

LESSON 21 A PLACE WITHOUT SUN

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Introduction

During the Martial Law period (1949-1987), anti-communism remained at the core of the Republic of China's (ROC) political agenda. As the ROC government expanded the compulsory education system throughout Taiwan, the government systematically penetrated schools and textbooks with ideological campaigns. "A Place Without Sun," a lesson from the National Language Textbook for Elementary School Book 6, is a prime example. Compiled by the National Institute for Compilation and Translation—the government agency monopolizing the publication of elementary and middle school textbooks in Taiwan before 1997—this lesson was designed for third graders. Its simple content and gloomy illustration depict mainland China under communist rule as a backward and devastating place to live, in contrast to the "free," clean, and developing society in Taiwan.

It is noteworthy that the version of "A Place Without Sun" you read here is from the 1981 edition of the National Language Textbook for Elementary School.¹ In the wake of the passing of Chiang Kai-shek (1975) and the United States' establishment of formal diplomatic relationship with the People's Republic of China (1978) instead of the ROC on Taiwan, it became clear that the ROC's aim to "reclaim the mainland, save the suffering countrymen" would never be realized. Nevertheless, the anti-communist message presented in this lesson remains strong. For many in Taiwan during the Martial Law period and after, it provides a shared rhetoric and metaphors to discuss and stereotype the mainland and the PRC regime.

¹ This lesson first appeared in the textbook in the 1970s

Citation

“Lesson 21 A Place Without Sun.” Translated by Fei-Hsien Wang. Primary Sources on Taiwanese History, 2021, <http://taiwanprimarysources.com>.

Citation of Original Source

“Lesson 21 A Place Without Sun.” *National Language Textbook for Elementary School Book 6* (Taipei: National Institute for Compilation and Translation). Translated by Fei-Hsien Wang. Primary Sources on Taiwanese History, 2021, <http://taiwanprimarysources.com>.

Possible pairing with Primary/Secondary Sources

“Uncles from the People's Liberation Army! Quickly go and liberate our distressed little friends in Taiwan” (1955) (<https://chinese posters.net/posters/e15-592>)

“President Chiang Kai-shek's Double Tenth Message; To the Chinese Communist Armed Forces” (1962) (<https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=4&post=7335>)



Lesson 21 A Place without Sun

Since the Communist bandits took over mainland China in the 38th year of the Republic, more than three decades have passed. For the past three decades, our fellow countrymen in the mainland have been living in a poor and unsettling state. They have been living in a dark, gloomy world. They couldn't see any sunshine and thus feel hopeless about the future. Everyone that has been to mainland China describes it as a "sunless state."

The Communist bandits have been ruling the mainland for over thirty years. There are more than one billion fellow countrymen in the mainland, but a number of them are starving everyday even now. Most houses there were built over thirty years ago, and by now they have become timeworn. Roads constructed more than three decades ago are all dilapidated as well.

Everything you see there is aged and shabby. There hasn't been any new construction at all.

Our fellow countrymen in the mainland have no freedom either. If they want to travel, they need to apply for "travel permits." If the Communist bandits refuse, they won't even be able to leave their hometown. They cannot travel abroad freely either since the Communist bandits do not want them to see the world outside mainland China.

The most prominent fear of our fellow countrymen in the mainland is the Communist bandits initiating a new political struggle. When the Communist bandits begin a new struggle, they kidnap and kill people. The civilians' lives are consistently in danger.

We are living in a free country, and our lives are full of joy. But please do not forget that there are one billion fellow countrymen still suffering in a place where the sun does not shine. To liberate them from their pains is our responsibility.