

Taiwan Kuomintang: Revisiting the White Terror years

國民黨：重返白色恐怖年代

The night before Huang Wen-kung was executed, he wrote five letters to his family, including his five-month-old daughter whom he had never seen.

It was the first and last time he had communicated with her.

"My most beloved Chun-lan, I was arrested when you were still in your mother's womb," said the 1953 letter.

"Father and child cannot meet. Alas, there's nothing more tragic than this in the world."

His daughter only got the letter 56 years later.

"As soon as I read the first sentence, I cried," Huang Chun-lan said. "I finally had a connection with my father. I realised not only do I have a father, but this father loved me very much."

在黃溫恭被槍決的前一天，他寫了五封信留給他的家屬，其中也包含了他曾打過照面過五個月大的女兒。

這是他第一次也是最後一次與女兒對話。

在 1953 年的信裡說到：「我親愛的春蘭，當你還在你母親的子宮時我就被逮捕了，父親無法與自己的兒子見面，唉，還能有比這更悲劇的嗎。」

他的女兒在 56 年後才看到這封信

黃春蘭說：「當我看到信的第一句我就哭了出來，我終於與父親有了連結，我了解了我不只有父親，而且他還非常的愛我。」

The letters were among some 300 papers handed to Ms Huang's daughter when she applied for documents about her grandfather from government archives in 2008.

That led to archive workers finding personal writings, mostly letters to families, that another 179 political prisoners had written before they were executed during Taiwan's "White Terror" period of suppression.

Tens of thousands of people suspected of being anti-government were arrested, and at least 1,200 executed, between 1949 and 1992.

在 2008 年，當黃春蘭的女兒向政府的檔案室申請調閱文件，約 300 張紙的信才能交到黃春蘭的手裡。

這使得檔案室的員工整理出其他的個人信件，大多是其他 179 名政治犯在白色恐怖打壓時期被槍決前寫的家書。

在 1949 到 1992 年間，有不計其數的人被懷疑為反政府人士並且被逮捕，最少有 1200 人被槍決。

The letters, and the recent election of opposition leader Tsai Ing-wen as president, have renewed calls for a thorough look at this dark period and its precursor, the 228 Incident.

This was a 1947 crackdown on protesters who voiced discontent over the then Kuomintang party's rule over Taiwan as it faced defeat by the communists in mainland China.

The estimate of the number of civilians killed in the crackdown ranges from 2,000 to more than 25,000 civilians.

Experts say a lot remains unknown about both periods, due to a lack of transparency.

The government never issued a death toll. It is barely mentioned in history textbooks, researchers say.

Historians also say papers may have been destroyed. It was not until 2002 that Taiwan's Archives Act prohibited important documents from being destroyed.

這些信，加上最近反對黨所勝出的台灣新總統蔡英文，使得台灣人從新全面的省視這個黑暗的時期，還有它的前一個黑暗事件：228。

這事件是 1947 年為了鎮壓那些對於從中國大陸被共產黨打敗後逃來台灣的國民政府發表不滿的示威民眾。

預估當時被殺害的民眾大概從 20000 到 25000 之間。

專家指出，關於當時許多資訊仍不明瞭，因為資訊都被政府掌控在手裡。

研究者指出，政府從來沒有公佈相關的傷亡數字，在歷史課本裡也幾乎沒有相關歷史的蹤跡。

Taiwan's president-elect clearly believes that how the country deals with its past will affect its future social and political cohesion.

She indicated recently it still had not properly dealt with this period despite the designation of 28 February as a public holiday to commemorate victims of the 228 Incident, and memorials, compensation payments and presidential apologies.

"Only with truth will there be reconciliation," she said in a recent speech.

"Only with reconciliation will there be unity. Only then can Taiwan move forward."

She has pledged to seek truth and justice.

台灣的總統當選人清楚的相信，這個國家用什麼方法面對自己的歷史則會影響到它的未來還有政治凝聚力。

她指出，儘管將二月 28 號訂為國定假日來紀念 228 的受害者，還有興建 228 紀念館、賠償金，甚至總統的道歉，到目前為止對於 228 事件仍然沒有妥善的處理。

在她最近的演講裡說到：「只有真相才能達到協調，只有協調才能讓國家團結，只有如此才能讓台灣向前行。」

她承諾會尋找真相和正義。

For victims' families, learning about the fate of their loved ones, while knowing nobody was punished, is difficult to swallow.

The many memorials to Taiwan's then President, Chiang Kai-shek, who they see as the biggest culprit, deepen the pain.

Lan Yun-jo, whose father was executed in 1951 for writing articles critical of the government in an underground newspaper, learned only through a researcher that his life might have been spared had it not been for Chiang.

Her father went into hiding and was not arrested despite a big cash reward offered for his whereabouts. He surrendered after the authorities jailed Ms Lan's mother and Lan, who was a baby then and needed to be breastfed. Within six months, he was executed.

"Under his hands, many jail sentences were converted to death sentences," said Ms Lan.

對於受害者家屬而言，在知道他們愛人悲慘的命運之後同時也得知沒有人因此受罰，實在很難接受。

他們視蔣中正為這起事件的罪魁禍首，而台灣有許多蔣中正的紀念館更加深了他們心中的痛。

藍雲州，她的爸爸在 1951 年被槍決，原因是他為獨立報社撰寫批評政府的文章，透過學者得知，若不是因為蔣中正他根本不會喪命。

他的爸爸起初藏匿得很好並沒有被逮捕，儘管政府對於他的下落給予高額的懸賞獎金，但在政府將藍雲州還有她的媽媽關進監牢後他只能出來投降，當時藍雲州還只是個嗷嗷待哺的嬰兒，而她爸爸在被捕不到六個月就被槍決了。

藍雲州說：「在他(蔣中正)的影響之下，許多只需坐牢的刑罰都直接轉成了處決。」

While victims' families label Chiang "the murderer", others, especially those whose families fled with him from communist China, credit him with liberating Taiwan from Japanese colonial rule.

They argue he had to consolidate control over the island and keep it from descending into chaos and falling under communist rule.

But most agree his methods were excessive.

Some of those arrested did support communism but only because they were repulsed by Chiang's harsh suppression of dissent.

雖然許多受害者的家屬將蔣中正貼上“殺人犯”的標籤，其他人，由其是那些跟隨著國民政府逃離中國共產黨來台的家族，都尊稱他為將台灣從日本殖民中解放出來的領導者。

他們辯解說他必須鞏固整個島嶼的控制權，以免整座島陷入混亂深淵還有掉入共產黨的統治。

但大多數人都同意他的手段太過於極端。

其中一些被逮捕的確實是支持共產黨的，但也只是因為他們厭惡蔣中正用極端壓迫的手法來對付意見不同者。

Others were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time and many were intellectuals who just wanted a more democratic society.

The letters expressing love, sadness and regret provide a window into their hearts.

Despite facing death, some stood by their beliefs.

In one letter, a prisoner wrote to his mother: "There is nothing more that can be said about what has happened to me. I only ask that you not be sad, that you live happily, and that you be proud of your child, who is sacrificing for this era."

其他人只是在錯誤的時間出現在錯誤的地點，而且有許多是知識份子，他們只是想爭取更多的民主。

這些信，在他們的心中建立起一個窗口，宣洩心中的愛、傷痛與悔恨。

儘管面對死亡，有些人還是堅信他們的信仰。

其中的一封信中，一個囚犯寫給他母親：「對於發生在我身上的事沒什麼好再多說的，我只想請你不要傷心，快快樂樂的過日子，且對於為了這個世代做出犧牲

的兒子感到光榮。」

For many families, the letters came too late.

In Ms Huang's father's letter to her mother, he deeply apologised for making her a widow at a young age and asked her to remarry.

"When we received these letters, my mother was already suffering from dementia, so she couldn't understand what we were reading to her," said Ms Huang, who wants more documents to be declassified.

"This is something we really regret. The truth about history should be revealed."

對於許多家庭來說，這些信都來的太遲了。

在黃小姐的爸爸寫給他媽媽的信中，他深深的感到抱歉讓她這麼年輕就成了寡婦，並且希望她能夠再嫁。

黃小姐說：「當我們收到這些信時，我媽媽已經得了老人癡呆症，所以她一個字也聽不懂我們在念什麼。」黃小姐希望有更多的機密文件可以釋出。

「這些是我們非常悲痛的事，歷史的真相應該被揭露」