

## **Roles and Reactions of Local Government Officials towards 228 Incident**

Su-ying Ou

### **ABSTRACT**

This article explores the roles and reactions of mayors and magistrates during the outbreak of the 228 Incident through examining how these local government officials responded towards people's resistance, what preventive measures were undertaken, and how they reacted and adapted to the circumstances during and in the aftermath of the Incident

In the early years after the Nationalist Government took over control of Taiwan, the Chief Executive Office of Taiwan Province adopted the administrative divisions implemented during the Japanese colonial era. A committee was established to handle the takeover. Following January 1946, local government officials were selected. However, most of them were originated from Fujian Province, had studied in Japan, or had received training from the Kuomintang (KMT). They were considered top-notch in terms of their educational background and working experience. Nevertheless, in less than 18 months after the takeover, the 228 Incident broke out due to the confiscation of contraband cigarettes. During the Incident, the demonstrators shouted provocative slogans "Down with corrupt officials." It was clear that the actions and policies of the government officials did not receive universal support or recognition from the people. In face of growing resistance, the government officials adopted different strategies including active intervention and negotiation, military repression, collaboration or confrontation with the 228 Settlement Committee. Nevertheless, the conflict between the people and the government further intensified with serious repercussions. In the aftermath of the Incident, some local officials continued their terms of office, others were relocated or stepped down voluntarily. The upheaval in administrative personnel undermined the implementation of government policies.

Beyond doubt, Chen Yi, who flaunted his superior martial and political power, should bear the greater blame for causing the social turmoil due to his inappropriate administration and hiring decisions. Subsequently, he resigned from the position as the Chief Executive and Garrison Commander of Taiwan in April 1947. Nonetheless, neither Chen Yi nor any local government officials were penalized for the outbreak and spread of the Incident, reflecting the official stance of the authorities concerned toward the 228 Incident.

**Keywords:** 228 Incident, Local Government Officials, 228 Settlement Committee, Commandant of Kiiun Fort