

Appendix 57 – Lee Tenghui Inaugural Address (1990)

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May 20, 1990

The Eighth President of the Republic of China My Dear Countrymen and Distinguished Guests:

The eighth session of the National Assembly elected me, Lee Teng-hui, to the eighth presidential term of the Republic of China. Today I, together with Vice President Li Yuan-zu, will take my oath of office in accordance with the stipulations of our Constitution. The entire people have charged me with a solemn office. With such a heavy responsibility on my shoulders, I will naturally do my utmost to adhere to the terms of the presidential oath, devoting my full efforts to protecting the country and enhancing the welfare of the people.

A look at the current world situation reveals that we now find ourselves in a great era of rapid change. The pursuit of political democracy, economic liberalization, and world peace by all of humanity is now a raging, irresistible tide that will inevitably destroy the shackles of systems that refuse to change with the times and the stockades of closed, totalitarian ideologies. Accordingly, the international situation has progressed from antagonism to conciliation. We, the Chinese people, naturally can not exclude ourselves from this massive tide. Rising up to take advantage of this opportunity and lay a comprehensive and lasting foundation for the future of the Chinese people is the common responsibility of the 1.2 billion Chinese at home and abroad. It is also the duty of the people on our bastion of national revival, civilian and military alike, to lead the way with great wisdom, determination, and solidarity, based on our many years of experience and achievements in implementing political democracy and an economy that benefits the people. Accepting the people's high expectations and trust in these extraordinary times, I feel the weight of my responsibility is multiplied many times over. I earnestly hope that all compatriots continue to offer your support and encouragement, so that over the coming six years of this presidential term, I can execute my duties to the fullest and fulfill the mission history has given us.

The Constitution of the Republic of China was drafted in accordance with the bequeathed teachings of our founding father, Dr. Sun Yat-sen. Its goal is to clearly delineate the distribution of power, and incorporate the strengths of China and the West to establish a sound democratic system. However, the process of drafting the Constitution involved many twists and turns and compromises. At the time it was first put into effect, the nation was embroiled in war and chaos. In view of these special circumstances, the Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of National Mobilization for the Suppression of the Communist Rebellion were enacted. For the past forty- some years, under the leadership of the late presidents Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo, this painstakingly executed design has made an undeniable contribution to maintaining stability on our bastion of national revival, and creating the miracle of the "Taiwan experience." Nevertheless, with the changing domestic and international situation and the increasingly ardent desire of the people for democratic rule

of law, the political environment of our bastion of national revival is not the same as in the past. Everybody now recognizes that normal development of a system of constitutional democracy is the only path to thoroughly implementing political democracy. Thus it is my hope that a termination of the Period of National Mobilization for the Suppression of the Communist Rebellion can be declared, in accordance with the law, in the shortest possible period of time. Furthermore, based on the many years of experience we have accumulated in implementing our Constitution and on the needs arising from the current national environment, forward-looking and necessary revisions will be made to portions of the Constitution concerning such matters as the parliamentary organs of the central government, the system of local government, and government organization to provide the Chinese people with a legal code that is in accord with the trends of our times, and to establish a great model of political democracy for all times. This difficult task can not be achieved in a single leap. The government will, in full sincerity and a spirit of selflessness, solicit the suggestions of people of all walks of life and cautiously and actively work at this task, so that, with the participation and encouragement of the people, it can be completed within a period of two years.

Equally important as innovation in our system of constitutional government is the institutionalization of party politics. Fair competition among political parties and entrusting decisions to the will of the people are the best ways to ensure thorough implementation of constitutional democracy. I have stressed on many occasions that we must invest our full efforts in building up our system and in cultivating a sound concept of the rule of law, so that all political activities can be carried out within the framework of the system, and operate according to the standards of the law. However, I also wish to emphasize that any responsible political proposition must have identification with the Republic of China as its premise, and the welfare of all the people as its basis. The government will accelerate renovation of the judicial system to solidify our foundation for the rule of law, make the civil service system sounder to raise administrative efficiency, and ensure clean elections so that outstanding members of society can achieve their goal of serving the people through a process of fair elections. If we proceed gradually, one step at a time, our system of party politics will naturally become sounder over time, our foundation of democracy will naturally become firmer, and the time when the country is well-governed and enjoys lasting stability will naturally be in sight.

We know that there is a mutually complementary and mutually reinforcing relationship between a prosperous economy and the development of political democracy. Because the Taiwan-Penghu-Kinmen-Matsu area has over the past forty years implemented a free economic system oriented toward enhancing the people's livelihood, it has a brilliant record of both rapid growth and equitable distribution of wealth. This fruit of the efforts of all the people has long been known throughout the world, and it has served to create a successful theory and model for all the developing countries of the world. Looking to the future, the government will, in addition to adhering to its set policies of liberalization and internationalization so as to maintain the continued growth of the economy and trade, design a comprehensive plan for the use and development of our land, accelerate state-of-the-art scientific and technological research and transfer, advance the upgrading of industry, improve the production structure of agriculture and fishery, open up markets for foreign trade, and

strengthen international cooperation, so that through a concerted effort, our economic development can in the six years to come expand its scope and horizons in its march toward a new level of achievement.

We believe that ensuring the people's well-being is the most important task of all development, and the fruits of all development should be enjoyed by all the people. In the process of economic development, the government should actively invest more in social welfare, and should, based on the particular circumstances of our country, learn from the experiences of more advanced countries and design a concrete program for the welfare of all the people, so that our citizens can live and work in safety and harmony, and the aged, weak, and handicapped can receive the care they need. At the same time, the government should also thoroughly implement ecological protection and prevention of public hazards, while improving traffic, public safety, and living environment conditions. In this way the people will not only have access to plentiful resources for their everyday life, but will also enjoy a rich and meaningful spiritual life, thus thoroughly realizing the ideals of prosperity and equitable distribution of wealth as prescribed in our Principle of the People's Well-Being.

We understand that culture and education are our nation's roots, and are the foundation of further national development. Any material or institutional development is destined to remain at a superficial level unless it is able to enrich our culture and raise our academic level. Through regional integration and cultural exchange, the overall development of the international community is gradually moving toward becoming an indivisible whole. This age of unprecedented vigorous development in our bastion of national revival is also the ideal time for making an objective review of our culture, and to choose and retain the best portions of it, and incorporate the strengths of other cultures where appropriate. We must begin with elementary school education, cultivating sound growth according to a plan, so as to set the minds and spirits of our people on the right track, mold their temperaments, and develop in them the life attitudes of placing a high value on ethics, being public-spirited and trustworthy, maintaining honor and discipline, and respecting the law. This will in turn promote the development of the Chinese cultural characteristic of being able to accommodate many diverse influences, thus making a valuable contribution to the well-being of mankind and world peace.

Fellow Countrymen, Distinguished Guests: Although development in the Republic of China over the past forty years has been restricted to the Taiwan-Penghu-Kinmen-Matsu area, all plans have been conceived with the future of all of China in mind. Taiwan and the mainland are indivisible parts of China's territory, and all Chinese are compatriots of the same flesh and blood. At this time when all of humanity longs for peace and is pursuing conciliation, all Chinese should work together to seek peaceful and democratic means to achieve our common goal of national reunification. In this time when the Communist countries of the world, including the Soviet Union, are declaring their renouncement of one-party dictatorship and the communist economic system, the Chinese Communists truly have no reason, and no strength, to continue to resist this trend over the long term. We sincerely hope that the Chinese Communists will become cognizant of the trends of the times, face up to the future, quicken their pace, and boldly march toward the goals of political democratization, economic liberalization, and social pluralization.

I would like at this point to earnestly declare that, if the Chinese Communist authorities can recognize the overall world trend and the common hope of all Chinese, implement political democracy and a free economic system, renounce the use of military force in the Taiwan Straits and not interfere with our development of foreign relations on the basis of a one-China policy, we would be willing, on a basis of equality, to establish channels of communication, and completely open up academic, cultural, economic, trade, scientific, and technological exchange, to lay a foundation of mutual respect, peace, and prosperity. We hope then, when objective conditions are ripe, we will be able to discuss the matter of our national reunification, based on the common will of the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits.

Reunification, prosperity, and strength for China are the common hopes of all Chinese people. But in addition to the unshirkable responsibility borne by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits, overseas Chinese the world over, always loyal and patriotic, also play an important role. The government must expend its greatest efforts to assist overseas Chinese in their economic enterprises and in cultural and educational work. We have particular concern for our compatriots in Hongkong and Macao, and hope that the Chinese Communist authorities will fully respect their rights to political and economic freedom. The government of the Republic of China will not pull out its organizations now based in that area, so as to help maintain the prosperity and stability of the Hongkong-Macao area and the well-being of all Chinese people.

At the same time, I wish to reiterate that the Republic of China is an independent and sovereign nation. We express our utmost admiration to the friendly countries who have maintained formal diplomatic relations with us over the years, and we value these relations highly. We also hope to be able to strengthen and upgrade mutual cooperation with countries who would like to treat us with friendship on a foundation of substantive relations. As a member of the international community, the Republic of China has, on a basis of equality and reciprocity, long adhered to international standards, participated in international organizations, and worked to carry out its international responsibilities. We will work even more actively and pragmatically to expand our freedom of action in international activities, promote international cooperation, and contribute our efforts toward greater prosperity and peace for the world community. It is our hope that we can continue to expand bilateral exchanges with the United States on the current basis, so as to enhance our traditional friendship and mutual interests. We hope that Japan will make even more constructive contributions to the future of both Japan and the Republic of China with a view to the long term. And we hope that through close cooperation with neighboring countries in the Asian-Pacific region we can together advance economic development in the region, to usher in the early arrival of the Age of the Pacific.

Fellow Countrymen, Distinguished Guests: Over two thousand years ago, Chinese culture gave birth to the ideal of a great world commonwealth of peace and prosperity. The political, economic, and social systems and goals that it entails are in full accord with those implemented and sought by modern free and democratic nations. A goal of these many years of untiring effort of the government of the Republic of China is also to achieve a renaissance

and enhanced development of Chinese culture. We sincerely hope that during this generation, we can establish a political model of democratic rule of law, to lay the foundation for a prosperous and equitable economic system and to create a peaceful, happy, trusting, and harmonious society. We want Chinese the world over to be able to raise their heads and be proud, and live with meaning and dignity. We wish to solemnly declare to all Chinese as well as to the whole world that beginning now we are prepared with incomparable confidence to open a great and brilliant new era for the entire Chinese people. Thank you.