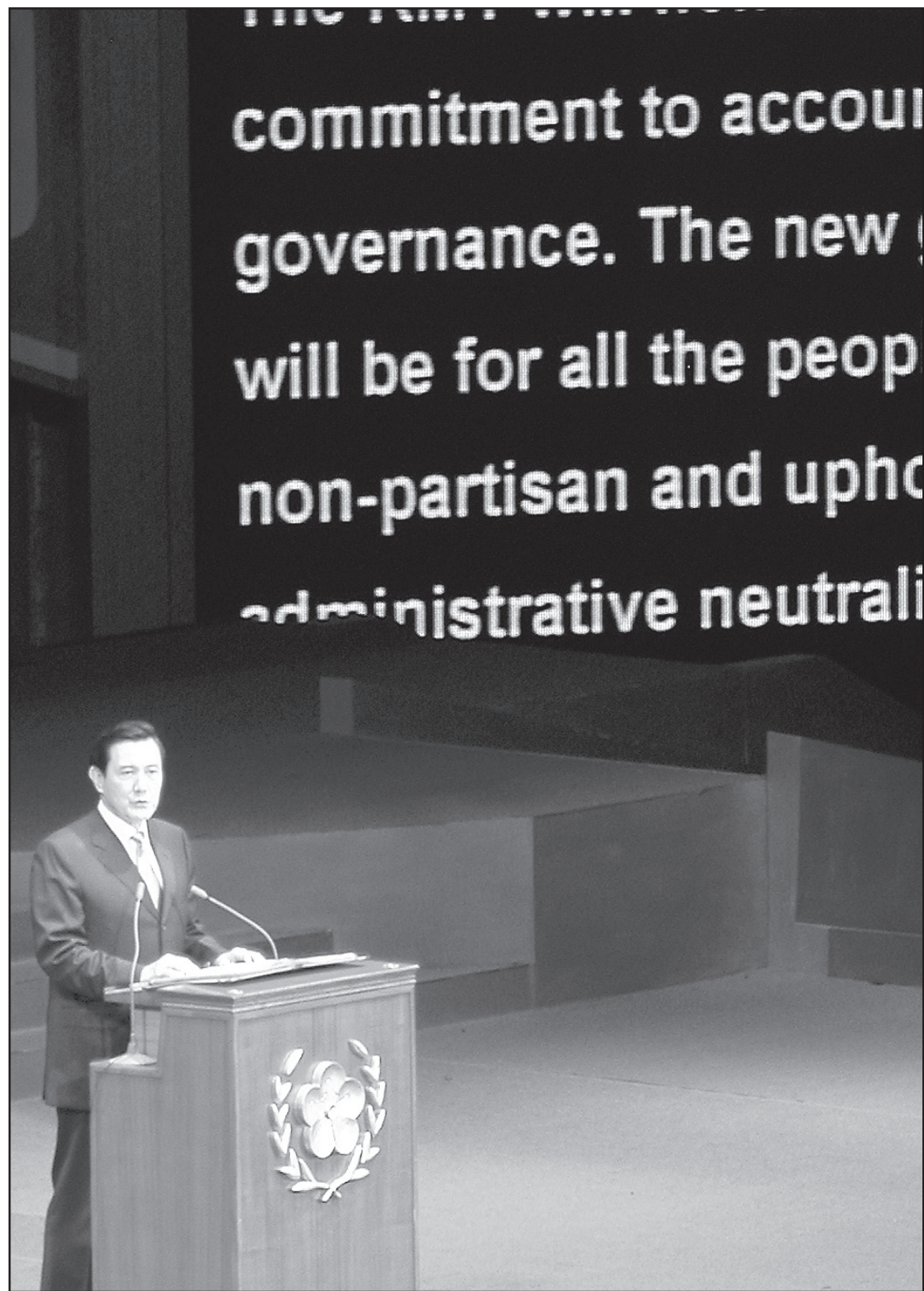


# Taiwan changes its direction



**TAIWAN'S NEW PRESIDENT**, Ma Ying-jeou (above), read his inaugural address to a sellout at a downtown Taipei arena, flanked by screens showing his text in Chinese and English. Earlier, the screens showed Ma's swearing in at the presidential palace (top photo).

## President takes office

TAIPEI — If the 2000 election of Chen Shui-bian confirmed Taiwan's shift to democracy, then the inauguration this year of Ma Ying-jeou seals its maturity.

Mr. Ma's 17-point election victory this spring returned to power the old Kuomintang party of Chiang Kai-shek, the U.S. supported strongman who ruled what once was known as Nationalist China through the Japanese invasion and the civil war with the communists. Chiang and his son ruled under martial law for more than 40 years, until the late 1980s.

This year, voters ousted Mr. Chen's Democratic Progressive Party not just from the Presidential Palace, but from power in the unicameral Legislative Yuan as well.

The shift is dramatic, in both substance and style.

Mr. Chen promoted independence for democratic Taiwan, a promise that prompted threats of war from the Communist mainland. President Ma's Kuomintang backs a return to the "one China" policy long held by both the Nationalist and mainland governments.

Where Mr. Chen promoted membership in the United Nations for this island and decried exclusion of Taiwanese delegates and reporters from the World Health Organization, a U.N.-sponsored group, Mr. Ma offers negotiations, closer contacts with the mainland and improved "cross-strait" relations.

The difference between the two in person could not be more dramatic. As President, Mr. Chen met with American editors. Reserved and formal, he speaks English but used a translator when taking questions. He obviously understood what you were saying, but relied on the cushion both to formulate an answer and assure it was understood as he intended.

The new president took questions



from foreign reporters the day after his inauguration, fielding a barrage of tough queries from the Taipei foreign press with ease. His Boston-Chinese accent betrays his time in America in tones oddly reminiscent of John F. Kennedy. He talks about his "ide-ers" for improved relationships with the mainland.

A Harvard-trained lawyer, Mr. Ma showed a command of both English and his policies that should carry him far. Nothing is ever simple in Chinese affairs, though.

The new president ran on a promise of "no unification, no independence and no use of force," implicitly renouncing Mr. Chen's drive for nationhood.

He says relations with the mainland should be governed by a 1992 consensus in which the parties agreed to the "one China" principle but agreed to disagree on how unitary that one nation should be.

His first initiatives, begun by his premier in a mainland visit even before the inauguration, were to arrange for more trans-strait charter flights this summer. Once limited to major holidays, the flights bring mainland Chinese to Taiwan as tour-

ists. Ma promises weekend flights year-around, then daily commerce. So far, no one is talking about scheduled flights for businessmen, who now must change planes in Hong Kong or another neutral port.

Where talk of independence stirred fear of war, though, talk of closer relationships makes many here fear domination by the 1.4 billion residents of the mainland over the 22 million Taiwanese. People here value their democratic system and the prosperity brought on by success in trade. (The gross domestic product here is about \$30,000 per person, while the mainland's is just \$5,600 and the U.S. leads the world with \$46,000.)

Yet the relationship binds the two in ways not easily undone. Taiwan is now one of the largest investors in the mainland's economy, as businesses here shift plants to take advantage of much cheaper labor. If the mainland economy sneezes, Taiwan's will catch a cold. Open flights could lead to domination by the far larger mainland population.

In his television-styled inaugural, held at the downtown sports arena, Mr. Ma was flanked by giant screens showing the text of his speech in English and Chinese. Entertainers kept the crowd busy for nearly two hours as he took the oath of office at the presidential palace, then drove to the arena — all shown on the screens.

Foreign dignitaries filed in ahead of the new president, who read faithfully from his text.

"Together, we can lay a solid foundation of peace and prosperity for our children, grandchildren and the generations to come," he told the crowd. "Let's work hand in hand for our future!"

And that drive for U.N. membership? When asked by a reporter, the new government did not actually disavow it. Officials would only say it remains "under study." As someone pointed out, both Koreas managed to gain admittance, and so might both Chinas, though they are one.



**FOREIGN REPORTERS INVITED** to the inauguration toured sites in Taiwan which included the military prison where dissidents were tried and held under the 40-year martial law rule. The guide (above left) introduced one former prisoner. A tomato (above, in text) clung to life in a crack in the prison wall, perhaps symbolizing the resilience of those once held there. An oddity of the tour was a park at President Chiang Kai-Shek's mountain retreat, where statues of the former strongman have been gathered from around the country. Nearly 150 Chiangs in all poses face each other across the green, though 50 or more remain in public places (right).



**Story and photos by Steve Haynes**