vie to be crusaders in a cause celebre, and claim to be the subject of government or other attacks (even to the point of staging their own assassination attempts, it was suspected for one candidate). Being arrested for illegal stock dealings paradoxically appeared to propel one independent with 24K gold cow quality, Ung 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 Wang 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 (Song Tsu-yu), secretary-general of the KMT. They polled 236,000 and 129,000 respectively, pulling counts 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, 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 guanxi, 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 advance towards 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 stated favor for 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 February 28, 1947 massacre and reverent raisings of the proposed new flag.

Premier Hau Bo-tsun was the popular target in this campaign, the man everyone loved to hate. While all those supporting Taiwan's sovereignty were gratified 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. Hau was lashed for holding China dearer than Taiwan in election ads by the head of the Wisdom Coalition, Lin Yu-hsiang. 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 put to defend themselves against the renewed charge that they are planning to sell out Taiwan to the Peoples Republic. The same was said of the 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, Li Ching-hua (Ph.D. in history from New York University, son of elder KMT statesman Li Huan, and a signal figure of the New KMT Alliance), argued in paid newspaper advertisements (Independent Evening News December 17, 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 [3]. 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 in jogging suits and tennis shoes on the streets, 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 like it is going to the people, and the DPP wants to look like it is ready to preside and rule, not just march in the streets and fist fight 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 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 (Zhang Tsan-hong), perennial chairman of the World United Formosans for Independence. The appeal of these long-banned overseas dissidents was soon demonstrated. In Chiayi city, Trong Tsai (Tsai Tong-rong), 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 there last year after more than thirty years' exile.

Government functionaries, especially police, avowed neutrality in the election process; 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 been 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 with a flood of dollars in payments to the voters (reportedly over \$US 10 million in some cases), flowing like irrigation waters through the channels of neighborhood and association heads, etc., 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 monetary inducements have been increasingly substituted for no-longer-enforceable political restrictions in recent elections, but then the elected representatives of moneyed interests make their money back in illicit dealings with government. The going price for a vote in this election was NT\$500, i.e. US\$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 \$US 100, and then voted for an opposition candidate. Experienced observers say the rule of thumb is that one in seven votes, about 15%, stays bought now, down from a previous figure of about 20%.

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, beginning from primaries considerably rigged in favor of the old guard, but still nominating a majority of Taiwanese moneyed interests, hardly served to limit the field. 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, e.g. 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-deh, 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 US\$20 million on his campaign, and he received 46,000 votes. While that sum is certainly not all payouts, it averages out to over US\$400 expenditure per vote. US\$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 US\$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 US\$300,000 and won on 30,000 - 80,000 votes, i.e. about US\$4-8 per vote polled. 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 US\$1.20 (NT\$30) per vote received, which offsets the expense slightly. Although the DPP cannot claim to be entirely free of the influence of gold cows itself, 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 Meilidao trials, the watershed in recent Taiwan political development: Huang Hsin-chieh, Chang Chun-hong, Yao Chia-wen, Shih Ming-deh, Lu Hsiu-lien (Annette), who have 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 office. Almost all new legislators are young (average age 45, 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 which 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, 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 towards some degree of accommodation with the Taiwan Democratic Progressive Party and its large block in the Legislature.

## NOTES

The author of this article spent December 1992 campaigning in Tainan for Shih Ming-deh.

1. Names and proper nouns are generally cited in this article in the form they appear in English in Taiwan, but pinyin in italics has been appended where necessary to clarify identities or original Chinese phrases.
2. Ms. Hsu Hsiao-dan, Labor Party, better known for her previous campaign mimicking the Italian striper,

also claimed that her close loss to a KMT candidate, Ms. Wu Deh-mei, was due to election fraud. Each polled about 32,400 votes. It might also be noted here that of the seventeen women in the new legislature, only two owe their positions to the quota for women's representation (see related review article by Arrigo in Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, Jan.-Mar. 1993).

3. 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 hardliners 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 no cooperation between Taiwanese and Chinese democratic movements.

### **RELATED ENGLISH SOURCES**

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