

# **Surviving the Rough-and-Tumble of Presidential Politics in an Emerging Democracy: The 1990 Elections in the Republic of China on Taiwan\***

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From 1949 until 1986 the Kuomintang (KMT) ruled Taiwan and adjoining island territories (Republic of China or ROC on Taiwan) without organized political opposition. This party was led by two powerful leaders, a father and son: Chiang Kai-shek served as party chairman and the government's president until March 1978, and then Chiang Ching-kuo held both positions until his death in January 1988.

In 1986 Chiang Ching-kuo decided to allow legal political opposition to form and a free press to flourish. His reforms granted full freedom of the press in early 1987, lifted martial law in mid-1988, and made it possible for 25 political parties to be active by spring 1989. The speed of these reforms unleashed so many public demonstrations, some very violent, that many feared the KMT might resort to repression to restore its former style of rule. However, that did not happen.

Few societies in history have moved so quickly from single-party, authoritarian rule to a pluralistic polity based on free elections and a free press and still enjoyed economic prosperity and social stability. Moreover, no territory under Chinese civilization had ever achieved so much political freedom. In late December 1989 the first elections since the lifting of martial law were held without serious incident.

In March 1990 the first election for president and vice-president was to be held since the death of Chiang Ching-kuo. Electing the president and vice-president had always been done by the National Assembly without direct popular voting, but there were now predictable difficulties for this type of election, because political conditions had radically changed. The free press aired all political views, many demanding the abolition of the National Assembly. The new opposition parties like the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) called for direct presidential elections. The popular mood also had changed, and few people supported the indirect elections of the president and vice-president. The spring 1990 elections therefore represented a great challenge for this fledgling democratic society.

Between 11 February and 22 March three important events

\* We wish to thank Thomas A. Metzger, Fu-mei Chen, Elsie Wu, Lin Ying and Charles Chen for their comments on early drafts, but we assume all responsibility for errors and omissions as well as interpretations.

produced a major crisis for the ROC polity.<sup>1</sup> On 11 February a heated debate took place at a meeting of the KMT's Central Committee over whether its members should elect the KMT's candidates for the posts of president and vice-president by using a secret ballot or the traditional procedure of standing up. Those favouring the latter prevailed, and that same day the president, Lee Teng-hui, announced that Li Yüan-ts'u would be his vice-presidential candidate, an action immediately confirmed when virtually all Central Committee members stood up. After this debate, however, there was a major split in the KMT leadership, with one group supporting Lee and Li, and another the nomination of Lin Yang-kang and Chiang Wei-kuo.

On 19 February the National Assembly (*Guomin dahui*) began its opening ceremony for the Assembly's Eighth Congress at the Zhongshan Conference Hall, in the Yang Ming Mountains just north of Taipei. The ceremony was disrupted when some assemblymen protesting at the presence of the "senior representatives," those elected on the mainland four decades previously, were forcibly removed by guards. Later, at the luncheon presided over by the president, Lee Teng-hui, one assemblyman overturned seven banquet tables, plunging the affair into chaos and creating a scandal for the political body whose task it was to vote for a president and vice-president on 21 and 22 March.

Then on 14 March a committee of the National Assembly passed a number of recommendations asking the Assembly to approve the expansion of its own power. Political demonstrations were held in front of the presidential office, and military police had to move in and forcibly carry away the demonstrators. An island-wide student movement followed, consciously modelled on that of the pro-democracy students on the mainland in May and June 1989, with some 30,000 students and their supporters congregating at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in the centre of Taipei. President Lee had to go on television and appeal for calm and order.

The political crisis to which these three events were central reflected three problems that have been basic to the ROC's political development since 1986, when Chiang Ching-kuo announced that martial law would be lifted and new political parties could be formed.<sup>2</sup>

First, there have been strains that are probably inherent in any such transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Most voters continue to support the KMT, with its stand for a gradual transition necessarily implying the temporary perpetuation of some non-democratic practices, outraging those who feel democratization must be total and immediate. Thus in February and March 1990 some

1. We use the term "political crisis" to describe the following new political conditions: a split in the leadership of the Kuomintang party; unconventional behaviour or violence by certain members of the National Assembly; and large-scale political demonstrations involving nearly all political parties and tens of thousands of students.

2. We are indebted to Thomas A. Metzger for suggestions regarding these three problems.

politicians and activists demanded that the National Assembly be abolished and that the president and vice-president be directly elected by the people. Others demanded radical change of the ROC's constitution and the immediate retirement of the "senior representatives" from the Control Yuan and the Legislative Yuan. This conflict between those favouring gradualism and those insisting on immediate, full democracy was aggravated by the presence in both camps of groups with extreme or especially radical demands. The gradualists were connected with the "senior representatives" in the National Assembly who sought to aggrandize their power rather than gradually stepping down, while the liberal camp overlapped the groups wanting to turn Taiwan into an independent nation. Different visions of how Taiwan's political system should evolve pose a serious problem that accounts for the strains of the current transition.

Secondly, the tensions associated with the transition from authoritarianism to democracy are made worse by the problem of transferring power from one generation to the next. The generation of leaders who have dominated the KMT since 1949 is gradually disappearing, but a few, like Li Huan and Hao Po-ts'un, are still powerful. They see themselves being replaced by younger men and women in their 50s and early 60s who have a different world view, especially with regard to the question of ROC on Taiwan policies toward mainland China. Competition between these older leaders and their followers has complicated the party's management of domestic and international problems.

Finally, a cultural pattern that relates to the problem of factional conflict must be taken into account. Many scholars have emphasized a pervasive Chinese fear of political disorder and uncertainty (*luan*).<sup>3</sup> This fear easily arises when there is a disagreement among top leaders without a fixed mechanism to ensure its prompt resolution – that is, a leader whose power is not seriously challenged. The ROC on Taiwan today lacks such a leader and is rapidly adopting a political system – democracy – that necessarily breeds competition and uncertainty. The fear of *luan* is today a major aspect of political life, and Chinese politicians tend to lapse into a form of Manichean, polarized politics, viewing adversaries as wicked and forming bitterly opposed political alliances or factions.<sup>4</sup> They also lack the experience of informal discussion and making political deals that is the hallmark of democratic polities, and therefore tend to react more strongly, taking extreme positions when criticized or challenged and preferring to form factions to achieve their goals. Simultaneously, they look for

3. For a classic statement of this position, see Richard H. Solomon, *Mao's Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), ch. 1.

4. For studies on Chinese political factions and how they try to achieve consensus, see J. Bruce Jacobs, *Local Politics in a Rural Chinese Cultural Setting: A Field Study of Mazu Township, Taiwan* (Canberra: Contemporary China Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 1980); Andrew J. Nathan, *Peking Politics, 1918–1923: Factionalism and the Failure of Constitutionalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), ch. 2.

mechanisms to resolve factional struggle, turning, for instance, to “elders” or “political brokers” who are perceived as being able to mitigate factionalism by effectively appealing to friendship, moral ideas or shared political commitments.

The crisis of February and March 1990 fully exhibited all three of these problems, which had by then converged. It tested the legitimacy of the ROC on Taiwan polity, threatened the unity of the KMT party, and even threatened the social and political stability of this small island state. This article gives a narrative account of the events from January to late March 1990. We think that this factual account is inherently worth presenting, since the coming of democracy to even one part of China is such a momentous event in world history. At the same time, it is necessary for Chinese as well as foreigners to realize that this political transformation is a perilous one for Taiwan. The problems or sources of the crisis (especially the first and third) examined below will continue for some time, and democratization does not necessarily ensure the perpetuation of a regime devoted to economic modernization and to the maintenance of Taiwan as a secure alternative to the disastrous political-economic development of the mainland.

### *The ROC on Taiwan Presidential System*

Not unlike the emperor in the Chinese imperial system, the president of the ROC on Taiwan still wields far more power than any other official or office.<sup>5</sup> The president is the supreme commander of the nation’s armed forces; he appoints and dismisses the most important government and military officials, including the Cabinet and the governor of Taiwan; and he is often able to influence decisively the flow of legislation. If he is also chairman of the KMT, as in the cases of Chiang Kai-shek between 1949 and 1975 and Chiang Ching-kuo between 1978 and 1988, and now Lee Teng-hui, even the KMT cannot check his power.

According to section III of the 1947 constitution, the National Assembly elects the nation’s president and vice-president every six years and can recall each. This body also makes amendments to the constitution and votes on proposed constitutional amendments submitted by parliament (i.e. the Legislative Yuan). Between the spring of 1948 and 1984 the National Assembly convened seven congresses to elect a president and vice-president and to deliberate on other affairs of state. Table I shows the extent to which the number of representatives of the National Assembly declined due to death or retirement. From 1969 a few seats in the Assembly were filled by Taiwan voters, and in 1986 there were 81 such seats. Thus, KMT

5. This paragraph owes much to Hung-mao Tien, *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1989), p. 113.

**Table 1: Seven National Assembly Congresses, Their Representatives' Attendance and Membership, and the Number of Votes Cast for ROC Presidents and Vice-Presidents at Seven Congresses**

<i>Representatives (Total)</i>	<i>Representatives attending</i>	<i>Percentage attending</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>Votes cast</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Vice-President</i>	<i>Votes cast</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>First Congress (9 March–1 May 1948: Nanking)</i>								
3,045	2,841	93.30	Chiang Kai-shek	2,430	88.88	Li Tsung-jen	1,438	51.99
<i>Second Congress (19 February–25 March 1954: Taipei)</i>								
3,045	1,578	51.82	Chiang Kai-shek	1,507	95.62	Ch'en Ch'eng	1,417	90.25
<i>Third Congress (20 February–25 March 1960: Taipei)</i>								
1,576	1,521	96.51	Chiang Kai-shek	1,481	98.08	Ch'en Ch'eng	1,381	91.76
<i>Fourth Congress (19 February–25 March 1966: Taipei)</i>								
1,488	1,446	97.18	Chiang Kai-shek	1,405	98.46	Yen Chia-kan	782	54.92
<i>Fifth Congress (20 February–25 March 1972: Taipei)</i>								
1,374	1,344	97.82	Chiang Kai-shek	1,308	99.39	Yen Chia-kan	1,095	83.78
<i>Sixth Congress (19 February–25 March 1978: Taipei)</i>								
1,248	1,220	97.36	Chiang Ching-kuo	1,184	98.34	Hsieh Tung-min	941	79.14
<i>Seventh Congress (19 February–24 March 1984: Taipei)</i>								
1,064	1,036	97.39	Chiang Ching-kuo	1,012	99.02	Lee Teng-hui	873	87.30

*Sources:*

*Guomin dahui tongji huibao* (1984), pp. 8–9 and 15–16. See also *Diyici guomin dahui diliuci huiyi tongji* (1978), p. 13; and *Zhonghua minguo nianjian* (1985), pp. 162–65.

“senior representatives” continue to dominate that body. It also shows that the National Assembly voted almost unanimously for Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo, with more dissent expressed for various vice-presidents.

Table 2 describes the changing profile of the Assembly since 1973. Most members are males who live in Taiwan. Half or more possess a college or university degree. By 1990 there were 753 Assembly members, of whom at least 377 must elect the president and vice-president.<sup>6</sup> The 1990 election, however, would not be a quiet affair like the previous seven, because of the remarkable political reforms launched by Chiang Ching-kuo.

In March 1984 the National Assembly had elected Chiang Ching-kuo as president and Lee Teng-hui (the second Taiwanese after Hsieh Tung-min in 1978) as vice-president. Two years later, President Chiang established committees to make recommendations for political reforms. He began these reforms in late 1986, and three years later it was possible for 40 political parties to compete in the 2 December 1989 and 20 January 1990 elections for local, provincial and national posts. The KMT won these elections by majorities any American political party would envy (ranging from 59 per cent to 89 per cent of the votes), but its majorities were considerably smaller than in previous years, and its main opponent, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was widely perceived as on the upswing. Moreover, the KMT was facing demands for internal democratization. On 23 July 1989 it had its first primary, which was important for its choice of candidates for the imminent elections.<sup>7</sup> And by 1989 the press freely expressed almost all political views. The spring 1990 National Assembly election therefore took place in a far more free political setting than had been the case in Taiwan since the Second Congress had met in Taipei during spring 1954.

### *The Kuomintang Nominates a President and Vice-President*

Although numerous political parties had sprung up since 1986, none of them could nominate a presidential and vice-presidential candidate and expect the National Assembly to take their nominations seriously. Most Assembly members belonged to the KMT, obviously sympathizing with its goals, and had always elected the party's presidential and vice-presidential nominees. By 1990, many politicians in all political parties were demanding that members of the

6. “Guoda bace huiyi zong’e qiwusan ren jue ding guobanshu wei 377 piao” (“At the Eighth Congress of the National Assembly, out of a total of 753 members, more than one-half or 377 votes, are required to elect a president and vice-president”), *Lien-ho-pao*, 18 February 1990, p. 1.

7. These elections are described in Ts’ai Ling and Ramon H. Myers, “Winds of democracy: the 1989 Taiwan elections,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (April 1990), pp. 401–415.

Table 2: The Changing Age, Political, Residential and Educational Profile of the National Assembly (selected years)

	1973	1978	1983	1984	1985	1987	1988
Total	1,411	1,263	1,085	1,067	1,018	964	917
Male	1,203	1,068	902	885	842	795	755
Female	208	195	183	182	176	169	162
Age distribution							
Under 40	24	—	8	7	6	10	9
40–49	24	—	35	34	34	43	37
50–59	250	—	33	32	30	33	37
60–69	701	—	231	193	167	106	90
70–79	345	—	546	520	479	463	422
80–89	63	—	213	257	278	282	289
Over 89	3	—	19	24	24	27	33
Party affiliation							
KMT	1,182	1,084	933	918	883	830	788
Youth Party	75	62	53	52	48	46	43
Democratic Social Party	44	37	31	30	25	25	24
Other	110	80	68	67	62	63	62
Residence							
In ROC	1,294	1,152	994	976	930	880	837
Outside ROC	117	111	91	91	88	84	80
Educational background							
Overseas study	229	203	159	153	142	148	139
University	709	646	585	577	553	529	503
Special schools	159	147	116	116	112	102	99
High school	69	58	57	56	56	45	44
Military academy	182	154	119	117	109	97	92
Police academy	20	19	16	15	14	14	13
Training class	17	16	13	13	13	13	11
Self-study	25	20	20	20	19	16	16

Sources:

*Guomin dahui tongji huibao* (1984), pp. 35–38; *Diyci guomin dahui diliuci huiyi tongji* (1978), pp. 136–38; *Zhonghua minguo nianjian* (1973, 1983–85, 1987–88), section on *Guomin dahui*.



National Assembly resign so that newly-elected representatives from Taiwan could dominate it and amend the constitution to allow the people to elect the president and vice-president. Most members of the National Assembly had refused to resign, declaring that they had been duly elected in 1947 by all the Chinese people and they would carry out their responsibilities to the bitter end. In early 1990, therefore, public attention naturally focused on the KMT party's endorsement of a presidential and vice-presidential candidate because that nomination would probably be endorsed by the National Assembly.

President Lee had proved to be an extremely popular president. Public opinion surveys gave him approval ratings of 80 per cent or higher. Although KMT party endorsement of his candidacy was more or less taken for granted in early January, such endorsement also greatly depended on whom Lee would select as his running mate.

Premier Li Huan, an able politician, was conspicuously mentioned as a desirable running mate for President Lee.<sup>8</sup> A mainlander who had worked well with the Taiwanese, Li had helped Chiang Ching-kuo to recruit talented young people for the KMT during the 1970s. He was also perceived as being "middle of the road" in his political views and highly respected by many young and old politicians in the KMT, the National Assembly, and the opposition parties. Sung Ch'u-yü (James Soong), the KMT secretary-general, was another candidate frequently mentioned. Young, energetic, and with considerable experience in government and party affairs, he had helped mastermind the KMT's success against great odds in the 2 December 1989 island-wide political elections. The candidate, however, who attracted the most public attention, particularly in the press, was a military general named Chiang Wei-kuo, long believed to be the son of Chiang Kai-shek.

In December 1989, Taiwan was full of rumours that Chiang Wei-kuo had actively sought the vice-presidency. By mid-January new rumours circulated that President Lee would not only ignore Chiang but bypass Li as well.<sup>9</sup> These speculations were fuelled by Chiang Wei-kuo's public comments, which were widely reported in the Taipei press. While visiting the United States in early February, Chiang had said: "It will be the free will of the National Assembly representatives to elect me as president or vice-president; I shall accept the will of the

8. For such an example see Lin Yin-t'ing, "Neidou zhong di yimei huoqi: Li Huan" ("A live chip in the inner struggle for power: Li Huan"), *Yüan-chien (Global Views Monthly)*, No. 44 (15 January 1990), pp. 26–28.

9. Wang Hsing-ch'ing, "Li Teng-hui timing Li Yüan-ts'u, Kuomintang neidou yi dengchang" ("Lee Teng-hui nominates Li Yüan-ts'u, and the power struggle within the KMT begins"), *Hsin-hsin-wen (The Journalist)*, 12/18 February 1990, p. 11.



party, the will of the constitution, and the will of heaven.”<sup>10</sup> When asked by a reporter why he had made such a statement after former president Chiang Ching-kuo had declared that no member of the Chiang family would ever serve as president or vice-president, Chiang Wei-kuo replied that Chiang Ching-kuo had never made such a statement in the first place. Those remarks caused a great sensation in Taiwan.

Speculation over President Lee’s running mate persisted until 11 February, when he was to announce his preferred candidate.<sup>11</sup> At 11 o’clock that morning the KMT’s Central Committee began discussing how to vote to nominate the president and vice-president. This was unprecedented. Until then they had always voted by standing up or sitting down to signify approval or disapproval. Something had happened within the Central Committee. Some leading party members had already opposed President Lee and feared his choice of running mate, and they and others wanted more democratization of the party, so many party members strongly expressed a preference to vote by ballot rather than by the traditional method.

Various Central Committee members then took the podium to argue why they favoured one or the other method of voting. Li Huan, who favoured the secret ballot, argued for “first approving the method of voting and then deciding whom the party would nominate as president or vice-president.”<sup>12</sup> Sung Ch’u-yü stated, “This body has used the method of standing in the Chiang Ching-kuo era, and it is the traditional way we have always elected a president; only a few people have recently expressed strong feelings to disturb the party and want the secret ballot. Everyone should use a responsible approach by raising hands. Only by raising your hand can you express whom you want to support and whom you do not want to support.”<sup>13</sup>

Chang Yü-sheng, president of the Pacific Cultural Foundation, opposed this view by saying that a high official had called him the night before, asking him to “support the procedure of standing up. I do not agree with this request. Moreover, who are the ones trying to manipulate? Do you want me to say their names? If you have the

10. “Chiang Wei-kuo dafanan founen naixiong shuoguo Chiang-jia buzai xuan zongtong” (“Chiang Wei-kuo reinterprets the historical records and denies that his brother ever said no member of the Chiang family will ever seek the presidency or vice-presidency again”), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 15 February 1990, p. 1. See also “Gehai fangpao Chiang Wei-kuo zouxing guoda hailang” (“His detonating of firecrackers overseas has stirred up huge waves in the National Assembly”), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 15 February 1990, p. 1.

11. For example, the *Lien-ho-pao* ran an article on 11 February entitled “Fuzongtong shi shei? Zhongshan lou eryu yuetan ‘bu zhidao’” (“Who will be the vice-president? At Chung-shan Conference Hall the whispers and conversations add up to ‘we do not know’”), *Lien-ho-pao*, 11 February 1990, p. 3.

12. “Qili? Toupiao? Timing’an biaoju fangshi jianren jianzhi” (“To stand up or vote by ballot? The method to nominate is seen in different ways”) *Lien-ho-pao*, 12 February 1990, p. 3.

13. *Ibid.*

courage, let's have a secret ballot."<sup>14</sup> And so the debate continued, pausing only for lunch and finally being determined by a show of hands in the early afternoon session.

The final vote of the 180 Central Committee members who actually attended was 97 in favour of standing up and 79 against; 99 then voted against the secret ballot, and another 70 voted for the resolution.<sup>15</sup> President Lee arrived promptly at 2.30 p.m. and announced his running mate. A vote was taken, and except for one person, all Central Committee members stood. The party had approved Lee Teng-hui and Li Yüan-ts'u for president and vice-president.

Lee's decision stunned the island. Li Yüan-ts'u was not well known to the public, and few within the government and the KMT party regarded him as outstanding. He had been trained in West Germany as a lawyer, served as president of National Cheng-chih University, and performed as minister of education and as a judge in military courts of the Ministry of Defence. In spite of an impressive career, he had kept out of the public eye. He was mild-mannered and reticent, and seemed to belong to no political faction. Just as he had no enemies, he also had few friends.

High-ranking individuals in both the KMT party and the government viewed Lee's choice of a vice-president with great alarm. Some, like Li Huan and the minister of defence, Hao Po-ts'un, were bitter because Lee had not consulted them. They also wanted to know about the president's plans for the future of the ROC on Taiwan, especially relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC), and they believed that he had excluded them from his "inner circle." Supporters of Li and Hao now began to manoeuvre in the National Assembly, then preparing to hold the Eighth Congress, to propose new candidates to oppose the KMT's nominees. Unlike previous nominees, the KMT's current choice did not mean smooth acceptance by the National Assembly. Instead, the party's decision set off the greatest power struggle in high political circles since 1949. Disagreement over a president's selection of a vice-president now produced "political polarization," or the emergence of two powerful factions.

### *Opposition Mounts Against Lee Teng-hui and Li Yüan-ts'u*

President Lee's choice of a vice-president infuriated many top officials. By refusing to consult Hao Po-ts'un, Li Huan, and others,

14. *Ibid.*

15. "Shan chu piaoxuan, jinzi caijue yingfa zhengyi" ("By eliminating election by secret ballot, they made the decision themselves, thus triggering a great debate"), *Lien-ho-pao*, 12 February 1990, p. 3. Among the key leaders who voted for secret balloting were Hao Pu-ts'un, Li Huan, Lin Yang-kang and Sun Yun-hsüan. Among those who favoured the stand-up method were Sung Ch'u-yü, Kao Yü-jen, Ch'iu Ch'uang-huan and Wu Po-hsiung.

Lee had kept his choice of running mate secret until the day he had to announce it. Although Sung Ch'u-yü and others had carried the day by retaining the Central Committee's traditional voting procedure, Lee would now pay a price for his independent manner and political decisiveness.

On 12 February the press reported that supporters of Li Huan were campaigning among the National Assembly representatives to win the minimum 100 signatures to propose Lin Yang-kang for president and Chiang Wei-kuo for vice-president.<sup>16</sup> Lin, a highly respected and experienced Taiwanese, had served as mayor of Taipei city (1976–78), Taiwan provincial governor (1978–81), minister of the interior (1981–84) and vice-premier (1984–87), and in 1987 became the president of the Judicial Yuan. Chiang Wei-kuo, a native of Zhejiang province, had a distinguished military career and had served as the secretary-general of the National Security Council since 1986. He was favoured by many National Assembly elders for his commitment to the ROC on Taiwan's unification of China under the 1947 constitution. This combination had every possibility of obtaining the necessary votes to be elected by the National Assembly representatives. President Lee and Li Yüan-ts'u now faced a serious and unexpected challenge.

Support in the National Assembly for Lin and Chiang came from Teng Chieh and others, who were vigorously collecting the necessary 100 signatures.<sup>17</sup> Teng Chieh argued that they represented "a struggle between democracy and dictatorship," in which "dictator" (*ducai*) referred to Lee's style and use of presidential power. Moreover, said Teng Chieh, "with Lin and Chiang there will be real democratization and the unification of China. This is a nomination that no one can refuse, not even the two nominees themselves."<sup>18</sup>

At the same time, a torrent of criticism of President Lee began appearing in the nation's press. These criticisms were new, and they echoed a sharp, biting tone never expressed before about the president. Moreover, they did not come from the opposition parties but from within the powerful party he chaired.

On 13 February, KMT member Chang Yü-sheng, the director of the prestigious Pacific Cultural Foundation, complained that a faction in the KMT wanted too much power, the party was not democratic, and factional infighting was widespread.<sup>19</sup> Chang clearly held the chair-

16. "Fan Li renshi jiang tui Lin Yang-kang-Chiang Wei-kuo tadang" ("Those who oppose the two Lis will promote the Lin Yang-kang-Chiang Wei-kuo nomination"), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 12 February 1990, p. 1.

17. "Teng Chieh tuiyong Lin-Chiang quanli fadong lianshu" ("Teng Chieh goes all out to obtain signatures to promote the nomination of Lin and Chiang"), *Tzu-li wan-pao*, 11 February 1990, p. 1.

18. *Ibid.*

19. "Chang Yü-sheng: Kuomintang yao kaifang buke zuo huitoulu" ("Chang Yü-sheng declares the KMT must open up and reform, not retrogress"), *Lien-ho-pao*, 13 February 1990, p. 2.

man and secretary-general responsible for this sorry state of party affairs.

On 1 March, Li Sheng-feng, a KMT member and one of the party's "new united line group," complained that the party was not democratic.<sup>20</sup> He also said that for a "strong man to run party affairs is passé, yet Lee Teng-hui still behaves like a strong man, because he makes the major decisions himself."<sup>21</sup> According to Li, the party chairman and president had become a lonely, authoritarian leader, isolated from the people, and poorly informed by his advisers.

The same day, the well-known young legislator Chao Shao-k'ang publicly attacked President Lee for not displaying strong leadership and for selecting narrow-minded people for high posts. He complained that the president had failed to make his policies clear to the people to win their support. He had also made some unnecessary and powerful enemies. "When Lee Teng-hui was sworn into office as president, Hao Po-ts'un, Chiang Wei-kuo and Li Huan had supported him, but now they oppose him."<sup>22</sup>

The very next day, 2 March, Teng Chieh publicly stated at the Zhongshan Conference Hall that Lin and Chiang had agreed to be nominated, and that he had already secured more than the 100 signatures necessary.<sup>23</sup> President Lee and his running mate were now in trouble, and a strong tide was running in the National Assembly to elect Lin and Chiang as the eighth president and vice-president of the Republic of China.

### *An Altercation and New Political Strains*

Between 11 February and 2 March a remarkable event occurred in the National Assembly that heightened political tensions in that body and exacerbated the "political polarization" taking place outside. Those instigating this affair shared the view that violent action had to be taken immediately to achieve full democracy. Outraged by the presence of numerous "elders" in the National Assembly, a few representatives elected from Taiwan took it upon themselves to impose their will on the National Assembly. Although they failed, their actions on 19 February at the Zhongshan Conference Hall reflected the serious strains within the ROC polity.

The opening ceremony for the Eighth Congress began at 10.00 a.m. after 719 members had arrived at the conference hall (33 were

20. "Li Sheng-feng pingji Li Teng-hui: buminzhu" ("Li Sheng-feng attacks Lee Teng-hui as undemocratic"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 1 March 1990, p. 1.

21. *Ibid.*

22. "Chao Shao-k'ang fangpao, yaoqiu Li Teng-hui yongren youfang fangda-xiongjin" ("Chao Shao-k'ang sets off some firecrackers by requesting that Li Teng-hui use people of talent who are broadminded and have vision"), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 1 March 1990, p. 2.

23. "Lin Yang-kang jue ding jiang houxuan zongtong" ("Lin Yang-kang decides to run for president"), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 3 March 1990, p. 1.

absent). The Assembly's secretary-general, Ho I-wu, opened the congress by saying that Hsüeh Yüeh should be appointed as the ceremonial chairman. Born in Guandong province in 1896, Hsüeh had spent much of his life in the military and served as governor of Guangdong in 1949 and early 1950. He had been a strategy adviser to the president's office in the 1950s and 1960s. Two members of the DPP immediately shouted, "We protest!"<sup>24</sup> Another DPP member, Chang Kuei-mu, rushed to the podium and tried to turn off Hsüeh's microphone while proclaiming loudly that Hsüeh Yüeh possessed no qualifications to be the congress chairman. Various elders then began shouting, and Hsü Mei-ying, another DPP member, and some representatives' visitors whistled loudly. Ho I-wu tried to restore order by shouting, "Let us maintain the conference rules!"

Suddenly, a score of policemen entered the hall and seized three DPP delegates, Ts'ai Shih-yüan, Huang Ch'ao-hui and Su Chia-ch'üan, and another named Lo Mei-wen who had loudly been denouncing Hsüeh Yüeh, and removed them from the hall, while they furiously kicked, cursed and screamed, even breaking one of the side glass doors.<sup>25</sup>

Ho I-wu now called the body to order and asked for a hand vote to elect Hsüeh Yüeh as the chairman for the opening ceremony. Hsüeh was easily elected. Supported by two women delegates, the 94-year-old Hsüeh slowly advanced to the podium, only to be blocked by Hung Ch'i-ch'ang, a DPP member. Policemen intervened and assisted the aged chairman to the podium. Ho I-wu then called for the national anthem to be sung, but halfway through Hung Ch'i-ch'ang pushed over a large flower vase, sending it crashing to the floor. Hsüeh Yüeh now began to read the Assembly oath, but he read it so slowly that he had to be replaced by Ho I-wu to complete it. At that point eight DPP member delegates rushed to the platform to hoist a large, black cotton banner with characters reading: "If the old representatives take their oaths, that means the death of the constitution."<sup>26</sup> It was now 10.30 a.m., and Lee Teng-hui had arrived to address the assembly. The eight DPP members remained sitting silently before the platform, and as President Lee began to speak, they stood up and shouted that three of

24. "Quan da jiaoti, yanzhong chongtu, guoda kailuoxi biandialiao" ("Using their feet and kicking, a serious altercation erupts, changing the sound of the opening ceremony of the National Assembly"), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 20 February 1990, p. 1. Our narrative is based on this account and others published in *Lien-ho-pao* and *Chung-kuo shih-pao* on 20 February.

25. *Ibid.*; see also "Zongtong wuyan, Minjindang xianfan qizuo jiuxi" ("At the presidential luncheon, DPP members overturned seven banquet tables"), *Lien-ho-pao*, 20 February 1990, p. 1; "Zongtong zhicu boli pinglanglang; zongtong wuyan jiucai hualala" ("When the president spoke, glass splintered everywhere; during the president's luncheon, dishes flew everywhere"), *Lien-ho-pao*, 20 February 1990, p. 3.

26. *Ibid.*, *Lien-ho-pao*, 20 February 1990, p. 3. For a timetable of the morning's events see "Guoda chongtu hunluan, di yici huiyi naodao zui gaodian" ("The National Assembly produces great conflicts, but the first meeting was most disorderly"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 19 February 1990, p. 3.

their colleagues had been physically removed, and they demanded that the president do something, upon which Lee merely smiled and asked them to “please sit down.” They sat down in front of the podium.

Meanwhile, the three DPP members and Lo Mei-wen were removed from the hall, placed on two separate buses and driven around the Yangming Mountains. One bus, carrying Ts’ai, Huang and Lo, eventually returned to the conference hall. Upon leaving the bus, Huang took an umbrella and shattered the bus window. Ts’ai whistled loudly without stopping, while Lo quickly went into the hall. Huang then managed to seize a brick and hurled it through the glass window of the hall’s front door. He then cried out, “Whoever damages my reputation, I go all the way. This is my character.” The bus transporting Su Chia-ch’üan had mysteriously disappeared.

Inside the conference hall, President Lee, who had been addressing the Assembly, stopped speaking when he heard the altercation outside. The police then formed a human wall to prevent Huang Ch’ao-hui from entering the hall. The president managed to finish his speech at 10.50 a.m., and at 11.30 the luncheon began, with members taking their seats at tables prepared nearby.

Huang and Ts’ai had by then been allowed to rejoin their companions inside the hall. As the luncheon progressed, President Lee moved from table to table, toasting the Assembly members. Suddenly the ten remaining DPP members rose and called to the president in the Minnan dialect, instead of the national *guoyu* language, to complain that Su Chia-ch’üan had not been allowed to return to the conference hall. President Lee ignored their comment and continued his round of table-toasting.

At that moment, Huang Ch’ao-hui stood up on a chair and loudly cried, “Now I will count to ten, and if Su Chia-ch’üan is not immediately returned to this hall, I will begin to overturn these banquet tables!” Less than a minute later, he grasped the tablecloth of a nearby table, furiously pulled it, and overturned the table, sending glasses of wine, plates of food and bowls of soup flying in all directions. Huang then moved to overturn six more tables. Pandemonium broke out. Aged assemblymen slipped in the greasy slime. President Lee appeared stunned. People screamed.

Security guards immediately grabbed the president and whisked him into a side room. One old assemblyman remarked to the president, “This is horrible. What are you going to do about it?” He then turned toward Li Yüan-ts’u and said, “If you cannot solve this problem, we will not support you.” Li Yüan-ts’u did not speak. President Lee instead answered, “I can solve this problem! I can solve this problem!”<sup>27</sup>

27. *Ibid.*; “Li Zongtong beizhao shou, zuihou yige likai Chung-shan lou” (“President Lee, with his hands clasped behind his back, was the last to leave Chung-shan Hall”), *Lien-ho-pao*, 20 February 1990, p. 3.



*Political Polarization and Reconciliation*

The 19 February scandal at the National Assembly was the talk of the island for many days. Those sharing the conviction of Huang Ch'ao-hui praised him as a hero and an advocate of democracy. Others were appalled at such behaviour and wondered aloud if such antics truly represented democracy. The incident certainly convinced many Assembly delegates that President Lee was "soft" and "incompetent" to serve as president of the ROC at such an important turning-point in history. Many were strongly influenced to consider voting for Lin and Chiang. In this way, the 19 February "affair" helped to intensify the political polarization already emerging after the KMT party's nomination of Lee and Li.

By the end of February the press was already referring to the "mainstream faction" (*zhuliupai*) as those supporting Lee and Li and the "non-mainstream faction" (*fei zhuliupai*) as those in favour of Lin and Chiang. While little was mentioned of the key leaders of these two broad factions, it was generally acknowledged that KMT party officials such as Sung Ch'u-yü were major players in the former, and Li Huan and Hao Po-ts'un were major players in the latter.

Recognizing the seriousness of the new challenge to his nomination and stung by mounting criticism in the press of his leadership style, President Lee decided to reconcile the two factions in the KMT party and restore agreement. On 2 March he announced that he was forming a small committee of respected party-government "elders" to mediate between the key supporters of the two factions. President Lee's purpose was to achieve a consensus between the factions so that the National Assembly would vote for the KMT's officially nominated presidential candidate. In this way, he also hoped to demonstrate his ability to take charge of the KMT party and maintain political harmony between the party and the National Assembly.

Lee asked Huang Shao-ku, Hsieh Tung-min, Yuan Shou-ch'ien, Li Kuo-ting, Chiang Yen-shih, Ch'en Li-fu, Ku Chen-fu and Ni Wen-ya to serve as a team to negotiate a new political consensus and end the crisis.<sup>28</sup> Ni Wen-ya, a former chairman of the Legislative Yuan and husband of finance minister Kuo Wan-jung, had links to leading figures in the "mainstream faction," whereas Huang Shao-ku reputedly had links to those prominent in the "non-mainstream faction."<sup>29</sup>

At 4.00 p.m. on 3 March, the eight-man group met President Lee to discuss how to avoid confrontation in the National Assembly and

28. "Dalao jihui zongtongfu, guanjian shike tan zhenghe" ("A committee of elders assembles at the presidential office at a critical juncture to discuss reconciliation"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 3 March 1990, p. 1.

29. *Ibid.* The two factional heavyweight leaders were obviously Lee Teng-hui and Li Huan. Bitter about being bypassed as vice-president and increasingly worried about President Lee's ideas for constitutional reform and a new mainland China policy, Li Huan began manoeuvring to exert pressure on President Lee to accede to having his power limited.



ensure President Lee's election. In a meeting lasting two hours and 20 minutes, President Lee expressed his deep regret for the "political confusion" and listened to various "elders" criticize him for not selecting talented people and not consulting his top officials.<sup>30</sup> President Lee defended his actions by explaining that he had selected a vice-president he could depend on to improve the political system and reform the KMT. Moreover, Lee hoped that the "elders" could persuade Lin and Chiang to withdraw their names. The team decided upon three arguments to persuade Lin and Chiang to renounce their candidacy: it violated KMT party discipline and unity; it endangered the unity of the KMT party; and President Lee and his running mate were the party nominees.<sup>31</sup> On the same day, Lin and Chiang attended a large luncheon, with some 200 National Assembly members, where toasts could be heard of "Long live Chiang Wei-kuo" and "Long live the Republic of China."<sup>32</sup>

By 5 March, Chiang Yen-shih had taken the lead and, with the other seven "elders," had invited Li Huan, Hao Po-ts'un, Lin Yang-kang and Chiang Wei-kuo to lunch at the Taipei Ping-kuan. Acting as chairman, Chiang Yen-shih outlined President Lee's opinions on how the ROC could achieve stability and solve the election impasse.<sup>33</sup> For the next four hours the group critically discussed the president's leadership style: his handling of ROC on Taiwan participation in the 1989 Asian Development Bank meeting in Beijing; the role he played in the exit of the KMT director of organizational affairs, Kuan Chung, the former deputy secretary-general; and his choice of Li Yüan-ts'u as vice-president.<sup>34</sup> Everyone finally agreed that four goals had to be achieved for reconciliation of the two factions: a collective leadership must be established; there must be a "working dialogue" between the top leaders; President Lee must clearly articulate his views on constitutional reform; and he must outline his policy towards mainland China. Some pointed out that Lee should not chair the KMT party, because the chairman should be separated from the presidency; moreover, the party needed a new secretary-general.<sup>35</sup>

30. "Zongtong guandi yuanlao huiyi" ("The president meets with the oldest former leaders at a meeting held at the presidential residence"), *Lien-ho-pao*, 4 March 1990, p. 1.

31. "Li zongtong bayuan lao huizhang jue yi san da liyou quantui Lin-Chiang" ("President Lee and eight distinguished elders met, discussed, and decided upon three major reasons to advise and compel Lin and Chiang to withdraw their candidacy"), *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 4 March 1990, p. 1.

32. "Yong Chiang canhui, Lin-Chiang jubei hujing" ("Supporters of Chiang hold a lunch, and Lin and Chiang toast each other"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 4 March 1990, p. 1.

33. "Li Huan, Lin Yang-kang, Hao Po-ts'un jin wu chuxi zhenghe canhui" ("Li Huan, Lin Yang-kang and Hao Po-ts'un attend the reconciliation luncheon"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 5 March 1990, p. 1.

34. "T'ai-pei Ping-kuan huishang baoshen longlong" ("A meeting at the Taipei Ping-kuan with artillery bombardment"), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 6 March 1990, p. 1. Interviews with several "elders" revealed they exerted strong pressure on Lin and Chiang to resign by insisting that both adhere to KMT party discipline and support the party's nomination.

35. *Ibid.*

To silence his critics' claim that he had not offered any clear policies for the country, President Lee made a speech on 7 March.<sup>36</sup> On the issue of the constitution, he promised to elicit the views of others and initiate a study for a constitutional reform that would conform to "the spirit of the country." Defending his role as both president and KMT party chairman, President Lee stated that he *would seek the opinions of others about the advantages and disadvantages of holding these two offices simultaneously and act accordingly*. He reiterated that his goal was to unify China, and he denounced the minority who used the veil of "democracy" to advocate an independent Taiwan and, by doing so, disturbed social harmony and destabilized the political order. He vowed to suppress their activities. Finally, he declared that his selection of personnel would be based on the criterion of selfless dedication to the public good (*dagong wusi taidu*) and upon a process of institutionalization (*zhiduhua*) that would select the best people, rather than presidential cronies, to run the government.

The reaction to President Lee's speech was not enthusiastic.<sup>37</sup> DPP member Chu Kao-cheng expressed his displeasure at the president's failure to offer any concrete details on how he intended to carry out his policies. KMT legislator Chao Shao-k'ang said that "the contents of his speech still left much to be desired to satisfy the expectations of the people" and that the president had "focused only on principles and not on how to take concrete action."<sup>38</sup> Hao Po-ts'un gave the president no support by saying merely that he had no opinion because he belonged to no faction, that as defence minister he would not obey any party's decision, and that his only intention was to be loyal to the government.

Meanwhile, those in favour of the Lin and Chiang nomination pushed forward to mobilize support, while both Lin and Chiang publicly stated that they were not actively competing to be nominated but that they would accept nomination if the National Assembly so decided.<sup>39</sup>

So far the mediating efforts by Chiang Yen-shih and the other "elder statesmen" had failed to break the impasse. Yet Chiang Yen-shih expressed optimism and continued to move between key elder statesmen and their contacts in each faction to achieve a consensus and compel Lin and Chiang to withdraw from the race. Hsieh Tung-min, a former vice-president and a Taiwanese, held talks with Lin

36. "Xianzheng tizhi jisi quangyi, quanli tuidong tongyi daye" ("To collect ideas to expand the advantages of the constitutional system; to push forward with all vigour to achieve the great task of unifying China"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 7 March 1990, p. 1.

37. "Kuomintang zhenghe shibai, shuangtou mache queli" ("KMT reconciliation efforts fail; the two factions are still split"), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 8 March 1990, p. 3, for various comments by major political figures.

38. *Ibid.*

39. "Li zongtong tanhua weihuo zhengmian huixiang, zhenghe duncou" ("President Lee's speech did not receive a positive response; therefore, reconciliation has met with opposition"), *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 8 March 1990, p. 1.

Yang-kang.<sup>40</sup> Some rumours gave the impression that a resolution of the crisis depended on President Lee giving up his chairmanship of the KMT party, thereby limiting his power.

By 9 March the deadlock still persisted. On that day President Lee was quoted as saying: "It is rare in a democratic society to have two factions of a single party running for the presidency, but as long as there is unity and peace, that contest could not harm the country and the party."<sup>41</sup> President Lee, in effect, was now telling his opponents that he would allow the election contest to be played out in the National Assembly. The mood of many top government officials had become gloomy, suggesting a new development that might very well have frightened some in the "non-mainstream faction" to pause and reflect on their actions. On that same day a distinguished official, the vice-minister of the Political Affairs Section of the Economics Ministry, publicly declared that because there was no longer any authority in government to carry out policy, he felt helpless and feared for the future. After serving government faithfully for 28 years, Wang Chien-hsüan, one of the most highly respected officials, had decided to resign.<sup>42</sup>

On 9 March, however, the mediating efforts of Chiang Yen-shih and other "elders" paid off, helped perhaps by Hsieh Tung-min and others having extended discussions with Lin Yang-kang. On that day, Lin publicly stated that he would withdraw his name from the presidential contest.<sup>43</sup> At 11.30 a.m. the following day, Chiang Wei-kuo also announced that he would not run for the vice-presidency.<sup>44</sup> President Lee met both men privately to express his gratitude and best wishes. Those National Assemblymen backing Lin and Chiang, however, were not to be deterred, and they vowed to fight on to elect

40. "Lianshu daoshu jishi, liangpai renma jiji beizhan" ("Running out of time, the two factions aggressively prepare for the struggle"), *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 9 March 1990, p. 1.

41. "Li zongtong: liangzu jingxuan wusuowei" ("President Lee: go ahead and let the two groups compete"), *Lien-ho-pao*, 9 March 1990, p. 1.

42. "Jingjibu zhengci Wang Chien-hsüan qingci" ("Vice-minister and head of the political affairs section of the economic ministry resigns"), *Lien-ho-pao*, 9 March 1990, p. 1. Premier Li Huan refused to accept Wang's request, and Wang again tendered his resignation on 27 March, declaring, "I simply want to take a rest and prepare myself for the long road ahead." *China Post*, 28 March 1990, p. 6.

43. "Lin Yang-kang xuanbu cixuan, zongtong xuanqing danchunhua" ("Lin Yang-kang declares he will step aside; the presidential election becomes simpler"), *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 10 March 1990, p. 1.

44. "Chiang Wei-kuo zhongwu biao ming cixuan taidou" ("At noon, Chiang Wei-kuo expresses his intentions of quitting"), *Tzu-li wan-pao*, 10 March 1990, p. 1. On the same day, the Taipei stock market shot up 440 points as investors purchased stock, confident that political stability had been restored.

the pair.<sup>45</sup> Even so, the crisis had passed. The two factions agreed to Lee Teng-hui and Li Yüan-ts'u. The road was now clear for the National Assembly to elect the KMT party's nominees.

### *The Eighth National Assembly and a National Crisis*

Although Lin and Chiang had stepped down, National Assemblyman Teng Chieh and others had already mobilized many assemblymen to support them. On 15 March Teng announced that "altogether we have obtained 140 Assembly signatures on behalf of the Lin-Chiang nomination, and we will not reveal their names."<sup>46</sup> Yet Teng now had to admit defeat, and he stated that he no longer intended to seek support for Lin and Chiang. In fact, four days before, vigorous efforts had begun for the first time in the National Assembly to elicit support for Lee and Li.<sup>47</sup> Then on 14 March the National Assembly leadership issued a circular to 27 representatives informing them that they could not participate in the congress because they had not correctly taken the Assembly oath. In fact, 11 DPP representatives had refused to say "the people of the ROC" and instead insisted on saying "the people of Taiwan"<sup>48</sup> (*Taiwan renmin*). Another 16 KMT representatives from Taiwan, when taking the oath, had insisted on using the western calendar instead of referring to the Minguo, or Chinese, calendar, which dates all years from the Ch'ing dynasty's fall in 1911.<sup>49</sup> Their oaths were declared invalid by the chief justice of the ROC judiciary, and they were therefore denied all the rights accorded to delegates of the National Assembly and informed they could not participate in the congress's proceedings.<sup>50</sup>

To make matters worse, on the same day the Assembly's First

45. "Yung Chiang-pai guodai zaoshi buxie" ("Chiang's assembly supporters will continue to rally behind him until they have failed"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 10 March 1990, p. 1. See also *Lien-ho-pao*, 11 March 1990, p. 1 for two articles describing in great detail how both men made their public statements of withdrawal from the race. The additional pressures on Chiang Wei-kuo to resign came in the form of public statements highly critical of his candidacy from Chiang Hsiao-wu, the ROC representative to Japan and a nephew of Chiang Wei-kuo, who flew to Taipei to hold a press conference and denounce Chiang Wei-kuo's intention to run. See "Chiang Hsiao-wu tongxin lingdaoqun zhengmo quanwei" ("Chiang Hsiao-wu expresses his grief over the leadership power struggle"), *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 10 March 1990, p. 3. See also the public comments of the high-ranking official Chang Hsiao-yen, who spoke critically of Chiang's candidacy in the same paper, p. 3.

46. "Teng Chieh zhengshi xuanbu: tingzhi zhengchao Lin-Chiang" ("Teng Chieh formally declares he will end efforts on behalf of Lin and Chiang"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 16 March 1990, p. 1.

47. "Zhichi Li Teng-hui lianshu yi zhankai" ("Support of Lee Teng-hui nomination begins to take form"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 11 March 1990, p. 1.

48. "Zongtong shenzhong kaolu, xuanqian gongkai tanhua" ("President seriously considers making a public speech before the National Assembly votes"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 17 March 1990, p. 1.

49. "Ershiqiwei wei xuanshi xuanshi wuxiao guodai zao tingshi zhiquan" ("Twenty-seven Assembly members did not take their oath; therefore, their Assembly rights have been abrogated"), *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 13 March 1990, p. 1.

50. *Ibid.*

Examination Committee, meeting for 24 minutes, approved four new recommendations they wanted the National Assembly to adopt: revise the Temporary Provisions effective during the period of communist rebellion (*lingshi tiaokuan*); have the National Assembly meet annually instead of once every six years; increase the pay of each Assembly representative from NT\$52,000 to NT\$200,000 when the Assembly convened; and give the National Assembly the authority to veto laws passed by the Legislative Yuan.<sup>51</sup>

The Temporary Provisions contained 11 articles that had been established at five separate meetings of the National Assembly between 1947 and 1972.<sup>52</sup> The First Examination Committee had wanted to retain article 7 of those rules, which allowed the Assembly to use its power to initiate changes in laws and to approve those changes, but it recommended that article 8 be altered to allow the Assembly to meet once each year instead of allowing the president to convene the Assembly.<sup>53</sup> By making these four recommendations, the Committee appeared to be trying to enhance the power of the National Assembly. At least, this was the widespread perception shared by people throughout Taiwan when they learned about them.<sup>54</sup>

By these two actions the National Assembly unwittingly provoked a storm of protest from all quarters of Taiwan society. The DPP's top leaders tried to negotiate with the Legislative Yuan and KMT party leaders to reinstate the 11 DPP assemblymen, but to no avail. The DPP immediately decided to muster popular support for the outcast 11, and several hundred members marched with them to the Chungshan Conference Hall to demand that they be allowed to join the congress. A human wall of police blocked them, and after various Assembly delegates hurled their bodies against the police, they finally sat down in front of the police line, refusing to move.<sup>55</sup> The next day, the DPP again marched to Zhongshan, only to be blocked by 1,000 riot police.

Outrage from the KMT party took the form of some liberal

51. "Guoda shencha weiyuanhui ershi fenzhong tongguo" ("Examination Committee of the National Assembly passes a bill in 24 minutes"), *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 15 March 1990, p. 1. Other newspapers, however, reported a period of two hours or other lengths of time for the Committee to deliberate and make its recommendations.

52. Government Information Office, Republic of China, *Constitution, Republic of China* (Taipei, n.d.), pp. 55–57 for a list of these 11 articles, which were used in accordance with paragraph 1 of article 174 of the constitution.

53. See "Meinian jihui yice xinshi liangquan" ("Each year the Assembly meets once to exercise its two powers"), *Chung-yang jih-pao* (*Central Daily News*, international edition), 16 March 1990, p. 1.

54. Even the KMT party newspaper, the *Chung-yang jih-pao*, interpreted the Committee's action as one of expanding the power of the National Assembly and disapproved of its action. See "Ziwo pengchang tuli ziji zeng'e guodai dakai minzhu daoche" ("Self-expansion, self-profit, and the Taiwan-elected representatives drive the vehicle of democracy backwards"), *Chung-yang jih-pao* (international edition), 15 March 1990, p. 1. In this article, the author also criticized some of those members of the Committee who had been elected from Taiwan and tried to extend their term of office beyond two years.

55. "Zujie kaihui minjindang fafeng" ("Prevented from attending the Eighth Congress, the DPP explodes in rage"), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 14 March 1990, p. 1.

members calling on President Lee on 15 March to demand that he take action to end the “constitutional revision farce” taking place in the National Assembly.<sup>56</sup> On 16 March, 14 DPP leaders and members of the National Assembly, including DPP chairman Huang Hsin-chieh, were dragged away by military policemen when they tried to stage a sit-down protest in front of the presidential office.<sup>57</sup>

Several days earlier, on 14 March, students at National Taiwan University (NTU) began to assemble in small groups on the campus when they heard about the actions taken in the National Assembly.<sup>58</sup> By 16 March, hundreds of NTU students had whipped themselves into a frenzy of moral outrage toward the National Assembly’s actions, and they called on other university students to gather at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial in a large-scale sit-down demonstration.<sup>59</sup> Students at universities in Taichung and Tainan cities also began demonstrating.<sup>60</sup> The next morning in Taipei, the students already assembled at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial were joined by students from more than a dozen universities and colleges.<sup>61</sup> For the first time in 40 years, a large-scale student movement, involving some 22,000 students, had broken out. The ROC government, moreover, made no attempt to disband the students and regarded their demonstration as legal.

For the first time, too, such slogans as “Organize mass boycott!” “Cut classes!” and “Refuse to pay taxes!” were being heard throughout society.<sup>62</sup> The situation was becoming potentially explosive, with mass violence very possible if action was taken to force the students to return to their classrooms. Editorials appeared in the press on 15 March denouncing the National Assembly. The Legislative Yuan met on the same day and vowed to cut off funds budgeted for it.<sup>63</sup> Public opinion had turned sharply against the National Assembly, as opinion polls taken by newspapers and the Research, Development and

56. “President Lee called to end political ‘farce,’” *China Post*, 16 March 1990, p. 16.

57. “Military police drag away 14 DPP deputies,” *China Post*, 17 March 1990, p. 12.

58. “Dizhi guoda bamian bake kangshui husheng siqi” (“To oppose the National Assembly, the slogans of mass boycott, cut classes, and resist paying taxes are heard from all quarters”), *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 17 March 1990, p. 1.

59. “Zhongzheng jiniantang yuanqi huijidian” (“At the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Auditorium an atmosphere of outrage builds up”), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 17 March 1990, p. 1.

60. *Ibid.*

61. “Xuesheng kangyi xindong kuoda” (“New efforts mount in support of student protest”), *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 18 March 1990, p. 1.

62. *Ibid.*

63. “Guoda ru yiyiguxin liyuan jiang shanchu quanbu yusuan” (“If the National Assembly insists on having its way, the Legislative Yuan will eliminate their entire budget”), *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 16 March, 1990, p. 1.



Evaluation Commission of the Executive Yuan later revealed.<sup>64</sup> A national crisis was brewing.

### *Resolving the Crisis and the Presidential Election*

On the afternoon of Saturday 17 March, President Lee Teng-hui appeared on all three ROC television channels to appeal for calm and patience.<sup>65</sup> Lee expressed his belief that the National Assembly would be cautious, abandon any reckless action, and act responsibly in its decision-making. He predicted that the Assembly would abide by the will of the people, and he promised the nation that democratic reform would continue.

The president's speech certainly did not deter the students, and their resolve only stiffened over the next few days as many promised to sit in for the entire week until the National Assembly dissolved. A large group also vowed to undertake a hunger strike. By 18 March, some 30,000 students and others had clustered around the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial in Taipei.<sup>66</sup> A sea of posters and banners had also appeared at the memorial, with such slogans as "Down with the thieves in the Yangming Mountains!" The government still made no attempt to intervene.

Observing the widespread protest across Taiwan, the National Assembly published a declaration on 18 March trying to explain the First Examination Committee's actions and devalue its recommendations.<sup>67</sup> This declaration stated that the Committee reflected the views of only a few representatives and not the will of the entire Assembly, and that the proposal to meet once a year had nothing to do with the Assembly using its powers to make and pass new laws. It went on to argue that the recommendation to revise the Temporary Provisions had not been passed, and only the Assembly could approve or reject this. Finally, the declaration stated that more detailed discussion would take place about these four recommendations. This, however, did little to soothe public anger and persuade the students to return to their classrooms.

64. "Retirement of aging reps second most urgent issue," *China Post*, 29 March 1990, p. 12. The *China Times* also surveyed 834 adults, and 80% stated the National Assembly had no function to perform and they were furious about the Committee's four recommendations. Only 13% stated that the Assembly represented the will of the people. For reference to this survey see "Yuban minzhong human guodai suowei" ("Over one-half of the people are dissatisfied with the behaviour of the National Assembly"), *Chung-yang jih-pao* (international edition), 18 March 1990, p. 1.

65. "Li zongtong zhengzhong xuangao minzhu gaige juexin biyou mingque jiaodai" ("President Lee solemnly declares there must be a positive spirit of democratic reform and there will be a clear resolution"), *Lien-ho-pao*, 18 March 1990, p. 1.

66. "Shengtao guoze zhongzheng jiniantang sanwanren qinuhou" ("Voices denounced the national thieves when some 30,000 people gathered in anger at the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Auditorium"), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 19 March 1990, p. 1.

67. "Lingshi tiaokuan yanchang renqi meinian jihui jue fan'an quxiao" ("National Assembly rejects proposals for meeting every year and extending assemblyman tenure, etc."), *Lien-ho-pao*, 19 March 1990, p. 1.



Then on 19 March, President Lee announced that a National Affairs Conference (*guoshi huiyi*) would be convened some time in June. This conference would represent all facets of Taiwan society, discuss national affairs, and try to reach a consensus on how to produce new policies for coping with the key problems confronting the nation.<sup>68</sup> On the same day, the National Assembly reacted to the new crisis and overwhelmingly rejected the recommendations passed by the First Examination Committee.<sup>69</sup> The crisis seemed almost over.

Yet the students refused to budge. On the morning of 19 March many began their hunger strike.<sup>70</sup> Realizing that the students were the last obstacle to restoring national calm, President Lee sent his education minister, Mao Kao-wen, and the director of the Research, Development and Evaluation Commission, Ma Ying-chiu, with a personal letter urging the students to protect their health and return to their schools. The students were not persuaded. Perhaps with them still in mind, on 20 March President Lee announced his intention to press forward for a National Affairs Conference, vowing that views from the full spectrum of society would be represented and that he would deal honestly with the crucial problems facing the nation.<sup>71</sup>

On 21 March the National Assembly voted for the new, eighth president of the ROC on Taiwan. Out of 668 votes cast, 641, or 95.96 per cent, were for Lee.<sup>72</sup> Lee expressed his gratitude, promising to push forward for democratic reform and improve the society and economy. The next day, the students began leaving the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial, having spent more than 150 hours protesting against the actions of the National Assembly.<sup>73</sup> The same day, the Assembly elected Li Yüan-ts'u the eighth vice-president of the ROC on Taiwan, giving him the highest share of votes ever accorded a vice-president, 93.48 per cent, or 602 out of a total of 644 cast.<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusion

The March presidential and vice-presidential elections produced

68. "Guoshi huiyi jinqi zhaokai" ("A conference on national affairs will soon be held"), *Lien-ho-pao*, 19 March 1990, p. 1.

69. "Zenge guodai wuyi yanchang renqi" ("Newly elected National Assembly representatives have no intention to extend their term of office"), *Chung-yang jih-pao* (international edition), 18 March 1990, p. 1.

70. "Xuesheng jinzao zhankai jueshi kangyi" ("Early this morning, students begin fasting in protest"), *Tzu-li wan-pao*, 19 March 1990, p. 1.

71. "Bingji zhao-zhu fang guoshi huitan" ("Seeking a prescription for a medical emergency: a National Affairs Conference will be convened"), *Tzu-li tsao-pao*, 21 March 1990, p. 1.

72. "Li Teng-hui dangxuan Zhonghua minguo dibaren zongtong" ("Lee Teng-hui is elected as eighth president of the ROC"), *Lien-ho-pao*, 22 March 1990, p. 1.

73. "Jinzuo xuesheng quanbu cheli zhongzheng jiniantang" ("All sit-in students leave the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial early this morning"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 22 March 1990, p. 1.

74. "Li Yüan-ts'u dang xuan dibaren fuzongtong" ("Li Yüan-ts'u is elected eighth vice-president"), *Lien-ho wan-pao*, 22 March 1990, p. 1.

the most severe political crisis for the KMT party and government since 1949. Conflicting world views, the generational transfer of power and the Chinese fear of disorder that facilitates factionalism had converged to aggravate the existing strains in the polity during the months of February and March 1990 and produce a great power struggle. Yet there was no political coup, and the presidential and vice-presidential elections still took place.

To resolve this crisis, did President Lee make secret concessions to other politicians to upset the Lin Yang-kang and Chiang Wei-kuo nomination? For example, did he promise to give up his post as KMT party chairman before the 1992 KMT party congress in return for support of his choice of vice-president? Or did he promise to sack his party's secretary-general, as some speculated?<sup>75</sup>

Our information strongly indicates President Lee made no political deals. Instead, he displayed firm and innovative leadership (which has not been emphasized in this narrative account of political life during that turbulent period). It was President Lee who exercised independent judgment to select his vice-president, going against mainstream opinion. It was President Lee who called on the assistance of a small number of "elders" to serve as political brokers to force Lin and Chiang to step down and to reach an accord with those politicians and officials opposing him. It was again President Lee who appealed for public calm during the crisis of 15–19 March and declared his intention of calling a National Affairs Conference to speed up political reforms. Finally, it was President Lee who electrified his county on 14 May when he made his defence minister and former critic, Hao Po-ts'un, his new premier. On 21 May, at his inauguration as the eighth president of the ROC, President Lee also promised he would initiate direct negotiations with the PRC leadership if they made certain concessions such as renouncing the use of force to reunify China.<sup>76</sup> By autumn 1990 President Lee had not replaced his party's secretary-general and had removed his major rival, Li Huan, from power. One can only surmise that this new president is very much in charge and imposing his stamp on political life.

The clash of different world views on how rapidly the ROC on Taiwan should adopt democracy will continue. There are still many politicians like Huang Ch'ao-hui of the DPP and Chang Yü-sheng of the KMT who believe that the pace of democratization must be accelerated. Meanwhile, the aged members in the National Assembly, many in government and the KMT, as well as many of the elite, are very alarmed that democratization is taking place too rapidly. They would prefer the process to be slowed.

President Lee Teng-hui and his new vice-president have strong

75. Such speculation was published in the foreign press. See James McGregor, "Taiwan's Lee to face challenge after poll," *Asian Wall Street Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 134, (14 March 1990), pp. 1 and 20.

76. David E. Sanger, "Taiwan's new president signals major softening in relations with China," *The New York Times*, 21 May 1990, p. A-3.

links to a younger generation of politicians and now draw on the advice of a younger group of the elite whose world view differs from that of the older generation. The transfer of political power from the Chiang Ching-kuo generation to a younger generation is nearly complete and within only a few years this difficulty will no longer exist.

Finally, the propensity to form factions among the leading politicians and elite has always been an enduring element of Chinese political life. The resurgence of factionalism in February and March nearly split the KMT leadership and the National Assembly. Yet President Lee demonstrated great skill in restoring consensus. Moreover, he promised to hold a National Affairs Conference in late June to speed up political reforms. By doing this he ran the risk that factionalism would re-emerge to paralyse the political decision-making process. In fact, between late March and late June a cynical public expressed scepticism and fear about President Lee's proposed conference.<sup>77</sup> Even so, the president and his colleagues patiently persevered and successfully organized the National Affairs Conference, which was held without major incident between 28 June and 1 July.

Although some intellectuals and politicians boycotted the conference at the last moment on the grounds that a political deal between the major parties would be struck, many overseas Chinese and local representatives who had been political dissidents did participate. The conference provided a forum for the reconciliation of the ruling party's leaders and those of the major opposition party, the DPP, and it allowed the politicians of the different parties to exchange views, try to understand each other better, and agree on some important reforms such as holding direct elections for the president and vice-president, Taiwan's provincial governor, and the mayorship of Taipei and Kaohsiung cities.

The National Affairs Conference deserves more discussion than is possible here. In brief, it successfully identified several reforms that the majority of participants could agree upon, and it made possible new avenues for communication between the KMT and the DPP. It remains to be seen how further reforms, such as modifying the constitution and the polity itself, will evolve in the future. The leading political actors, however, had successfully defused the severe crisis of the spring and had nudged the political reform process along.

The future political development of the ROC on Taiwan is very likely to be characterized by periods of calm, punctuated by crisis. Political calm will prevail when leaders and elite play by the rules and

77. See Ts'ai Ling and Ramon H. Myers, "Manichaeian suspicions and the spirit of reconciliation: currents of public opinion in Taiwan on the eve of the 1990 conference on the Republic of China's destiny," *The American Asian Review*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (summer 1991), pp. 1–41; and also "Achieving consensus amidst adversity: the conference to decide the Republic of China's destiny (June 28–July 4, 1990)," *ibid.*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (autumn 1991), pp. 1–40.

control unruly behaviour or violence. Political crisis will erupt if passion leads individuals to undertake confrontational politics, consensus is rejected in favour of bitter factional struggle, or new revelations of improper political behaviour cause widespread moral outrage. Strong, adept leadership will be an important factor to mitigate these swings. But as Machiavelli once counselled, “it is better to be adventurous than cautious, because Fortune is a woman.” Thus, much will depend on the element of luck as to how well the leaders manage their political affairs while taking the tortuous road to democracy.