The Taiwan Experience

Taiwan's Peaceful Evolution from Dictatorship to Democracy

as Seen Through the Eyes of a Foreign National and ROC Citizen

Book One, 1st Edition

by

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"Democracy is an unstoppable force"

Xu Jiatun, Director of the Xinhua News Agency, Hong Kong, at the time of the Tiananmen Massacre

Preface

This book is the first of three covering Taiwan's gradual evolution over several decades from a one-party dictatorship to a vibrant multi-party democracy. It deals with the social as well as political changes that have taken place in Taiwan, as seen from the point of view of a foreigner and a Taiwan citizen.

A foreigner *and* a Taiwan citizen? Two people? No, just one. I arrived in Taiwan on a British passport in 1986 and swapped my British nationality for Taiwan (ROC) nationality about 10 years ago.

The book first gives the history of Taiwan to provide the background necessary to understand the complex present-day circumstances of this island. Then, the political circumstances and developments from 1986 to 1992 are narrated in Part Two from the point of view of an initially rather reluctant observer. Part Three focuses more on social change during this same time period. These years represent Taiwan's initial opening up from a society that had been under martial law for nearly four decades, the longest period any country in the world had suffered martial law at the time.

Book Two will cover the years from 1992 to 2003, and draw comparisons with other countries in the region, particularly the other three of the four 'Asian Tigers'; South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore.

At the time of this writing, Taiwan is going to the polls in the 2018 so-called 'nine-in-one' local elections. Apart from the elections themselves, there are 10 referendums. Even I will cast a vote shortly, for the first time in my life. Public participation in the administration of Taiwan has reached unprecedented levels. But it hasn't always been this way...

Book One: The Seeds of Democracy

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* A Note on Translations: There is no accurate way to translate Mandarin Chinese (or any other Chinese dialect) into English. The best approximation currently widely used is the pinyin system adopted by the Peoples' Republic of China. But it's important to bear in mind that this is a phonetic system; it's not 'English'. I've used the pinyin system in this book where possible, but not everywhere. For example, an English 'ch' sound (as in 'cheese') in pinyin is represented with a letter 'q'. I've avoided this, as English-speaking readers not familiar with the pinyin system inevitably read this with the same pronunciation as the 'q' in the English word 'quick'. As for place names and peoples' names in Taiwan, where a usage is already established, I've adopted that usage. Where there is little difference between the established spelling and the actual pronunciation in Chinese (such as in the name Lee Teng-hui), I've let it pass. Where the difference is significant (such as in the name Chiang Ching-kuo), I've provided in brackets after the name what I feel is a more accurate approximation of the sound in English. This is done with the intention of helping readers pronounce the names as accurately as possible. I know from my own experience, and the many misunderstandings I encountered when I first arrived in Taiwan, that just because a local inhabitant can speak English well does not mean that he or she is necessarily familiar with all the spellings for Chinese words generally in use in English, many of which are a long way from their actual Chinese pronunciations.

Introduction

By late January 1986, when I arrived in Hong Kong, I considered myself a dyed-in-the-wool traveller. My travels had begun in 1981 with a 'work experience' stint at a kibbutz in Israel on the border with Lebanon, and I had never looked back. I had travelled to - and within - dozens of countries from Sweden to Sudan, and worked in a good few of them in order to pay for my travels.

Naturally, to be able to live such a lifestyle, I was ‘footloose and fancy-free’. Or almost so. Recently, I had fallen head over heels in love. The one I had fallen in love with was named ‘Thailand’. I loved everything about her: her climate, her food, her people, even the Thai rock band Carabao, whose songs I had tried to learn in order to learn Thai.

I had been teaching English in Bangkok for some time before coming to the difficult decision to leave that city for Hong Kong. The problem was, though the pay for teaching English there was excellent by Thai standards, I knew that my hard-earned money would not go far internationally, and though I loved Thailand, I still had a seemingly unquenchable thirst for travel elsewhere as well. With great reluctance, I had decided to leave Thailand and once again hit the road. But my intention was not to go too far. Hong Kong was within relatively easy reach of Thailand, and I imagined myself going back to that country at every opportunity.

I had arrived the previous evening in Hong kong, and by the time I woke up in a window-side hostel bed in Kowloon's Cameron Road, I had to look out of the window for some moments before it all came back to me. Oh, yes, I told myself, I was in Hong Kong. Not Hong Kong Island, which is where the territory’s financial centre was located, but Kowloon, where all the cheap backpackers' hostels are.

It was raining lightly outside and much cooler than Bangkok. I fell out of bed and reached automatically for, first, the few remaining cigarettes in my crumpled-up packet of Marlboros, and second, the Lonely Planet guidebook to Hong Kong and Macau tucked away in my heavy shoulder bag. I was in a small dorm room, but I was the only guest in this room at a clean, newly-opened guesthouse, the Lee Garden.

There was no-one else around to ask for advice, so I would just have to go and take a look around the place and find things out for myself, I decided. But the manager was an amiable character, and as I sat in the common room sipping a coffee, he placed a newspaper, the South China Morning Post on the table in front of me. “A lot of news from the Philippines today”, he commented. I ran my eyes over the front page news reports. Huge anti-government protests were taking place in Manila, the capital of the Philippines; they would evolve into the ‘People Power Revolution’ that would ultimately depose the dictator Ferdinand Marcos. I wondered if it were possible that this infamous despot would actually be thrown out of power? I almost felt like getting onto the first plane to Manila - I wanted to see all this first-hand. But I reminded myself that I neither had the money, nor was that a part of my travel plans.

However much I may have wanted to see democracy replace dictatorship, I had to be realistic. My plans were to find work in Hong Kong, then I would be able to visit Thailand - or the Philippines for that matter - whenever I wanted to. Salaries in Hong Kong were far higher on average than either of those two countries. But I decided that I would give myself a one-day holiday in Hong Kong before I started looking around for work. That would also give me a chance to find out exactly where I was in relation to everything else in Hong Kong.

I walked out of the guesthouse, and down towards the Kowloon waterfront, the direction of which I could easily see without having to ask. Hong Kong Island was a short ferry ride from there, and I would begin my wonderings around the British-administered territory there before returning to cover Kowloon. I re-affirmed to myself my intention to spend at least one day looking around the city. I didn't have the energy or the focus to start looking for work in Hong Kong that very day, and I also had absolutely no idea where to begin. The weather was cool, and very comfortable after Bangkok. I was thoroughly enjoying that and wanted to make the most of it.

Acting on information from my Lonely Planet guidebook for the territory, which I expected to temporarily replace my dog-eared Southeast Asia on a Shoestring by the same publishers, my plan was to first visit Hong Kong Island's Victoria Peak, the highest point on the island overlooking the city. From there, I reasoned, I would literally be able to get the lay of the land.

However, one of those serendipitous encounters of the kind that happen to travellers from time to time was just about to occur. I saw the Star Ferry terminal - from which I would take a ferry to Hong kong Island - and was just approaching it when I noticed a lanky, long-haired American a few years older than myself coming towards me. His name was Don, and he had stayed in the same dorm room as myself in Bangkok a couple of months earlier. He instantly recognised me. We greeted each other, and as I knew very little about Hong Kong, I naturally had a few questions which I wanted to put to him. I also asked

whether he was planning to stay long in the territory, or if he was on his way back the US?

"Well, I'm on my way back, but slowly. Just going to do one more milk run from here to Tokyo, then I'll be flying back from there. This'll be my tenth. I figure that's enough.."

I had no idea what he meant by "milk run", but didn't want to reveal my ignorance; I had already revealed enough ignorance about Hong Kong. "So, you've done a few milk runs by now, then..." I prompted him.

"Yeh, the first started out from Bangkok, but all the others I've done from here. They're good fun for a while, but I don't want to end up doing nothing else."
I nodded. "So, how do the milk runs from here compare to those starting out from Bangkok?" I asked.

"They're more lucrative from here," he replied. "You can't make much money carrying stuff from Bangkok to Hong Kong. Bangkok's much cheaper overall, but so many things here are tax-free here to begin with..."

The more he talked about these "milk runs", the more I was interested. It transpired that they involved carrying goods from Hong Kong to Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan, particularly those items that were highly taxed in those latter three locations. It sounded like only a step or two from smuggling; it was legal, but pushing the limits of legality a little. For your efforts in carrying the goods, the Hong Kong travel agency would give you a free return ticket, some spending money, and some basic accommodation at the other end, or ends. They worked in a relay; if you only wanted to go as far a Taiwan, you could do that, or the agency they worked in conjunction with in Taiwan could fix you up with a ticket and accommodation in Seoul, or Tokyo, or both. Generally, Tokyo was the last stop, and there were people doing nothing else but this, Don assured me, and making a good living. My plans to look for work in Hong Kong evaporated there and then. The idea of getting paid just to travel was far more enticing than looking around Hong Kong for work, starting the next day. I asked what the chances were of getting a start in this?

"I'm going to the travel agency this afternoon", Don replied, "You're welcome to come with me if you like..."

We arranged to meet at 2:00 pm outside a building called Chungking Mansions on Nathan Road, Kowloon, only a few minutes walk from the guesthouse where I was staying. He took me with him to the travel agency to arrange my flight.

On Don's advice, I then went directly to an address he had giving me on Hong Kong Island, where I could apply for my Taiwan visa. He warned me that there was no fixed time within which my visa would be approved; it could be the

same afternoon or a week later, so it was better if I applied as soon as possible. If I didn't get it by the next day, the flight time arranged with the travel agents would have to be put back. He went on his way, and I took the Star Ferry across the harbour.

At the time, I knew absolutely nothing about Taiwan beyond its geographical location, which I had noticed on maps, and the fact that it had a capitalist economy. I knew this only because of a Newsweek article I had read a year or so earlier, in which it was termed a capitalist 'Asian Tiger', along with Hong Kong, South Korea, and Singapore.

When I reached the address of the 'consulate' that Don had written, I thought he had made a mistake. Instead of a consulate, I found a travel agency, called 'Chung Hwa Travel Service'. Yet, when I looked again at the piece of paper my American friend had written on, I saw that it did in fact say "Chung Hwa". I was thoroughly perplexed. I stood outside the ground floor office for perhaps 10 minutes, unsure what to do. Finally, I decided that there could be no mistake in Don's writing of “Chung Hwa”; if this wasn't the place to get a visa, perhaps the agency arranged it or something like that (in those days, visas applications tended to be fairly complicated, and travel agencies handling them on their customers behalf were not yet very common). Finally, I walked in, and told one of the counter staff that I wanted to travel to Taiwan and had heard that this was the place to apply for a visa.

The counter clerk I spoke to confirmed that was indeed the case, and handed me an application form. As I walked away to fill the form out, I noticed that it was, in fact, an application form for a tourist visa to the Republic of China (which I assumed to be the same as the Peoples Republic of China). I walked back to the same counter and explained that I wanted a form for Taiwan, not China. "This is the form for Taiwan", the man told me with a smile, handing the form back to me. I walked slowly away from the counter, more confused than ever.

As I spread out the application form - which was by far the longest visa application form I had ever seen - on a shelf mounted at elbow height on the wall, provided for filling forms, I thought this situation over. I had clearly shown the man at the counter that the form he had given me was for the Republic of China, and he surely couldn't be wrong that this was the form for Taiwan. After all, he worked there. Most of the blame, it seemed, lay with myself. Inwardly, I cursed myself for not being more like Michel, my former travel companion in India. The Frenchman had impressed me by the fact that he had done his homework thoroughly beforehand and knew all about the places we would visit and the problems we would likely encounter before we did. In comparison, I felt that I may just as well have been some alien beamed down from another planet, and now this familiar feeling came back to me. Apparently, Taiwan was a part of the Republic of China; yet it was a capitalist part, despite the fact that China

itself was a hardline communist state. How could I be planning to travel to this place, I asked myself, without knowing such basic information?

As I struggled to complete the 3-page application form, I noticed a blond girl of my own age next to me, speedily filling her own form out, mostly in Chinese. I wanted to glean some information from her, but was momentarily stuck for words. After all, I would seem pretty dim asking, for example, if she was going to Taiwan, or if the language of Taiwan, where I was heading, was Chinese! And to be honest, I couldn't really be sure she *had* been writing in Chinese; it may have been Japanese for all I knew. Finally, before she made to leave my side, I quickly put in: "I guess you've been there for a while, to be able to write so well?"

"Oh, a few months," she answered, turning towards me, and giving me a disarming smile. "Will this be your first visit?"

"Yeh...I must say, though, er, I thought the application form would say 'Taiwan' on it," I said, waving my form, "I was confused for a moment."

"Oh, you'll get used to that," she came back, and I noticed the north American accent. "The Taiwanese are pretty schizophrenic in that way, but you don't need to take it too seriously. When are you going?"

"Hopefully about noon tomorrow morning, if I can get the visa in time..."

"My ticket's booked for tomorrow lunchtime too," she told me, again with her disarming smile, as she turned to leave. "I hope I can get this visa by tomorrow morning."

I wondered what the chances were of me being on the same plane as her. As she went to hand in her form, I realised they were extremely slim, but she had at least put me somewhat more at ease. I would take her advice, and not take things too seriously. After I got to Taiwan I would no doubt have more opportunities to find out what that place was all about.

Where is Your Flight to, Sir?

The following day, I did indeed get my visa shortly after 9.00 am. I then rushed back to the hostel in Kowloon's Tsimshatsui district to check out and go to the travel agency, where I found Don, the agency manager and his wife in the process of getting an enormous amount of items into two suitcases and a carry-on case (hand luggage). The contents of my sports shoulder bag was emptied into another such case, the bag folded up and put into yet another. The manager, who had broken a sweat with all the effort, explained that we would both be slightly over the weight limit (by nearly 10 kilos, as it turned out), but only

slightly, so the airline ground staff would let it pass. If they didn't, and we had to pay, we could get the money back from our connection at the Taipei end. The carry-on cases were designed to fit in overhead lockers, "But, you know, very full so may need some pushing!" he added. I had never in my life travelled so heavy, but thankfully it was only a short trip. A few minutes later, Don and I were in a taxi bound for Kaitak International Airport. The airport, built on reclaimed land in the harbour was a mere 10 minutes drive away from the agency.

We both checked in our heavy suitcases with no problem and an hour later we were on a China Airlines flight to Taipei. Don was seated somewhere towards the front of the plane. I had been told not to act as if I knew him after the plane arrived in Taipei, but rather to head for one of two customs clearance desks alone after arrival to reclaim my two suitcases.

Before the flight, I had tried to glean some information on Taiwan from Don in the departure lounge. He had stated that Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Chinese government was still "holding out in Taiwan", or some such thing. I thought the man had to be either joking or was as thoroughly confused about Taiwan as I was, despite all his previous visits. I had heard of Chiang Kai-shek ('Chiang' is pronounced 'Jiang'), and his war against Mao's 'Red Chinese', and remembered seeing a film that featured this story, but that was the Chinese Civil War, shortly after the Second World War or so, as far as I was aware. This was 1986. Obviously, China was now on at least fairly good terms with Taiwan, otherwise there wouldn't be travel links between the two. I mistakenly took China Airlines to be the PRC's national carrier.

During the flight, after browsing *Time* magazine, I decided to take a look at the travel booklet in the seat pocket in front of me, a guide to the Republic of China. Obviously, judging by its mediocre design, it was a government publication.
I thought this guide book - perhaps 50 or 60 pages long - would be able to fill me in on the relationship between Taiwan and the rest of the Republic of China, while also providing some useful travel info. I was right on both counts, but it was the travel information that first grabbed my attention. I was pleased to see that Taiwan came first in this, and Taipei first in Taiwan. I became engrossed in reading about various attractions in Taipei, such as the National Palace Museum, and the Sun Yet-sen Memorial. Then, I went on to the various other tourist attractions in Taiwan; Taroko Gorge near Hualien, Alishan in the Central Mountain Range, and so on. Gradually, I began to feel there was something not quite right about this publication. I wanted to know about Taiwan in particular, so I was glad to have so much information on Taiwan, but where was the information on the rest of China?

I flicked through the pages towards the back of the book, trying to find information on mainland China. Because I was thoroughly unfamiliar with Taiwan at that time, this took some time, as I usually had to read a little way into

the description of each sightseeing location before I realized it was also located in Taiwan. Finally, I got through to the last few pages, on the Pescadores (now better known as Penghu), a group of islands to the west of Taiwan island. So, where was the info on mainland China, I asked myself? I checked the title of the guidebook again. It did indeed claim to be a guide to the Republic of China. I looked back at the last page of the book and finally noticed a one-sentence paragraph that had originally escaped my attention: Under the title 'Mainland China', the sentence read 'As the mainland region is temporarily under the control of Communist Bandits, there is at present no reliable travel information on mainland China.'

Good God! The entire area of continental China had been summed up in one sentence! I was staggered. Suddenly, the clouds began to clear: the reason this island called itself the Republic of China was because it actually did claim be the legitimate government of China! Don had not been joking about Chiang Kai-shek's government holding out in Taiwan! The entire existence of Communist China for three and a half decades had been summed up and disregarded in one sentence in this guidebook. This seemed almost too far-fetched to be real. Where on Earth was I going to?

PART ONE: THE HISTORY

Chapter One: Frontier Formosa

Taiwan is an island located at the outer edge of the Asian continent, approximately equidistant from the Chinese mainland (at about 180km), Luzon island in the Philippines and Japan's Ryuku islands. At the time I arrived in Taiwan, this was just about all I knew about the island. I didn't even know the total area, which is about 36,193 square km (for the island of Taiwan and its dependent islands). That makes it somewhat smaller than the Netherlands and larger than Belgium. The island of Taiwan itself has an area of 35,883 square kilometres.

The First Forays

The origin of Taiwan's first inhabitants is lost in the mists of time. The island's aboriginals, an Austronesian people (Pacific Islanders) or peoples, are thought to have come partially from South-east Asia, and partially from continental Asia, but there is no certainty about this. Recent research suggests the ancestors of Taiwan's aboriginals may have been living on Taiwan for approximately 5,500 years in relative isolation before a major Han Chinese immigration began in the 17th century.

Austronesian peoples are various groups in Southeast Asia and the Pacific who speak languages belonging to the Austronesian language family. They include Taiwanese aborigines, the majority of ethnic groups in the Philippines, East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, the Cocos Islands, Polynesia, Micronesia and Madagascar, as well as the Malays of Singapore, the Polynesians of New Zealand and Hawaii and the non-Papuan peoples of Melanesia.

The name Formosa dates from 1542, when Portuguese sailors sighted an uncharted island and noted it on their maps as 'Ilha Formosa' ('Beautiful Island').

The first non-aboriginals to settle in Taiwan's outlying islands are thought to have been Chinese fisherman who settled in the Pescadores, to the west of Taiwan island. The first non-aboriginals to settle on Taiwan island itself are thought to have been Japanese, who established a settlement close to present-day Tainan.

Then came the Dutch and the Spanish colonial powers. In 1626, Spanish forts were established at Keelung (pronounced 'Jilong') and Danshui (also written Tamsui, but pronounced 'Danshui') on the island's northern coast). The Spaniards' intentions were not so much to colonise Taiwan as to keep the Japanese at a safe distance from Luzon by preventing them from using Formosa as a base for attacks. At around the same time, the Dutch occupied Makung in the Pescadores, but they soon abandoned this for Anping, in present-day Tainan, on the Taiwan mainland. The Japanese settlement nearby faded when Japan prohibited Japanese from overseas travel. Finally, the Dutch managed to dislodge the Spanish from the northern coast and for the next couple of decades held onto their relatively small area of Taiwan's territory without challenge.

The Dutch set up the first schools on the island, and Han Chinese immigration from the continent increased substantially as waves of Chinese loyal to the Ming dynasty (which preceded the Ching dynasty) rulers and unwilling to live under the rule of the Manchurian-led Ching dynasty left China to seek new lives in South-east Asia, and in Taiwan. Most of these bold adventurers did not leave China with the intention of ever returning, and those who made their new homes in Siam, Malaya, and elsewhere in South-east Asia remained far outside the reach of the Manchu-Chinese imperial authorities. But those who only came to Taiwan soon found they had not travelled far enough.

The Chinese immigrants clashed with the native Formosan aborigines, pushing them ever further from the low-lying land on the island's west coast and into the hills and mountains of the island's interior to the east. Many of the battles were fought by proxy, through Sinicised or semi-Sinicised tribes on the frontiers between the two ethnic groups. Neither the Chinese immigrants nor the aboriginals or mixed-bloods within the Dutch area of control liked the strict Dutch style of administration, which demanded licenses for hunting and fishing and imposed heavy taxes on trade. Most welcomed the defeat of the Dutch in 1662 by a mixed Chinese-Japanese, pro-Ming dynasty leader named Koxinga, who promised to liberate mainland China from the Manchu rulers (just as they would welcome another outsider nearly three centuries later who made similar promises).

The Dutch and Spanish eras came to an end. There are few traces of Dutch or Spanish rule in present-day Taiwan. The remains of some of the forts they built on the northern coast, such as Baimiweng (known locally as Fort Dutch) in Keelung and place names such as Cape Fugui and Cape Santiago are the only reminders of that era (and even then, the origins of many of these place names are often not known, even to local people).

Koxinga set up his own independent kingdom on that part of Taiwan previously administered by the Dutch. But 20 years after its establishment, the Manchu-Chinese imperial rulers, who now had much more thoroughgoing control of South-east China, were able to build up a formidable military force in the Pescadores with which to threaten Koxinga's Taiwan. Koxinga's kingdom, then ruled by his grandson, surrendered without a fight in return for a guarantee of no reprisals and a life-long privileged status for the monarch and his family members. To some, he is regarded as the first Taiwan leader to 'betray Taiwan', or 'sell Taiwan' to China for his own personal gain. So began 200 years of Ching dynasty rule in Taiwan.

During this period, illegal Han Chinese immigration (although Taiwan was now under Ching rule, Ching civilians were not permitted to leave the mainland) continued and the frontiers were pushed further back. But Ching administration was characterised by its ineffectiveness, especially in those regions far from the government offices, on the frontiers with the aboriginal-controlled territories, where powerful clans held sway who co-operated with Ching administration just as much or as little as they wanted to.

Even in the last decades of Ching rule, two-thirds of Taiwan's territory remained outside government control, including all the high mountains and the east coast. In the tribal regions, no Han Chinese could tread except those few local people on good terms with the tribe in control. Skirmishes continued on the borders, and Sinicised tribes (principally ‘Plains Aboriginals’, or Pingpu people) continued to push the 'barbarian' tribes back by means of their superior weaponry.

The Reluctant Conquerors

Few official Ching expeditions tried to directly seize aboriginal territory; it was better to let the 'half-barbarians’, or ‘cultivated barbarians’ do this. The uncultivated barbarians, literally ‘raw’ barbarians, were people to avoid direct contact with; many tribes were headhunters who made up for what they lacked

in modern weaponry with savagery.

Perhaps the best illustration of the Ching rulers' approach to territorial expansion, and what territorial expansion entailed is provided by one of the island's oldest official 'highways', the Danlan Trail, or Danlan Footpath.

The trail was so-named because it connected *Dan*shui, then an important administrative centre on the north-west coast of Taiwan (while much of Taipei city was still a miasmic swamp few people really wanted to live in) with the much coveted *Lan*yang Plain on the north-east coast.

The trail was developed by ordinary citizens who wanted to trade with other villages near to their own. It was developed section by section, over many decades, with little thought given to linking them together. But as time went by, there was growing demographic pressure in northern Taiwan to expand eastward, with increasing numbers of Han Chinese immigrants coveting the apparently huge and fertile Lanyang Plain that lay beyond the mountains separating today's New Taipei from Ilan (also written 'Yilan' but pronounced 'Ilan') County.

Finally, a small group of Sinicised aboriginals cut a trail though the windswept hills of today's Gongliao district in New Taipei down to the coast a few kilometres north of Langyang Plain, which became known as the Tsaoling Trail. The trail was linked up with the existing sections of trail from Danshui and the route was complete. Han Chinese pioneers began moving into the plain, clashing with aboriginals in the process.

In 1867 a can-do Ching government military official named Liu Ming-deng made an inspection tour of this important new communication route with a small military contingent, after which it became an official 'safe' route for Chinese traders and immigrants to take to and from Ilan.

Even for a hardened military man like Liu, the various hardships encountered, including sickness, truly foul weather, and difficult terrain constituted a major setback which gave him pause for thought on the magnitude of the initially apparently straightforward task he had undertaken. Finally, the route was open and considered the only safe route to take to the tiny Ching administrative outpost, deep in the Lanyang Plain in present-day Ilan city, on the east coast.

Pioneering Han Chinese settled in this tiny area of the plain, which was effectively little more than an open prison for them for many years, as they were surrounded on all sides by hostile aboriginals.

Gradually, however, the levels of hostility lessened. The pioneers, as in other areas of Taiwan, were all Chinese males; in the early years it was very rare for Chinese females to venture into these dangerous frontier regions. Over time, the pioneers took aboriginal wives, who could be bought easily, and the settlement expanded through intermarriage. In the patriarchal Chinese family system, the children of Chinese fathers were also Chinese; the aboriginal mothers were the end of the aboriginal line. In reality, of course, the children were mixed Chinese-aboriginals, and many studies carried out in recent years claim that most of Taiwan's population have some aboriginal heritage.

Possession of a Han surname could confer a broad range of significant economic and social benefits upon aboriginals, despite a prior non-Han identity or mixed parentage. Many Sinicised aboriginals adopted the Han surname Pan as a modification of their designated status as 'Fan' (meaning 'barbarian'). Other Sinicised aboriginals adopted other common Han surnames, and traced their earliest ancestor to their locality in Taiwan.

In any case, this was the mode of Chinese expansion in Taiwan rather than direct military conflicts with the aboriginal population. In many cases, however, Plains Aboriginals took the initiative to carry out attacks on neighbouring un-Sinicised tribes, killing the inhabitants, and often destroying entire villages before rebuilding new ones at the same locations.

Throughout Ching dynasty rule Taiwan was infamous for lawlessness, as the reach of the Ching authorities was so limited and so subject to co-operation with various local Han Chinese clans. Sailors dreaded being forced ashore almost anywhere on the coastline of the island, but particular anywhere on the long eastern coastline, which was almost entirely outside Ching control. Headhunting tribes on the east coast took anyone who landed on their shores as enemies, and attacked them as soon as they were discovered. Even on the west coast, local Han Chinese 'wrecking' gangs often plundered stranded vessels.

Commodore Perry, the American naval commander who had played the leading role in forcing the opening up of feudal Japan to the outside world, wanted to solve these problems through annexation. Perry saw Formosa as the westernmost outpost of the sphere of American influence, made safe through American naval power.

France was the third European colonial power to make a grab for Taiwanese territory. Northern Taiwan and the Pescadores were the scene of subsidiary campaigns in the Sino-French War in 1884. The French occupied Keelung in October, 1884, but were repulsed from Danshui a few days later. The French

won some tactical victories but were unable to exploit them, and the Keelung Campaign ended in stalemate. The Pescadores Campaign, beginning on 31 March 1885, was a French victory, but had no long-term consequences. The French evacuated both Keelung and the Pescadores after the end of the war.

International pressure on Imperial China grew to do more to guarantee the safety of foreign nationals forced to take refuge in Taiwan. The embarrassing truth for China’s imperial rulers was that they were unable to. But they did make a show of paying attention to the problem. In 1887, the Ching government upgraded the island's administration from Taiwan Prefecture, in Fujian Province, to Fujian-Taiwan-Province, the twentieth in the empire, and moved the administrative centre to Taipei.

Japan was put in bellicose mood in 1871, when a group of 54 ostensibly Japanese shipwrecked sailors were massacred by a group of Paiwan tribe aborigines from the village of Mudan in south-east Taiwan. In fact, the sailors were from the Ryuku Islands, not Japan proper, but as the Ryukus were a Japanese tributary state on a fast track to be incorporated into the empire, this was a minor detail from the Japanese viewpoint.

After the 66 sailors arrived at the Mudan tribal community, they were ordered to stay there by local Paiwan tribesmen, while their fate was decided. The 66 sailors attempted to escape, and 12 were taken into protective custody by the Han Chinese officials of neighbouring areas, but the remaining 54 were killed.

In retaliation for Ching China's refusal to pay compensation on the grounds that the Taiwanese aboriginals were out of their jurisdiction, Japan sent a military force to Taiwan in 1874, to settle the score with the aborigines directly by themselves. The first overseas deployment of the Imperial Japanese Army and Imperial Japanese Navy saw 3,600 soldiers win at the Battle of Stone Gate on May 22nd of that year. Thirty tribesmen were either killed or mortally wounded in the battle. Japanese casualties numbered only six, with 30 wounded. Even these ferocious aboriginal warriors were no match for Japan's modem weaponry and sophisticated tactics.

The First Sino-Japanese War was fought between Ching dynasty China and Japan between July 1894 and April 1895, primarily for influence over Korea. After more than six months of unbroken successes by Japanese land and naval forces and the loss of the port of Weihaiwei, the Ching government accepted defeat in February 1895.

With the Meiji Restoration in Japan, the country had brought its military out of

the feudal age of shoguns, while in China there was still a powerful resistance to military modernisation (and all other forms of modernisation). This not only allowed Japan an easy victory, it also demonstrated that the country was on the right path in adopting the military tactics and weaponry of its own conquerors. Previously, for many years there had been a similar resistance to depart from military tradition in Japan. With defeat, the Ching Empire, along with the classical military tradition, suffered a major blow. The humiliating loss of Korea as a tributary state sparked an unprecedented public outcry.

Chapter Two: Spoils of Wars

When Ching dynasty China was defeated in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Taiwan, along with the Pescadores and the Liaodong Peninsula, were ceded in full sovereignty to Japan by the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Taiwan was thus simply handed over to the Japanese, who took it as a spoil of war. Inhabitants on Taiwan and the Pescadores wishing to remain Ching subjects were given a two-year grace period to sell their property and move to mainland China. Very few Taiwanese saw this as feasible.

In May 1895, a group of pro-Ching high officials proclaimed the Republic of Formosa to resist impending Japanese rule. Japanese forces entered the capital at Tainan and quelled this resistance in October 1895.

Despite being, in principle, handed to Japan on a silver platter, and despite the fact that the Taiwan resistance began with little modern weaponry of any kind, it took Japan - then Asia's most advanced military force - eight years to gain complete control of the entire island of Taiwan. Fighting between Japanese on one side, and Taiwanese of both Han and aboriginal ethnicity on the other, took the lives of 14,000 Taiwanese, or 0.5% of the population. Ultimately, Japan prevailed and the Japanese colonial government became the first government to rule Taiwan in its entirety.

Several subsequent rebellions against the Japanese, such as the Beipu uprising of 1907 (the first large-scale armed local uprising against Japanese rule, which involved insurgents from the Hakka ethnic group and Saisiyat aboriginals in Beipu, Hsinchu County), the Tapani incident of 1915 (one of the biggest armed uprisings by Taiwanese Han and aboriginals, which involved the storming of a number of Japanese police stations. It marked the end of violent opposition to Japanese rule by Han Chinese), and the Musha incident of 1930 (the last major uprising against colonial Japanese forces, in which Seediq aboriginals in Musha attacked killed over 130 Japanese, and Japanese killed over 600 Seediq in retaliation) were all unsuccessful but demonstrated opposition to Japanese colonial rule.

The Japanese brought Taiwan into the 20th century. Road and rail networks expanded across the island, an extensive sanitation system was built, and a formal education system established. Japanese rule also ended the aboriginal practice of headhunting. The standard of living rose continuously. The east coast was opened up with a sheer determination through the Suhua Highway, which linked Ilan County with Hualien. The road, cut into coastal mountainsides was probably the most dangerous in the world in its early years, and all in all it claimed hundreds of lives, not only the lives of its builders, but its users, for decades to come. (After I first travelled this road in 1986, I swore I would never take it again. It would not be until 28 years later that I actually did).

Roads were also cut into the high mountains. While the intent behind these was of course to improve transportation, and thus administration throughout the island, an inevitable consequence was Han Chinese migration into the island's mountainous hinterlands, and the acceleration of loss of aboriginal homelands. Han Chinese moved progressively deeper into the mountains and assimilation continued unabated.

Anti-Japanese sentiment, though never absent in Taiwan, especially in the older generation, generally gave way to grudging respect. The Japanese were strict rulers, but fair. A native Taiwanese could win a court case against a Japanese national; something almost inconceivable in the 1950s if the court case were between a Taiwanese and a mainland Chinese immigrant.

During this period, the human and natural resources of Taiwan were used to aid the development of the Japanese empire and the production of cash crops such as rice and sugar increased dramatically. By 1939, Taiwan was the seventh biggest sugar producer in the world. However, Taiwanese and Taiwan aborigines were still classified as second- and third-class citizens within the Japanese empire. A self-rule movement developed in Taiwan, but there was no notion of full independence at this time. This came later. Most Taiwanese did not imagine such a thing as a possibility, and while anti-Japanese sentiment lingered, the idea of Japan ever being defeated in military conflict also seemed an impossibility at the end of the 1930s. The Japanese seemed to win every battle they fought.

Around 1935, the Japanese began an island-wide assimilation project to bind the island more firmly to the empire of Japan and people were taught to see themselves as Japanese under the Kominka Movement ('Naturalisation Movement). During this time, citizens were encouraged to adopt Japanese surnames. By 1938, 309,000 Japanese settlers resided in Taiwan, comprising

around 5% of the island's total population.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Japan rapidly modernised, developed, and expanded its military capabilities, particularly its 'power projection' capabilities. The lack of alarm at this in the United States was one reason the raid on Pearl Harbour, which finally brought the United States into WWII, was so stunningly successful.

Alarm bells were not going off in Britain either, then still the world's biggest naval power. With the help of a British aviator and Scottish peer named William Forbes-Sempill, the Imperial Japanese military was able to develop its Navy Air Service, its naval air force, including a world-class aircraft carrier fleet. Sempill became a technical and business consultant to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. From 1932 to 1936, Sempill represented Mitsubishi in Europe, and throughout his relationship with Japan, he quietly passed classified military information on to Japan. Britain was perhaps then too pre-occupied with the rise of Hitler's Third Reich, much closer to home.

Founding of a Republic

While the Japanese were coming to grips with the task of subjugating Taiwan's aboriginal and Han Chinese populations, developments were underway on the Chinese mainland that would have far-reaching and long-lasting effects on Taiwan.

Sun Wen, born just north of Macau, was a Chinese who became a thorn in the side of the already miserable relations between Britain and the Manchu-Chinese empire. Educated in Hawaii, and baptised 'Yat-sen' by an American missionary in Hong Kong, Sun used the British colony as a base for attacks on the Ching imperial regime and set up his Revive China Party (Chung Hsing Hui) in Hong Kong. Always on the run, London was another of Sun Yat-sen's favourite places of refuge. In the mid-1890s, he was tracked down there by Ching government agents, captured and kept in the Chinese Legation to be sent back to China for a certain death penalty. Holding fake and genuine passports of several nationalities, and commanding a large following in overseas Chinese communities, Sun's release was later secured by Britain's Scotland Yard.

Several more abortive rebellions were managed by Sun from both Hong Kong and Japan (without his actual participation), until October 10th, 1911, when a group of discontented army officers in Wuhan, central China, led an accidentally successful uprising against the Manchu-Chinese Ching government. Sun then

returned to China to claim his revolution.

The Republic of China, which Sun established, was a state which never fully materialised on the Chinese mainland. The republic was first co-opted by powerful warlords in northern China, and its capital was moved from city to city in a series of short-lived alliances with local warlords. The new order never managed to completely establish itself throughout the entire country. Russian military and strategic aid was provided, and Sun's Nationalists (KMT, for Koumingtang, pronounced 'Goumingdang') allied for a time with another growing force, China's own Communist Party (at that time viewed very much as a tool of Russia).

Sun's death in 1925 led to the KMT falling into pro- and anti-communist factions. The anti-communist faction, led by Chiang Kai-shek (Chiang is pronounced 'Jiang'), a military man with training in a prestigious Japanese military academy soon got the upper hand, and in the chaos that was China in the 1920s, Britain - the world's most powerful military force at the time - was left with little alternative but to continue to recognise the Nationalists as the legitimate government of China.

Chiang himself retained power through murder and intimidation, carried out by his own men, or by Shanghai's Green Gang, a triad which operated both inside and outside Shanghai's International Concession then run by Britain, France and the United States. The Green Gang was often hired by Chiang's KMT to break up union meetings and labor strikes and was also later involved in the Chinese Civil War. One of the leaders of the Green Gang, Ying Guixin, was also involved in warlord Yuan Shikai's assassination of the rival politician Song Jiaoren in 1913.

Shanghai's international settlement was policed by the British, and Chiang was wanted by them for a long list of offences, including murder. However, the constitution of the Republic of China, which put an end to many unsavoury practices of imperial China, was based on Sun's impression of the American constitution, and even as a regime hijacked by a ruthless leader, the Nationalists were favoured by Britain as the most acceptable force in China. The alternative, the Communists led by Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong, was even less palatable. A civil war which was to last over two decades got underway in China a decade before WWII.

In the Shanghai region, the Green Gang exercised considerably more power than the KMT itself, and the opium trade was essential to the triad. But the triad also shared its profits from the drug trade with the KMT after the creation of the

Opium Suppression Bureau. Although Britain was often later vilified by both Chinese Nationalists and Chinese Communists for using opium as a tool against China, at this time Britain threatened to take China to the League of Nations (the predecessor to the United Nations) for breach of treaty obligation in revitalising the cultivation and sale of opium. But this option foundered on the reality of rule in China - though there was obvious KMT involvement in the trade, it was difficult to draw the line between the party and the criminal organisation which was entangled in it, and consequently almost impossible to apportion blame.

The leader of the Green Gang, the so-called 'King of Shanghai' was Du Yue-sheng - also nicknamed Big-eared Du - who was also arguably the most powerful man in Shanghai at the time. He was able to operate with impunity within the International Concession, and transport opium through it with the full knowledge of the foreign authorities. Du took Chiang under his wing and collaborated with the KMT to purge the party of communist elements within it, thereby ensuring that Chiang was free of serious opposition to his leadership from within the party.

Chiang Kai-shek's brother-in-law and financial minister T.V. Soong also partnered with the Green Gang to pressure Shanghai banks to buy up national securities. In the last two years of ROC government on mainland China, the Green Gang continued to pressure big business to buy up national bonds, as a means of compensating for the lack of corporate tax imposed by the government.

Long before Chiang Kai-shek and his military arrived in Taiwan, and long before the '2-28 Incident' there, Chiang Kai-shek had developed a fearsome reputation as a leader who dealt with his rivals and his opponents through the most brutal of means, which often involved double-cross.

The Shanghai Massacre of April 12th, 1927, was the violent suppression of Chinese Communist Party organizations in Shanghai by the military forces of Chiang Kai-shek and Green Gang thugs. Conservative KMT elements carried out a full-scale purge of Communists in all areas under their control, and it led to an open split between left and right wing factions in the KMT.

Before dawn on April 12th of that year, Green Gang members began to attack various district offices controlled by union workers. Under an emergency decree, Chiang ordered the 26th Army to disarm the workers' militias; that resulted in more than 300 people being killed or wounded. The union workers organized a mass meeting denouncing Chiang Kai-shek on April 13th, and thousands of workers and students went to the headquarters of the 2nd Division of the 26th Army to protest. Soldiers opened fire directly on them, killing 100 and

wounding many more. Chiang dissolved the provisional government of Shanghai, labor unions and all other organizations under Communist control, and reorganized a network of unions with allegiance to the KMT and under the control of Du Yue-sheng. Some sources claim as many as 10,000 people were killed. Chiang Kai-shek granted Du the rank of general in the National Revolutionary Army after this as recognition of his help.

The Canton Uprising of the same year was a failed communist uprising in the southern city of Guangzhou (then known in English as Canton). In the resulting purges, many young Chinese Communists were publicly beheaded in the streets by KMT executioners. By the end of the purge, more than 5,700 Communists had been killed and an equal number were unaccounted for. All of this was of course known to Taiwan's Han Chinese population, through news reports. It was only much later, when the island was effectively under KMT control that such incidents were glossed over, and the Green Gang connection vanished from public descriptions of the pre-WWII Nationalist Chinese leader and his party.

As head of the Green Gang, Du dominated Shanghai's opium and heroin trade in the 1930s, while secretly funding the political career of Chiang Kai-shek. In contrast to his views on legality, Du was politically a staunch Confucian conservative.

The Green Gang's support for the Nationalist Government included funding and equipment, even going as far as to purchase a German Junkers 87 aircraft (better known as a Stuka dive bomber) emblazoned with the Board of Opium Suppression Bureau logo. In return, Du was given leeway to run labour unions and keep business flowing freely. In 1931, Du had the financial and political clout to open his own temple — one dedicated to his ancestors and family members — and hold a three-day-long party to honour its grand opening. It was one of Shanghai's largest celebrations, with hundreds of celebrities and political figures attending. Within months of its opening, however, the temple's private wings had been turned over to the manufacture of heroin, making it Shanghai's largest drug factory.

The relationship between Du's Green Gang and Chiang Kai-shek's KMT soured after WWII, when corruption and crime committed by top-ranking politicians and gangsters began causing administrative and image problems within the KMT. Chiang Kai-shek's son, Chiang Ching-kuo (pronounced 'Jiang Jing-guo'), launched an anti-corruption campaign in Shanghai in the late 1940s in which Du's relatives were among the first to be arrested and thrown into jail. Although Du successfully managed their release by threatening to expose the

embezzlement activities carried out by Chiang's relatives, the arrest and imprisonment of Du's sons effectively ended the partnership between the Chiangs and Du. It also highlighted the fact that father and son had different approaches to government administration.

Du escaped to Hong Kong after the KMT fled to Taiwan in 1949. As he gradually became blind and possibly senile, Du decided it was safe to move back to China in 1951. However, before he could return to China he died in Hong Kong, of illness apparently caused by his addiction to opium. Allegedly, his body was taken by one of his wives to Taiwan, and buried in Xizhi District, New Taipei (then Taipei County), though some are skeptical that his tomb actually contains his body. I happened upon this tomb shortly after it's whereabouts ceased to a secret in about 2009. A couple who had lived nearby for the previous 30 years revealed that they had had no idea throughout these 30 years that Du's tomb lay so close to their home, and suspected the collusion of a nearby temple in keeping it out of sight. Chiang Kai-shek owed Du a debt he couldn't possibly pay off, but by the time the KMT had installed itself in Taiwan, the early connection with criminal gangs in Shanghai was something strenuously denied...

Chiang Kai-shek could not rely on the strong-arm tactics of criminal organisations alone to get him and keep him in power in the face of the threat to his power from Mao and his Chinese Communists. He also married into the Soong family, a shrewd move from a political point of view, as this was a wealthy and influential family with excellent American connections. The marriage came with the disadvantage of having to adopt Christianity (which nevertheless paid off dividends in terms of support from pious Americans), but it also came with the advantage of a wife who was able to communicate fluently and persuasively with the American public. That was Mei-ling Soong, the youngest of three sisters of Shanghainese (of Hainanese descent). Along with their husbands, themselves amongst China's most significant political figures of the early 20th century, they each played a major role in influencing politics and public opinion in China and abroad.

Their three brothers all became high-ranking officials in the ROC government, the best-known of whom was T.V. Soong, who determined the country's economic policies. Ai-ling The eldest sister, married China's richest man, H. H. Kung. Ching-ling The middle sister had married Sun Yat-sen, father of modern China and first president of the republic, in Japan in October 1915. Mei-ling outlived her husband by several decades and even attempted to influence Taiwan politics as late as the 1990s.

War in the Pacific

The Imperial Japanese Navy was heavily dependent on the use of Taiwanese ports before and during the Second World War. Taiwan held strategic wartime importance to Imperial Japanese military campaigns over the course of this period. The Imperial Navy's 'South Strike Group' was based at Taihoku Imperial University (now National Taiwan University) in Taipei.

The Japanese Governor-General of Taiwan was given control of local military forces in August 1919, and these formed the nucleus of the Taiwan Army of Japan. During World War II, tens of thousands of Taiwanese served in the Japanese military.

Future president Lee Teng-hui ('Teng' is pronounced 'Deng') served as a second lieutenant in the Imperial Japanese Army in the final months of World War II. His brother, Lee Teng-chin, was killed in action in the Philippines while serving in the Imperial Japanese Navy and his remains were never recovered. Lee Teng-chin was only one of at least 26,000 Taiwan-born Imperial Japanese servicemen and hundreds of volunteers who were killed or presumed killed in action, and were enshrined in the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. It is because of this war-era background that Lee Teng-hui was distrusted by other high-ranking officials in the KMT, particularly the 'Palace Faction', rather than Lee's intention to 'localise' Taiwan politics, the extent of which was not known to anyone else except Lee himself until after he consolidated power following his 1996 presidential election victory.

Japan's military technology progressed by leaps and bounds. By the time the Mitsubishi Zero fighter aircraft was introduced into service in July 1940, Japan had produced a piece of military technology that was by no means an imitation or approximation of Western military technology; on the contrary, it was in a class of its own. In early combat operations, the Zero gained a legendary reputation as a dogfighter, achieving an outstanding kill ratio of 12 to 1.

Nowhere was its superiority more glaringly obvious than in its use against Chinese military bases. Zeros scored their first air-to-air victories when 13 of the aircraft led by Lieutenant Saburo Shindo attacked 27 Soviet-built Polikarpov I-15s and I-16s of the ROC Air Force, shooting down all the ROC fighters without a single loss to themselves. By the time they were redeployed a year later, the Zeros had shot down 99 ROC Air Force aircraft.

Based in Tainan, in the south of the island, the Tainan Air Group, a fighter aircraft and airbase garrison unit of the Imperial Japanese Navy, was heavily involved in many of the major campaigns and battles of the first year of the war. Its aircraft decimated ROC Air Force bases in China, and pilot desertions on the Chinese side skyrocketed. The unit's aces notched up dozens of kills apiece in the manner of Germany's Baron Von Richtofen and his Flying Circus. Most of the unit died peacefully in old age.

The allied fighter aircraft were initially no match for the Zero. The plane could easily out-turn Britain's Supermarine Spitfire, sustain a climb at a very steep angle, and stay in the air for three times as long as the British fighter. American pilots were warned not to get into dogfights with the aircraft; its maneuverability was far superior. It easily disposed the Allied aircraft sent against it in the Pacific in 1941.

However, the Japanese did not build on their lead. By 1943, a combination of new tactics and the introduction of better equipment enabled Allied pilots to engage the Zero on generally equal terms, and over time the Zero became progressively less effective against newer Allied fighters.

As the war moved west over the Pacific, in October 1944, with Japan on the defensive, the Formosa Air Battle was fought between American aircraft carriers and Japanese forces based in Taiwan. Important Japanese military bases and industrial centres throughout Taiwan, such as Kaohsiung and Keelung, were targets of heavy raids by American bombers. The battle consisted of American air raids against Japanese military installations on Taiwan during the day and Japanese air attacks at night against American ships. Japan lost more than 300 aircraft in the battle, while American losses amounted to fewer than 100.

The Formosa Air Battle marked a turning point for Japanese military tactics. Organized kamikaze attacks had been proposed after the First Battle of the Philippine Sea but were rejected by Imperial Japanese Navy leaders. After the Formosa Air Battle, Japanese units were specifically deployed with the intent to crash-dive on enemy vessels.

In May of the following year, 1945, the Taihoku (Taipei) Air Raid was carried out, and this was the largest Allied air raid carried out on Taipei during WWII. Units of the US Fifth Air Force consisting of 117 Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bombers were sent to conduct this raid. Approximately 3,800 bombs were dropped on military units and governmental facilities in Taipei. But many other buildings within the downtown area and the city's Japanese quarter in particular suffered extensive damage.

The Presidential Offices (as they are known today) suffered a direct hit and were not repaired until the Nationalist Chinese takeover. Other facilities hit included Japanese Army Headquarters, Taihoku Imperial University (today's National Taiwan University), Taipei Main Station, the Bank of Taiwan, Taihoku High Court, Taihoku New Park, and many other facilities.

After the conclusion of World War II, the ROC toned down the attack and excluded it from the media and history textbooks. This was partly to show the United States in a good light by failing to mention the extensive civilian casualties - the raid killed hundreds and wounded or displaced tens of thousands - but mostly because Chiang's government did not think teaching the population about the part the United States played in capturing Taiwan from Japan was in the country's interests. In the first three decades after the war, 'spiritual engineering' (to borrow the Communist Chinese term for brainwashing) through the education system and the media was so thoroughgoing that, even as I write this book in 2018, there are still many people in Taiwan who actually believe that Japan was defeated in WWII by the ROC!

As far as Taiwan was concerned, the ROC Air Force played a supportive role in raids launched against military and industrial targets in Taiwan in 1943, but that was about all, and it didn't escape the general public's notice that the scores of aircraft shot down by the Japanese defenders in 1945 were not from the ROC Air Force.

Towards the end of the Pacific War, the United States, having suffered unacceptable casualty rates, became increasingly unwilling to commit ground troops to fight against the Japanese, who were now using 'kamikazi' suicide tactics in an all-out effort to prevent defeat. The Battle of Okinawa was particularly fierce and protracted, and America could only expect worse than that on the main four main islands of Japan. US battle tactics became increasingly barbaric.

The Tokyo firebombings were a series of firebombing air raids by the United States Army Air Forces in March 1945, and are regarded as the most destructive bombing raids in human history.

The Tokyo Fire Department estimated 97,000 killed and 125,000 wounded. The Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department established a figure of 83,793 dead and 40,918 wounded and 286,358 buildings and homes destroyed. Some historians put the number of deaths at over 100,000, injuries at a million and homeless residents at a million. An estimated 1.5 million people lived in the burned out areas. Firebombing raids were also carried out on Osaka and other major cities.

Finally, the ultimate barbarity came: the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. From the American point of view, this was infinitely preferable to committing ground troops to push forward to Tokyo. The United States was simply unwilling to suffer further losses in this war with Japan.

Japan's unconditional surrender was announced on August 15th, 1845, less than 10 days after the bombing of Hiroshima, and it was formally signed on September 2nd. On August 28th, the occupation of Japan led by US general, Douglas MacArthur began.

After the war, Taiwan was treated as if the Treaty of Shimonseki had never been entered into, and it was merely a recently occupied province of the Republic of China. In fact, various different territories of the Japanese Empire had various different kinds of legal status, but the victors of WWII were not really interested in these. Taiwan was simply handed to the Nationalist Chinese government as a spoil of war, and how the Nationalist government handled the island's integration into the Republic of China was left largely up to Chiang's government.

Chiang appointed a personal friend, General Chen Yi, to govern Taiwan. He was also the first head of the Taiwan Garrison Command, a quasi-military body which in fact was closer to a secret police unit.

Chen and Chiang were natives of the same district in Zhejiang province. Both had received military training in Japan, both had a liking for Japanese women, and both had good underworld connections. Chen also had excellent credentials for wiping out a group of rebel soldiers in Fujian province who had fought against the Japanese during WWII and refused to be disbanded.

It has to be borne in mind, however, that at this time CKS could not have imagined that within a few years the ROC government would be governing nowhere on the Chinese mainland, and Chiang himself would be forced to flee to Taiwan. Taiwan had not yet assumed the critical importance to Chiang's survival that it would by 1950.

In the weeks immediately following the end of war, Japanese police and civil servants remained on duty. American and UN authorities had the problem of how to get the Chinese government to Formosa. China had no ships and few planes. In October 1945, an advance team headed by an ROC lieutenant general, escorted by around 100 US American military personnel, was ferried across the Taiwan Straits in Japanese vessels commandeered by the US military.

Finally, on October 15th, the first 12,000 ROC troops arrived in Keelung and Kaohsiung, but flatly refused to go ashore out of fear of vengeful Japanese suicide squads. The Americans at Keelung had to send an advance team to Taipei to ensure the safe passage of the Chinese troops. The KMT troops from China were initially welcomed by most of the local population, who were keenly optimistic towards the future at the end of the war. But their behaviour and the KMT maladministration led to Taiwanese discontent during this period.

As Governor-General, Chen Yi took over and sustained the Japanese system of state monopolies in tobacco, sugar, camphor, tea, paper, chemicals, petroleum refining, mining and cement, in exactly the same way the Nationalist Chinese treated people in other former Japanese-controlled areas, which had only been occupied by the Japanese for a few months or years. He confiscated some 500 Japanese-owned factories and mines, and homes of former Japanese residents. Economic mismanagement led to a large black market, runaway inflation and desperate food shortages. Many commodities were compulsorily bought cheaply by the KMT administration and shipped to mainland China to meet the Civil War shortages where they were sold at very high profit, furthering the general shortage of goods in Taiwan. The price of rice rose to 100 times its original value between the time the Nationalists took over to the spring of 1946, increasing to nearly 4 times the price in Shanghai. It inflated further to 400 times the original price by January 1947.

In the months immediately after the end of WWII, the ROC government was heavily dependent on help from the military personnel of the country that had captured the island from the Japanese in the first place. Once the long process of Japanese repatriation had been completed (most of Taiwan's approximately 300,000 Japanese residents were expelled and sent back to Japan) and all government duties transferred to the immigrants, Chen Yi became eager to get rid of US and UN personnel stationed on the island.

As for the Taiwanese impression of the new government, it could hardly have been worse. There was widespread looting of private properties, a number of Japanese had been murdered for no apparent reason other than race hatred, and native Taiwanese had been removed from all but the lowest ranks of the civil service. On top of all this was open corruption and appalling incompetence. As if that were not enough, Chen Yi proposed a programme to force young Taiwanese to fight for the ROC against the Chinese Communists in the war they were losing on the mainland. In 1946, Shanghai gangsters began moving over to Taiwan and involving themselves in depletion of island’s food stockpiles, working with the military to raid private warehouses, confiscate the contents on

charges of stockpiling, and ship it all back to Shanghai.

Rather than enforcing order under difficult circumstances, many ROC troops were actually directly involved in looting, stealing and contributing to the overall breakdown of infrastructure and public services. Because the Taiwanese elites had met with some success in self-government under Japanese rule, they had expected a similar system from the incoming Nationalists, but found themselves almost entirely removed from the island's administration. The shambles that constituted government under Chen Yi in the post-war years stood in sharp contrast to the strict but orderly administration of a few years previously. Language misunderstandings (few Taiwanese were fluent in Mandarin at the time) served to further inflame tensions on both sides. By 1947, frustration with the incoming regime had reached breaking point.

Chapter Three: The Silent Suffering

An Incident With a Cigarette Vendor

What came to be known as the 2-28 Incident occurred on February 28th, 1947.

On February 27th, 1947, a Tobacco Monopoly Bureau enforcement team in Taipei confiscated contraband cigarettes from a 40-year-old widow named Lin Jiang-mai. When she demanded their return, one of the men dealt the widow a blow to the head with his pistol, prompting the outraged crowd surrounding the agents to challenge them. As they fled, one agent shot his gun into the crowd, killing one bystander. The crowd protested to the police, but to no avail.

Violence flared the following morning. Security forces at the Governor-General's Office tried to disperse the crowd. Shots were fired at protesters calling for the arrest and trial of the agents involved in the previous day's shooting, resulting in several deaths. Formosans took over the administration of the towns and military bases on March 4th and forced their way into a local radio station to protest. By evening, martial law had been declared and curfews were enforced by the arrest or shooting of anyone who violated them.

The above was the full extent of the official government description of the 2-28 Incident when I arrived in Taiwan nearly four decades later. It omitted a slight detail, which was of course the week-long, island-wide massacre of nearly 30,000 civilians which occurred shortly after the cigarette vendor incident, as a reprisal for the Taiwanese for trying to take over administration of the island. This is the 'incident' of most concern to most people rather than the killing of a bystander in a crowd by Monopoly Bureau official and the 'riots' that followed.

The initial riots were spontaneous, but after a few days the local population were generally coordinated and organized. Public order in Taiwanese-held areas was upheld by volunteer civilians organized by students, and unemployed former Japanese army soldiers. Local leaders formed a Settlement Committee, which presented the Chen Yi government with a list of 32 Demands for reform of the provincial administration. These included greater autonomy, free elections, surrender of the ROC Army to the Settlement Committee, and an end to governmental corruption. They also demanded representation in forthcoming peace treaty negotiations with Japan, hoping to secure a plebiscite to determine the island's political future.

Chen Yi played for time, pretending to be willing to listen to the peoples' demands and discuss them, while actually requesting urgent military assistance from the mainland. A large military force dispatched from Fujian province then arrived on March 8th, and launched an immediate crackdown as soon as the troops disembarked. In Taipei, Keelung and Kaohsiung there were several days of indiscriminate killing and looting, before the troops moved to other parts of the island for what would in all be a one-week long killing spree. Anyone seen on the streets was shot at, homes were broken into and occupants killed. There were instances of beheadings and mutilation of bodies, and women were raped. The port city of Keelung was particularly hard-hit; troops rounded up all able-bodied Taiwanese men they could find, chained them together and dumped them in the harbour, expecting the tide to carry their bodies away, which it didn't.

By the end of March, Chen Yi had ordered the imprisonment or execution of all the leading Taiwanese organizers he could identify. Modern-day estimates of the number of dead resulting from the 'incident' vary between 18,000 and over 28,000, but at the time the government's own official estimates varied between two and three. Quite some discrepancy. Unfortunately for those who hoped justice would come from outside, the United States - the KMT regime's biggest ally and the country that bankrolled it - was simply uninterested in finding fault with the Chinese Nationalists. America had won the war in the Pacific (and played an important role in the European theatre), and now they wanted to "win the peace", as Roosevelt had termed it. What reports of the atrocities allegedly taking place in Taiwan found their way to America were studiously ignored by those in power.

It wasn't until 1995 that the Taiwan government was able to (nearly) fully face up to the reality of the 2-28 Incident, and issue a public apology for it. In the ultimate twist of irony, the man who gave this apology was Lee Teng-hui, one of the victims, and his apology was vehemently opposed by many in the mainland immigrant community and regarded as a waste of time and focus by others. By this time, of course, the perpetrators of the massacre had nearly all died of natural causes

Back on the continent, the war between the Nationalists and the Communists had resumed after the end of WWII. Territory changed hands again and again, but the overall trend was a reduction in Nationalist-held territories and a progressive expansion of Communist-held territories. Throughout the months of 1949, a series of Chinese Communist offensives led to the capture of the ROC capital Nanjing and the subsequent defeat of the Nationalist army on the mainland, and the Communists founded the People's Republic of China on

October 1st of the same year.

On December 7th, 1949, after the loss of four capitals, Chiang evacuated his Nationalist government to Taiwan and made Taipei the 'provisional' capital of the ROC (also called the 'wartime capital'). Nearly 2 million people, consisting mainly of soldiers, KMT party members, intellectual and business elites, were evacuated from mainland China to Taiwan, adding to the existing population of approximately six million. In addition, the ROC government took to Taipei many national treasures and much of China's gold reserves and foreign currency reserves.

After losing most of the mainland, the KMT retained control of parts of Chinghai (Qinghai), Xinjiang (formerly East Turkestan), and Yunnan provinces along with Hainan Island until 1951 when the Communists finally captured these territories. From this point onwards, the KMT's territory was reduced to Taiwan, the Pescadores (now known as Penghu), and the Fujian province islands of Jinmen and the Matsu Islands. The KMT continued to claim sovereignty over all 'China', which it defined as including the entirety of mainland Chinese territory held by the Chinese Communists, Taiwan, the Republic of Mongolia (referred to as 'Outer Mongolia') and other minor areas. On mainland China, the victorious Communists claimed they ruled the sole and only China (which they claimed included Taiwan) and that the Republic of China no longer existed.

Chiang Kai-shek took his two sons with him to Taiwan, Wei-kuo and Ching-kuo.

Wei-kou, an adoptive son, trained with the Nazi Wehrmacht in the 1930s, and during the Chinese Civil War was in charge of an M4 Sherman tank battalion during the Huaihai Campaign against Mao Zedong's troops, scoring some early victories. From 1964 onward, Chiang Wei-kuo made preparations to establish a school dedicated in teaching warfare strategy and finally established this school in 1969. In 1975, Chiang Wei-kuo was further promoted to the position of general, and served as president of the Armed Forces University. In 1980, Chiang served as joint logistics commander in chief; then in 1986, he retired from the army, and became secretary-general of the National Security Council.

In 1993, Chiang Wei-kuo was employed as advisor of the president of the Republic of China. After Chiang Ching-kuo's death, Chiang was a political rival of native Taiwanese Lee Teng-hui, and he strongly opposed Lee's Taiwan localisation movement.

Ching-kuo was Chiang Kai-shek's chosen successor, and Wei-kou frequently expressed envy for this. In 1925, Ching-kuo went on to Moscow to study at a communist school, and it was in Moscow that he was given the Russian name Nikolai Vladimirovich Elizarov and put under the tutelage of Karl Radek at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East. Noted for having an exceptional grasp of international politics, Radek's classmates included other children of influential Chinese families, most notably the future Chinese Communist party leader, Deng Xiaoping. Soon Ching-kuo was an enthusiastic student of communist ideology, particularly Trotskyism. He even applied to be a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, although his request was denied.

After the 1927 Shanghai Massacre orchestrated by his father and the Green Gang, Chiang Ching-kuo wrote an editorial that harshly criticized his father's actions.

With Soviet Union and Nazi Germany credentials like these, it may seem hard to understand how the Chiang family could remain on such good terms with the United States. But from Washington's point of view, almost anything was preferable to the spectre of Mao's extreme form of communism.

The White Terror

The 'White Terror era' refers to the entire period from the aftermath of the 2-28 Incident in 1947 to July, 1987, when martial law ended. Around 140,000 Taiwanese were imprisoned during this period, and over 4,000 are known to have been executed by the Nationalist regime. However, several thousand more 'disappeared' and it has to be assumed that they were murdered too. It seems unlikely that so many people all decided to secretly go on holiday and liked their holiday destinations so much that they decided not to return.

However, most of the murders took place in the first decade or so. Most of those prosecuted were charged by the KMT as being 'bandit spies', meaning spies for the Chinese 'Communist Bandits' previously mentioned, now in control of that part of China constituting the other 97% of the ROC's territory. In fact, while Chinese Communist infiltration into Taiwan was a reality, it was dramatically exaggerated by the Nationalist regime, partly because the regime truly did live in fear of their conquerors, but partly because it was simply the most convenient excuse for removing potential opposition and requisitioning property held by native-born Taiwanese. Thus, if there wasn't any more specific charge to level

against a Taiwanese, he or she could always be charged with being a 'bandit spy'.

After the 2-28 Incident, the incoming regime was acutely conscious of the fact that any challenge to its authority on Taiwan could mean the end of the ROC in its entirety. This was something it simply could not risk.

The KMT imprisoned the majority of Taiwan's intellectual and social elite out of fear that they might resist KMT rule or sympathize with communism. For example, the Formosan League for Re-emancipation was a Taiwanese self-rule group established in 1947 which the KMT claimed to be under Communist control, leading to its members being arrested in 1950. The World United Formosans for Independence was persecuted for similar reasons. However, other prosecutions did not have such clear reasoning; in 1968 the writer Bo Yang was imprisoned for his choice of words in translating a Popeye comic strip. A significant number of the White Terror's other victims were actually mainland Chinese, many of whom owed their evacuation to Taiwan to the KMT. Often, after having come unaccompanied to Taiwan, these refugees to Taiwan were considered even more disposable than local Taiwanese. Many of the mainland Chinese who survived the White Terror in Taiwan, like the writers Bo Yang and Li Ao, moved on to promote Taiwan's democratization and the reform of the KMT.

In 1969, future president Lee Teng-hui was detained and interrogated for more than a week by the Taiwan Garrison Command who demanded to know about his "communist activities" and was allegedly told "killing you at this moment would be as easy as crushing an ant to death." Three years later he was invited to join the cabinet of Chiang Ching-kuo. Chiang realised that influential Taiwanese could be an asset to the KMT regime, and that in the long run the island would be ungovernable without the co-operation of the native-born population.

In 1972, relations between the PRC and Britain were normalised (Britain was one of the first countries to recognise the PRC, but this was rejected by Mao's China). The Cultural Revolution was still raging, but the Communist leadership's willingness to meet with Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger signaled a new beginning in foreign relations. Though normalisation of relations between Britain and China would ultimately lead to the agreement for Hong Kong’s return to Chinese rule a little over a decade later, in 1972 the British territory did not feature as a major element in the normalisation talks with Britain; rather Taiwan was the focus of Beijing's concern. The Communists wanted the closure of the British Consulate in Taiwan and commitment to the recognition of Taiwan as a part of the PRC.

In September, 1976, Mao died, and Hua Guofeng - Mao's chosen successor - took over as titular head of state. Zhou Enlai had died earlier the same year. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping, whose criticism of Mao's economic policies had got him jailed - and almost killed - re-emerged in CCP politics, supported by powerful factions of the Peoples' Liberation Army. Hua Guofeng's role as a mediocre, caretaker leader with little ability to rally support behind him, contrasted sharply with Deng Xiaoping's straight-talking, relatively ideology-free manner and his willingness to deal with economic realities. Diminutive in stature, he nevertheless shared Mao's ability to inspire confidence and loyalty in the people. To the great relief of the outside world - the Chinese were already well acquainted with him - he didn't share Mao's proclivity for organising self-destructive mass political movements.

In the aftermath of the Mao era on mainland China, economic reconstruction was the primary concern. There was little energy left available for unification policy. But with very little effort on its own part, the PRC was slowly forcing the island into diplomatic isolation as more and more states recognised the Communists as China's legitimate government. Deng Xiaoping's overtures to Chiang Ching-kuo, through secret envoys (the few politicians or statesmen who enjoyed good relations with both sides, like Singapore's Lee Kuan Yao), fell on deaf ears. The Nationalist government still refused to refer to Beijing's regime as anything other than 'Communist bandits', and saw no reason why it should ever compromise with them.

As for Taiwan's relations with other states in the 1970s, the ROC represented China at the UN until 1971, when it lost its seat to the PRC. Although the Cold War was at its height at this time, the PRC was not only successful in gaining the diplomatic recognition of other communist states; more and more capitalist countries were recognising the Peoples' Republic as China too. One by one, they 'abandoned' Taiwan, and the ROC government organised 'spontaneous demonstrations of the people' outside embassies of major countries like the United States.

However, the seemingly massive victory of America's recognition of the Peoples' Republic in January, 1980, ebbed away with the passage of the Taiwan Relations Act in Washington shortly afterwards. This act enabled the US to continue to treat Taiwan as a separate entity from Communist China, and obliged America to help the island protect itself. China's focus of ‘unification’ then turned to Hong Kong.

Another Formosan Incident

The most significant public disturbance since the February 28th Incident of 1947 occurred over three decades later in the island's second city, Kaohsiung, in December 1979, and it became known as the Kaohsiung Incident, or the Formosa Incident.

The incident occurred when *Formosa Magazine*, headed by a non-party legislator named Huang Shin-chieh and other non-party activists held a demonstration commemorating Human Rights Day in an effort to promote and demand democracy in Taiwan. Two years earlier, Huang and a fellow politician had established the 'dangwai' (literally 'outside the party', meaning non-party) movement, a loosely- knit association intended to promote democracy, political change and due process of law, which would eventually coalesce into the Democratic Progressive Party.

The Nationalist authorities had never allowed any such public expression of discontent before and it seemed like a reckless invitation for arrest and imprisonment. On the afternoon of that day (four hours before the demonstration commemorating Human Rights Day started, and before any irregularities had taken place), the military police, the army, and the police had already taken up positions in preparation. When the event took place during the evening, the military police marched forward and closed in on the demonstrators, then they retreated again to their original positions. This was repeated two or more times. The battalion commander explained that the purpose of this exercise was to cause panic and fear in the crowd and also to provoke anger and confusion.

The KMT authorities used the incident as an excuse to arrest virtually all known opponents to one-party rule. They were held incommunicado for some two months, during which reports of severe ill-treatment filtered out of the prisons.

In February 1980 Lin Yi-hsiung, a leader of the nascent democracy movement, was in detention and beaten severely by KMT police. His wife saw him in prison and contacted Amnesty International's Japanese office. The next day Lin's mother and twin 7-year-old daughters were stabbed to death. Lin's oldest daughter was badly wounded in his home. The authorities claimed to know nothing about it, even though his house was under 24-hour police surveillance.

In March and April of the following year, the eight most prominent Kaohsiung Incident leaders, named 'The Kaohsiung Eight' were tried in a military court and were sentenced to terms ranging from 12 years to life imprisonment. Another group of 33 people, 'The Kaohsiung 33', who had taken part in the Human

Rights Day gathering were tried in a civil court and sentenced to terms ranging from two to six years. A third group of 10 people who were associated with the Presbyterian Church, which hid the activist Shih Ming-teh (pronounce the 't' as a 'd'), were sentenced to lesser sentences, apart from the church's general-secretary, who was given seven years imprisonment. Shih was given a life sentence, and his wife, Linda Arrigo, a United States citizen, was deported.

Fifteen of Taiwan's most important political leaders, writers and intellectuals, all associated with *Formosa Magazine*, were arrested. Fifteen publications were closed down, including Formosa Magazine. After the event, newspapers reported that the ensuing confrontations led to civilian and police injuries.

Chen Shui-bien, a future ROC president, became accidentally involved in politics in 1980 when he defended the participants of the Kaohsiung Incident in a military court. While his client Huang Hsin-chieh, a leading opposition dissident, and seven co-defendants, including his future vice president Annette Lu, were all found guilty, Chen came to be known for his forceful arguments, and claims the experience is what motivated him to further efforts against the one-party state.

Apart from the Kaohsiung Incident, instances of open and public opposition to the party's rule were few and far between. Most people, including all those who had loved ones killed in the massacre that followed the 2-28 Incident and in the years following it, suffered in silence. Discussing such matters, or questioning their official interpretations was an invitation to put yourself and your family in serious danger. Often, as in the case of Lin Yi-hsiung, the authorities would take action against relatives, so that those reckless enough to not care less about their own lives would think twice about bringing harm upon their relatives (these tactics have been employed throughout all Chinese dynasties and into the modern era).

I noticed the unwillingness to discuss political matters among the friends and English students I had in the last years of martial law who were keen political debaters when they knew that everybody present was trustworthy. If there was the presence of anybody they were not familiar with, they would suddenly clam up and lose all interest in talking about anything relating to Taiwan's politics/

Illustration 1: The remains of Baimiweng (known locally as Fort Dutch), one of many cannon emplacements on the north coast of Taiwan, built by successive occupying forces to repel their rival military forces.

Illustration 2: Tsou tribe aboriginals, with their hunting weaponry. The Tsou live mainly in the central southern region of Taiwan. The photo was taken around the turn of the 20th century during a Japanese anthropological study (photo by Ryuzo Torii, Japanese anthropologist and archaeologist). Image in the public domain according to both Japanese and ROC copyright law).

Illustration 3: Two semi-Sinicised members of the Tsarisen (Rukai) tribe, which is found mainly in the far south of Taiwan. Notice the Chinese-style jacket worn by the man on the left. The person on the right is wearing the skin of a clouded leopard, which is now thought to have been hunted to extinction in Taiwan (photo by Ryuzo Torii, image in the public domain according to both Japanese and ROC copyright law).

Illustration 4: A Taiwanese adolescent in Japanese kendo uniform during the later years of the Japanese colonial-rule era. The boy is Lee Teng-hui, who would later become Taiwan's first democratically elected president.

Illustration 5: Left: Entrance to the Presidential Offices in central Taipei, originally the administrative building of the Japanese Taiwan Governor-General. Built in 1918, it has served as the seat of power for every ruler in Taiwan since. Right: The tomb of the so-called ‘King of Shanghai’, Du Yue-sheng, in New Taipei’s Xizhe district. Du’s Green Gang operated with impunity inside and outside Shanghai’s International Concession. His co-operation with the KMT, particularly in the 1927 Shanghai massacre of Communists ensured Chiang Kai-shek’s rise to power.

Illustration 6: Sons of Chiang Kai-shek, with their wives in about 1950. Future president, Chiang Ching-kuo stands on the left. Chiang Wei-kuo, a military man trained by the Nazi German Wehrmacht, stands on the right (photographer unknown, image in the public domain according to ROC copyright law).

PART TWO: POLITICAL CHANGE

Chapter One: Big Brothers are Watching You

I can think of no better way to introduce the political circumstances of Taiwan in the last year and a half of martial law (1986-July 1987) than to simply relate my own experiences living and working in Taipei. After arriving in the capital, I stayed at a hostel named the Happy Families in Zhongshan North Road, and found English teaching work at several schools specialising in teaching 'conversation' classes to adults. After a month or two at the Happy Families, I moved out to live with my Taiwanese girlfriend, Michelle.

It seems, in retrospect, that I was fortunate to gain a great deal of insight into the political circumstances in Taiwan during the last two years of Chiang Ching-kuo's rule (and life), particularly through one of my English students, who went by the English name of Denny. However, it has to be said that not all of these insights were particularly welcome at the time.

From my first meeting with Denny Ho, I sensed there was something amiss. Like most of the other students at the International Fellowship Center (IFC), one of three English schools where I taught '\conversation classes, his English was good. All he really needed was daily practice to bring it as close to 'native speaker' level as it ever would be. And that's exactly what Denny was at IFC for. But it wasn't the only thing he was there for. He did have an ulterior motive, and as his charade could not be as sophisticated when rendered in English as it would have been in Chinese, this was almost immediately apparent to me.

The KMT had been quick to recognise that university campuses were places of open ideas and thought and the practice of hiring student informants in classes to inform the Taiwan Garrison Command of any students discussing issues that could have been seen as a threat to the KMT was well known to local students, but not to me. This practise was never actually admitted by the pary, but

government documents released in 2019 revealed that the party employed over 400 such informant across Taiwan (as late as 2021, a DDP politician bowed out of the party with the admission that he had once been a KMT spy). The IFC was not a university; it was an English school. But it was an English school of a special kind. Due to its location close to the corner of Hoping East Road and Jienguo South Road, more than half its students were also students at either one of two nearby universities; National Taiwan University (Taida) or National Taiwan Normal University (Shida), and some of the remaining English students were also university students at other universities more distant. Although I was unaware at the time of the party's practice of spying on students, Denny's inept spy work alerted me to the fact that he was not all as he tried to give the impression of being.

Denny was two or three years older than me; about 28 or 29 years old in 1986. Generally, he wore a dark jacket and open-necked shirt, and didn't wear glasses, which put him in a small minority among intellectuals in Taiwan where the majority of all people over the age of 12 needed them. He spoke in rather measured terms, which didn't seem to be entirely due to lack of confidence at using a foreign language; rather, he liked to be absolutely clear and precise to avoid misunderstandings. He wore a slight smile most of the time, which seemed almost to be pasted on.

Throughout my association with this character, he was consistently guarded about his own background, while at the same time demonstrating a remarkable degree of interest in the personal details of other people, both local students and foreign teachers (as all the teachers at IFC were). Even his family name was not divulged directly to me in conversation; I only learnt it because Alison - a friend of my girlfriend, Michelle - was at that time responsible for taking tuition fees and she referred to him by his full (English) name; presumably because he had given his full name at registration. As for the name Denny, 'English' names were not (and still are not) mandatory or fixed for Taiwan citizens. They may change their foreign names as often as they change their clothes, if they so desire. So, there's no way of knowing whether Denny had used this English name all his life, or just since he registered at the IFC.

But Denny was extremely interested in knowing my girlfriend's name. "Michelle", I told him, intending to leave it at that.

"No, no, I mean what is her Chinese name?"

"Oh, I wouldn't like to try pronouncing that," I replied, "I just call her Michelle."

This was the truth. I had been in Taiwan a little over a month; just long enough to know that English transliterations of place names and people's names were often so inaccurate that I didn't like to voice any name out loud that I hadn't actually already heard local people pronounce.

"Well, how do you write her Chinese name, in English?" Denny asked. I found this to be a very strange question. Why did he want to know the spelling? But that was not the reason I avoided telling him. I genuinely did not know the exact spelling off-hand.

"Oh, but you must find out! Ask her how she writes her name in English, and tell me next class," Denny insisted.

"What for?" I asked. Our interactions up to this point had been very amiable, but I didn't feel like leaving Denny with the idea that I would give him this information next class, as I had no intention of finding out how Michelle wrote her Chinese name in English for no good reason.

"Oh, we Chinese attach a lot of importance to names, you know. We can know a lot of things from your girlfriend's name, such as whether or not she is suitable for you!"

His explanation oozed disingenuousness and insincerity, and I felt he had made it up on the spot. Despite this, and despite that fact that he even asked exactly where my girlfriend lived (again, I genuinely didn't know the exact street number; I had never memorised it), I may possibly have brushed off these intrusive questions and thought nothing more of them. But what happened next made that impossible.

I left the building the IFC was located in, and began walking in the direction of my girlfriend's flat, 10 or 15 minutes walk away on the same road, Hoping East Road. The doctor's surgery Michelle worked at as a nursing assistant broke for a long lunch of three hours, as many do in Taiwan, and we would always meet up at this time, as schools like the IFC also had no classes at lunchtime. However, while passing a bookstore, I noticed a rack of English-language newspapers and magazines at the far end of the store, and decided to take a closer look. Both the two local English-language newspapers, the *China Post* and the *China News*, consisted merely of two folded sheets, making a total of eight pages of very basic, heavily censored news. Like most of the foreign national English teachers and Chinese students I knew, I felt somewhat starved of outside news.

At one point, while perusing these English publications, by chance I turned my

head to glance back in the direction of the shop's open entrance, and to my surprise saw Denny on the other side of the street, riding his scooter at a snail's pace while scanning the street visually from left to right as if looking for something. Suddenly, I realised what it was he was looking for: me! I kept myself out of sight and moved only slowly towards the shop entrance, feigning interest in other publications to keep out of Denny's line of sight. By the time I stepped out onto the street, Denny was just a couple of hundred metres further down the street, still apparently searching. I felt a strong sense of foreboding. Could it be, as I suspected, that Denny was actually trying to follow me in order to find out where my girlfriend lived, and if so, why was he doing this? What possible reason was there for trying to find out where my girlfriend lived and her precise identity? Certainly, he didn't strike me as some kind of sexual deviant, but rather than that making me feel at ease, it had the opposite effect. So, assuming this information was not for Denny himself, who was it for and what would they do with it?

But I could not be entirely sure he had been following me without trying the same routine again. The following morning, at the end of morning class at IFC, Denny asked me where I was taking lunch? I told him I would be meeting my girlfriend shortly and he pretended disappointment that we couldn't take lunch together. "Maybe tomorrow, if you're taking morning class?" I suggested.

"OK", Denny agreed, and we both made to leave (as there were no classes during lunch hour, Denny really had to leave anyway). Fortunately, I entered the lift to the ground floor a few moments before Denny tried to, and it was too full to take Denny and the others waiting with him. I needed a couple of minutes to get ahead of him, and I had got it. What happened next was a repeat performance of the previous day's circumstances, with the exception that this time I was not in the bookstore by accident, and I also felt a lot more nervous about my deliberate attempts to stay out of sight.

But all went smoothly, and confirmed to me beyond reasonable doubt that Denny was deliberately going to some lengths to find out where my girlfriend lived. I kept Denny in my line of sight as far away as possible, so that if he suddenly backtracked, I would be able to dive down an alley before he had a chance to see me. I related all this to Michelle when I a finally got to her flat above the doctor's surgery, and even suggested we not take lunch outside (there was nothing in the flat in the way of food) for a further 20 minutes or so, as I suspected Denny may still be in the vicinity. Michelle told me I had to avoid talking about politics when Denny was present in my class or within earshot.

I didn't like the suggestion. "I don't care less what Denny thinks about my politics," I protested, "I don't have any secrets; I'll say whatever I like, whether he's there or not!"

"You have to think about your students, not just yourself", Michelle insisted. "If you encourage some student to say something that makes Denny think he's a communist, or that he supports Taiwan independence, then Denny will note that, and the student is in big trouble…He doesn't really have to openly support Taiwan independence, just say something that makes Denny think he is sympathetic, or even that he doesn't support the KMT."

I paused to think over what she was saying. "What do you mean, the student would be in big trouble?" I finally asked. "What kind of trouble?"

Michelle went on to explain that this would depend on who the student was, what their background was, what they wanted to do in life, and exactly what they had said. I asked her to give me some examples, and she did. She told me a student from a good family background, especially a mainland Chinese family with a history of party support would get off lightly. Other students would encounter problems, especially if they didn't recant their views.

What kind of problems, I asked? I was more than a little dubious of her assertions.

"Well, for example, if they wanted to go abroad to study, they wouldn't get a passport, at least not until they showed that they had changed their views. Or, if they wanted to study on a master's degree here in Taiwan, they would find no university willing to accept them.'

'C'mon, that's up to the university", I said, finding Michelle's notions of the reach of the party's tentacles hard to accept, and a little naive. I told her as much, but she insisted it was I who was being naive. There was only one political party in Taiwan, she pointed out, and every university principal was loyal to it. Some university principals were even important figures in government. If they were told not to accept a student, they wouldn't.

She went on to claim that at the other end of the extreme, a student who didn't have a good family background, especially a native Taiwanese, would get much more forceful reminders to change his views. And if they didn't, 'accidents' might be arranged.

She gave as an example, the case of a local farmer from her own home village in

southern Taiwan who had repeatedly claimed publicly that a local KMT politician was corrupt. Until that was, a van crashed into his wife and daughter on their way home from school, putting his wife in a wheelchair and killing his daughter.

These ‘accidents’ always looked like they could really be genuine accidents, so the party was always able to deny having anything to do with them.

Maybe the incident she had related really had been an accident, I suggested, always keen to play devil’s advocate. Michelle then told me then about the case of a Taiwanese professor, Chen Wen-chen, working in the United States who had openly advocated Taiwan independence while in America. He had returned to Taiwan a few years previously and committed suicide. The party had suggested smugly that he probably felt guilty of his unpatriotic crimes and killed himself.

“Well, maybe he really *did* commit suicide!” I insisted.

“Maybe he really did. But I can tell you, if the party didn’t want him dead, he wouldn’t have ‘committed suicide'. They are experts in making ‘accidents’ and ’suicides’ happen, so that naive people will still believe they really are accidents or suicides, and that the party would never to such things. Too many anti-KMT activists end up committing suicide or in fatal accidents.” She paused, then added that the party doesn’t always do the actual ‘dirty work’, triads often did it for them.

At the time, all this sent me into a depressed mood. I knew there had to be some truth in what Michelle was telling me, though I hoped that what she claimed was an exaggeration. I knew that such things happened, especially in one-party states where the party did not want to have to contend with competition and threats to its vested interests. But I hoped that no such things really happened in Taiwan, the place I wanted to make my base for work and for future travels in the region. It wouldn’t be until many years later that I would come to know a triad hitman who claimed to have killed about a dozen Taiwanese abroad, several of them for ‘political crimes’.

I decided to befriend Denny, rather than let him jump to conclusions about me that may be to my detriment. I felt that I had no secrets, and though Denny was obviously to some extent brainwashed, he did not seem to be an unreasonable man. At the time, my Chinese was not good enough to carry out discussions on political issues in any depth, but this was to my advantage. I was certain I could argue all my political views in English and see off any challenges to them, even

from a native English speaker, let alone from a non-native speaker.

I also assumed that Denny's interest was not so much in my political views as those of the local people I may be interacting with. I decided that I would not lead him to any other people - such as my girlfriend - that he didn't already have 'access' to on his own, and in this I was successful. If he was secretly 'investigating' me, I thought this might be on suspicion that I was a communist (this was still several years before the collapse of the Soviet Union, and there was no sign that communism as an ideology was doing anything other than expanding inexorably).

What I didn't know was that he actually suspected me of being a British spy. Before the 18 months or so of our association was over, Denny would admit as much to me. He was not well-informed enough to know that British intelligence did not recruit people from educational backgrounds like mine, and when I told him this, he took it with a pinch of salt. But in fact, it would be over a decade later before British intelligence decided it would be in its own interests to recruit spies who didn't all come from similar upper-class backgrounds.

Denny was not the kind of person to throw caution to the wind in conversation, no matter how inebriated he was. But he liked to drink, and occasionally after a drink or two he would sometimes let his guard down. The first time this happened was when a group of perhaps 10 or 12 IFC students and teachers went out together for a meal after class. The occasion was the eve of the 1986 Dragon Boat Festival, so that was our excuse for celebration, and the location was a newly-opened restaurant and bar on Xinhai Road, near Taida. The only other teacher apart from myself was a newly-arrived, slim, intellectual-looking American; the rest were all students.

We were all sat at the same long table, with me at one end, and Denny next to me. The American - I can no longer remember his name - was at the other end of the table, but within earshot of us as several of the students closer to him asked questions about his life in the United States and his study of Chinese there.

Denny could hear all these questions, and paid such close attention to them that he ignored several unrelated comments I made to him. "CIA!" Denny suddenly told me in a kind of stifled exclamation. "CIA! I knew it. I knew it just to look at him!"

"CIA?" I repeated.

Denny was speaking forcefully, but carefully; he didn't want others to hear.

“CIA. For sure,” Denny told me, keeping his voice down. “Nobody learns to speak Chinese like that in six months at an ordinary language school, as he claims.”

“So, how come he has?” I asked.

“CIA! Like I just told you. They have the best language training, much better than any private language school.”

I snickered, treating his suggestion with the disdain I thought it deserved. “C’mon, Denny, you’re paranoid. What on Earth would the CIA be wasting it’s time sending people to Taipei language schools for? He’s just an English teacher.”

Denny looked at me squarely, and spoke in his usual, more measured terms: “You’re very naive,” he told me. “Yes, he is an English teacher, of course. Did I say he wasn't an English teacher? But he is also a spy, for the CIA.”

I laughed again, but did not contend his claim. I couldn’t say that it had a ring of truth about it. But the way Denny put his claim to me made it seem like a possibility. I couldn’t imagine that all spies were James Bond-type secret agents who did nothing else. But I also couldn’t resist the obvious question: “How do you know all this, Denny?” Naturally, he did not reply.

This was one of several times that Denny let his guard down in the year-and-a-half or so that I knew him. I should point out that in between, there could be weeks of conversation in which he didn’t even hint that he was anything else but an English student.

Obviously, that the American was a CIA agent was not something a regular English-language student would be concerned about, and certainly none of the other students present at the restaurant that evening were even thinking about such a possibility, let alone talking about it. In doing so, Denny had revealed - once again - that he was not an ordinary student. As Denny came to know me, and came to realise that I was neither a British spy, as he had originally suspected, nor a communist, he cared progressively less that I was aware he was not a regular student. After all, knowing this had not made me attempt to avoid him, and that may also have been a reassurance in itself. My value to Denny was that I knew a lot of highly suspect people, locals and foreigners.

The People We Work With

I had known Denny for close to half a year before I even discovered that he was not - as I had assumed - a Taipei-born mainlander (or '*waishenren*'). On that occasion, I was with Denny and a fellow IFC English teacher, Marc, an Englishman who had only been in Taiwan for three weeks, taking Chinese language classes at National Taiwan Normal University's Mandarin Training Center as I had originally.

Marc was a tall, dark-haired, pale-faced 20-year old Brit from Bristol on a 'gap year' that he had decided to take after his university foundation year (or freshman year for Americans), in order to get some practical experience of living in a real foreign language environment before continuing on a degree course in Asian languages. Though he probably hoped to learn something of the culture of Taiwan, or rather China as the island then claimed to be, I doubt if he expected to get the crash course in the realities of life in Taiwan that he got.

We were on the first floor (the second floor for Americans, and Taiwanese) of a newly-opened beer house on Taipei's Anho Road. The establishment had a rather unique design and had opened in an area where competition would be intense. There were three other beer houses within 100 metres and two of them were well established and popular. Nevertheless, the atmosphere on the first floor, where we took a table, was almost festive. Every other table was occupied, and it seemed we were lucky to even get one.

No sooner had we sat down to our drinks, and Denny's now-familiar (to me, at least) routine of fishing around for personal information got underway with Marc, than two scruffy-looking local teenagers walked in. At first, they were hardly noticed. But then one of them swept an array of ornaments off the shelf they had been standing on, which instantly got everybody's attention.

The same scruffy teenager then addressed the entire room in Taiwanese. People were looking at the two of them with some trepidation and the loud conversation of a few minutes previously had dropped to a murmur.

I asked Denny if he knew what was going on? At this time, in the mid-1980s, it was common for second-generation mainlanders to have some grasp of basic Taiwanese. But more often than not, this was no more than a passive, listening-oriented ability. When it came to speaking, it was rare to find second-generation mainlanders fluent in Taiwanese (and, of course, even rarer for first-generation mainlanders).

"They are telling us all to leave, because they are about to smash the place up."

“What?!” I exclaimed. I was surprised that some people had actually stood up and seemed to be ready to leave.

I was not about to comply with such a demand. I also stood up, and pointing at the two local kids to attract their attention, then instructed Denny to tell them that we were staying. And if they touched anything on our table, I would personally put both of them in hospital! I tried to make my intention clear through gestures, and hoped Denny had enough basic Taiwanese to get my message across. I was not about to be turfed out by a couple of skinny 16-year olds.

To my great surprise, instead of seeing Denny fumble through some clumsy sentences of ‘mainlander Taiwanese’, he spoke to them both in apparently fluent Taiwanese. Denny’s speech came with a flurry of apologetic gestures, throwing his hands up, waving one hand towards me and Marc, and patting the two teenagers on the shoulders.

By the time Denny had finished talking to them, the steam seemed to have entirely gone out of these two kids who a few minutes ago were bent on smashing the place up. They were smiling and nodding. After a few more moments, and some hand-shaking, they quietly left, one even smiling and nodding in my direction as he left.

Everybody returned to their drinks and meals and the atmosphere gradually returned to normal. A couple of customers complimented Denny’s handling of the situation, and there were smiles all around.

“What on Earth happened?” Marc asked me. I didn’t want to admit it to him, but I had hardly any more idea of what had happened than he did. Rather than say as much, I turned to Denny, and commented: “Denny! I’m surprised. Your Taiwanese is so fluent!”

Denny was to some extent basking in the attention he had brought to himself, and spoke more freely than usual: “Yes, of course I speak Taiwanese. I grew up down south, so I learned the local dialect from childhood.”

“Really!” I was genuinely surprised. The waishenren population at that time was concentrated in Taipei city, where they constituted almost half the population, and beyond that there were only significant populations in the satellite towns of Danshui and Keelung, in Taoyuan, Taichung, and in Kaohsiung. Elsewhere, waishenren constituted only a tiny percentage of the population, so I was very curious as to where exactly ’down south’ Denny came from. But before I could

ask him, Marc asked who those kids were?

“They’re from a local gang,” Denny explained. “They came to smash up the place because the bar owner would not pay them protection money. We don’t normally work with this group; usually we work only with the Union. But, still, my superior knows their boss and is now on good terms with him. I told them that, and also that he would be very disappointed if we gave a bad impression to you foreign guests. I told them my superior is also a friend of yours!”

“Wow!” Marc was awe-struck. But he was also curious: “Who is your superior, Denny? And who’s the Union”

I knew that “the Union” meant the Bamboo Union, the mainland Chinese triad that had integrated itself into the KMT and carried out much of their dirty work. Another IFC student, Frank, had told me about the Bamboo Union with respect to Henry Liu, a writer and journalist from Taiwan and a vocal critic of the party. Even though Liu was a naturalized citizen of the United States, and living in California, he was murdered by Union members who had reportedly been trained by ROC military intelligence. The triad’s tentacles reached deep within the party, and the party’s tentacles deep within the triad. For my own part, I was not so interested in hearing about the triad connection and a lot more curious as to whether Denny considered himself to ‘be’ from down south, or just to have ‘grown up’ down south, as he had said. The former indicated that he had Taiwanese parents, the latter that he had mainland Chinese parents. “Where exactly ‘down south’ are you from, Denny?” I asked.

“From a small town; you don’t know it.” Then, Denny continued to answer without saying anything, as per his usual style: “In the south of Taiwan,” he smiled blandly, “most people speak Taiwanese primarily, and Mandarin secondarily - the opposite from here in Taipei.”

I could see Denny was aware that he had already been far too revealing about his own background. Now he was back to normal, giving very little away with a lot a words.

The Only Way

On my birthday, in September (1986), along with Denny and several other IFC students, I went a local bar called AC-DC on Roosevelt Road. The bar was very popular with the then small number of foreign nationals living in Taipei,

especially those young people learning Chinese and teaching English. Going there almost certainly meant meeting someone I knew, and Denny also knew this, which I felt was why he was keen to accompany me.

We sat at one of the bar's wooden tables, and Denny ordered beers for all of us - we were all males, and it was assumed, all beer drinkers. I realised that this whole thing was going to be a little difficult for the other three students present. Two had already been mutually acquainted at Taida before becoming IFC students, and all three were keen political debaters at IFC when Denny was not around. The two freshman National Taiwan University students seemed to realise - though I couldn't be sure - that Denny was not to be trusted, and certainly must have wondered why I wanted to have someone like him around while celebrating my birthday. I did not want to involve them in a discussion that they may regret, and Michelle's warnings came back to me.

The other student was a second-generation mainlander, previously mentioned, who went by the English name of Frank. He would later become my landlord. Like Denny, he was a good few years older than the others, at about 28 or 29 years old. The problem was, Frank normally talked about almost nothing else but politics, and like Denny, was very proficient in English. I could not imagine a whole evening going by without him talking politics, and this was worrisome. Being from a good mainland family would certainly give him greater leeway in talking about politics, but I was concerned it would not be enough. Frank never shied away from talking about Taiwan independence, the KMT-Bamboo Union connection, or Chiang Kai-shek's unsavoury past, so I was already wondering how to keep discussion away from such topics by the time we took our seats.

Unfortunately, it turned out to be all but impossible to avoid. Someone had scrawled the words "Taiwan Independence - It's The Only Way!" on our tabletop with a thick black felt pen. Our eyes could hardly avoid it. Finally, as the bargirl delivered our beers and placed them on the tabletop for us, I read the sentence out loud, as if I had just noticed it.

Denny snorted with derision. "Yes, Taiwan independence is the only way," he responded with obvious disgust. "The only way to war!"

I smiled, but left the topic there, hoping it would burn out by itself. But Denny's ire had been stoked: "This is the only reason the Chinese Communists would go to war with us now," Denny exclaimed, his voice rising as if he were giving a public address. "So, it's correct; Taiwan independence is the only way - the only way to war." He was pointing to the words on the table as if they constituted a living adversary that he was ready to do battle with.

“But Taiwan wants to take the mainland back anyway, doesn’t it?” I suggested. “Why should Taiwan care what the Chinese Communists think?” At that time, the phrase '*fangung bi sheng*' (meaning 'Victory against the Communists is certain') was to be seen in the form of giant elevated metal characters everywhere within about 500 metres of the presidential offices.

“We don’t need to go to war for no reason. Of course, we hope to re-take control of the mainland, but if this happens at all it will be through rebellion on the mainland, giving us the opportunity to step in and take control.” He used his hands to illustrate the process. “Why should we invite the criminals there to attack the criminals here?”

This last question or comment eluded me completely. “What do you mean, ‘invite the criminals there to attack the criminals here’?” I asked. I was a little slow, thinking along the lines of real criminals; robbers and rapists.

“Communism is a crime,” Denny told me in all seriousness, “and supporting Taiwan independence is also a crime. But supporting Taiwan independence is the more serious crime. We should not let the Communist Bandits there imagine that we here are all criminals, and give them an excuse to attack us!” Denny threw up his arms, to emphasise how unreasonable he considered the whole notion to be. “We are all Chinese! We are all part of the same family.”

I smiled at the other students. At least now Denny’s opinions were out in the open, and they would be wary of contradicting them. But Denny didn’t stop there. Looking again at the dreadful writing scrawled on the table, he said, almost to himself: “I wish I knew who wrote this.”

I could hardly resist. “I know!” I announced, and almost immediately regretted it. It was a joke, based on the fact that Denny thought I knew everybody at AC-DC.

For the next 10 or 15 minutes I had to work hard to convince Denny that I had only been joking. Finally, he was willing to leave it at that, as long as I understood that as a law-abiding ‘foreign guest’, it was my duty to report it to the police if I ever saw someone - local or foreigner - writing something like these words.

“Now you can see,” Denny told all of us, waving his hands at the offensive words, “why the police have to keep such a close eye on bars like this.”

I was about to comment that I was a regular at AC-DC, and had been for many months, and I had never noticed any police officers there. But then the thought

struck me that I was perhaps sitting next to one. I had assumed up to that point that Denny was either working directly for the party, or working for the Garrison Command, but it was equally possible he was an undercover policeman. I knew by this time that the party's dirty work was not always carried out by triads; often it was the police or the military police, who 'put the boot in', sometimes with fatal results. Ultimately, of course, the party controlled everything, so to some extent it was an academic question which organ of administration carried out the brutality, or whether it was 'outsourced' to criminal organisations. But anyway, thinking that perhaps Denny was a member of some kind of police unit, I let the comment drop.

Suddenly I remembered that Frank was a keen chess player. I challenged him to a game. The loser, I suggested, would be liable to buy a round of drinks for the five of us. He accepted gladly, the offensive words were conveniently covered up by the chessboard, and we had seven keenly-watched games, all of which Frank lost! I knew Frank to be a good player and the only way I could understand all the mistakes he made was that other things were occupying his mind, despite all his attempts to concentrate on the game - and of course, I knew also what those things were. But, anyway, the chessboard, the rivalry, and the beers succeeded in turning the evening into a pleasant one.

The Criminal Party

The next meeting - weeks later, I should add - at which Denny apparently inadvertently revealed his own political views while rummaging around in other peoples' was at a new bar popular with foreign residents called Roxy, close to Shida (National Normal University), and run by the same manager as AC-DC.

Denny took the initiative to invite a newly-arrived Chinese-language student from the United States who had just had her first experience as an English teacher at IFC. The bar was only a short walking distance from the IFC, so Denny, myself, Julie (the new teacher) and five other students walked there. Generally, there were always several other students keen to accompany teachers to a restaurant or bar after class as this represented a further opportunity for English practice!

Denny began attempting to bring Julie's political views into the open, presumably to be sure she wasn't a communist. That wasn't difficult as Julie was obviously a democratically-minded young American without any reason to pretend otherwise. Or, at least she probably assumed there was no reason to

pretend otherwise. Taiwan's 'Free China' propaganda was very effective overseas, and probably nowhere more so than in the United States. I could sense that with Denny's prodding, Julie felt pressured to make it clear that she has chosen to study in Taiwan rather than the PRC because she favoured living in a "free, democratic, society." At the end of what virtually amounted to a speech in favour of democratic values, Denny smiled: "Very good, very good," he murmured. A hint of disdain was clearly visible in his smirk.

It wasn't clear to me if Denny meant her views were very good or her delivery of them was. But then, he continued with something which must have left Julie completely confused, for she surely assumed all people in 'Free China' were committed to democratic values; this was the message publications like *Time* were constantly trying to put across to the American public. "So, you're another of those great Western democracy warriors, just like Alix here," he said, patting me on the shoulders. "You think democracy is the answer to everything, don't you?"

"Well, not everything, no," Julie responded after a moment, sounding a lot less sure than she had a few minutes earlier. "But...Taiwan is democratic isn't it? That's better than communism."

"Well, Taiwan's not really fully democratic yet," I put in with a laugh. "It's only had an opposition party for three weeks, and it's still not legal!"

Less than a month earlier, the Democratic Progressive Party had been formed at a meeting of a group of anti-KMT activists at a local hotel. I already knew the fact that they had been allowed to do this without arrest was a cause of great concern and dissatisfaction for Denny. He considered it the gravest of mistakes the party had made in recent years.

"Yes, yes, he's right!" Denny said to Julie, throwing up his arms. "If that's what you call democracy, having a band of criminals say and do anything they like, we have only had that situation for a few weeks. Some of the people in this so-called new political party are convicted criminals. They have not renounced their support for Taiwan independence, and yet we allow them to walk free and openly oppose the government, which has done so much for this country..."

Julie was obviously taken aback by the strength of Denny rebuttal of Taiwan's latest developments in the direction of democracy, and the other students quickly fell silent too. Nobody now was in any doubt as to whether it was safe to express political opinions.

Denny went on: “Democracy may be fine in America. But every country is different, and democracy is not suitable for China. If and when China is ready for opposition parties, those parties must openly commit themselves to supporting the ROC constitution and opposing separatism!”

“Well, nobody seems to want to stop these criminals, Denny”, I suggested, “maybe you’re in a minority.”

I was probing to see if he really felt that to be the case. A month or so earlier, unbeknownst to Denny, I had met a number of supporters of the nascent opposition party, that was now calling itself the ‘Democratic Progressive Party’. I was very tempted to reveal that fact, and was considering whether or not I should, based on Denny’s response.

On that occasion I had been invited to a party after class by an IFC student I didn’t know well. When I got there, I found almost all the other people had something or other to do with the new opposition party. I fell into conversation with a Chinese-American girl named Anita, who had come to Taiwan ostensibly to study Mandarin Chinese, but also to help bring “freedom and democracy” (her words) to the island. She had met a woman named Linda Arrigo back in the United States, and it was her who had inspired Anita to “do something positive” for Taiwan.

As mentioned in the previous section, Arrigo was the wife of Shih Ming-teh, a political activist who had set up a study group called the Taiwan Independence League in 1962. Originally, he been sentenced to life imprisonment for trying to overthrow the Nationalist government, but had finally been released in 1977. After marrying American researcher Arrigo, he played a part in organising the pro-democracy rally which became known as the Kaohsiung Incident in 1979, and was again arrested and sentenced to life in prison. A couple of years previously, in 1984, he had gained some more international attention when the Polish politician and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Lech Walesa had nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize. For the KMT, this international attention and Shih's American wife was an embarrassment, and it also meant Shih couldn't easily be dealt with through the traditional means. But all this, In Anita's opinion (and this was backed up by several others I spoke to), was about to change. She claimed there was a reformist clique within the government, who genuinely wanted to see a transformation to a multi-party system, and that the president would not oppose this.

Knowing Denny, and having met many others who would support his political views, I felt this overly-optimistic prognosis to be highly dubious. To some

extent, I probably also put Anita's views down to her lack of experience; she had only been in Taiwan a couple of weeks. I felt she would slowly discover that things of a political nature don't change that quickly in Taiwan, although I didn't say as much. And yet, no more than two weeks later, the DDP was established without hindrance.

Of course, in a dictatorship like Taiwan's, it would make no difference whether there were reformists in the government or not if the man at the top was not in agreement. The unavoidable implication of the DDP's unhindered establishment was that - as Anita had suggested - Chiang Ching-kuo wanted to allow genuine opposition to the KMT. I pointed this out to Denny, and asked how he could disagree with that?

"Of course, I respect the opinion of our great leader. But I don't have to share it. I believe he has been misled by some elements within the party. I believe that time will tell that this decision to allow these criminals and misfits to openly form an opposition party was a mistake."

I felt that Denny was simply incorrigible. Thus, I decided not to let him know about my association with these 'criminals'. I could not be sure whether or not doing so may backfire on me in the future.

By this time, I had known Denny for seven or eight months. I would meet with him regularly for about another seven or eight months. Though he had originally put on an unconvincing show of being just another English student, and maintained that act most of the time despite all the aforementioned slip-ups, over time, as he became more convinced that I was neither a communist nor a British spy, he seemed to care less and less whether I understood the real purpose - or at least the primary purpose - of him being at the IFC. Nevertheless, I never discovered precisely who he worked for; the Garrison Command, the police, some other domestic intelligence or law enforcement unit, or directly for the party. When we went out with IFC students for New Year celebrations, and I asked him his plans for 1987, he told me he wanted to "continue working for my beloved country." And that was it. I knew there was no point in pressing him as to precisely how he worked for his beloved country, let alone precisely which agency of administration he was answerable to. It was hard enough to find out the kind of basic background information most people share freely, and that he was now willing to admit that he was working for his country was revealing in itself by Denny's standards.

So I just left it at that, hoping that something positive would come from our exchanges of opinions. I met Denny about a half-dozen times in 1987; he was

interested in knowing more about Daniel, a Swiss friend I had met in the Philippines who had subsequently come to Taipei to teach English. But after a few meetings, he seemed to lose interest, perhaps convinced that Daniel was just what he seemed to be. I later learnt from Frank - then my landlord - that Denny had said he had been “reassigned", as he put it. When I asked Frank who had reassigned him, he laughed and told me that Denny had told him only that and nothing more. That was September, 1987. Martial law had finally come to an end in July....

Chapter Two: The Connection Connection

If there was one common thread to all opinions on - and explanations of - life in Taiwan, and Chinese culture and values in general, that I heard during my first months in Taiwan, from a vast variety of different characters, it was this: Connections are what matter in Chinese culture. Not qualifications. Not laws and regulations. Not standard operating procedures. Yes, suchlike things were all of some importance, but at the end of the day, 'connections' trumped all else.

As this view came to me from locals and foreigners of all ages, educational backgrounds, and political inclinations, I attached some importance to it. And it has to be said that there was a lot to back up this view. This would change over the coming decades, but not dramatically so.

As far as connections relating to politics are concerned, I can think of no better example than Brett, a young American I knew, but not well, teaching at one of the same English schools I taught at. At that particular school, we had a Teachers' Room; a place where we could take a break between classes, or prepare for classes, and that's where I found this tall, tanned, blond Californian surfer named Brett, in an ebullient mood and actually humming a tune to himself as he made a coffee. "Yeh, I'm outta here, that's for sure," he told the other two teachers sitting there taking their coffee breaks. "Just two more weeks, and not an hour longer. Nice school, reasonable boss, but you've got to be practical. The pay there is nearly twice what it is here."

"What's the story?" I asked with a smile as I entered. It transpired that Brett had been offered a full-time post at another school, so he wasn't going to be teaching at our school much longer. After hearing the whole story, we all agreed he was doing the right thing, and suggested, only half-jokingly, that he put a good word in for us if any other teaching positions became available at his new school.

The biggest disadvantage of teaching English in Taipei at that time was that this kind of work was piecework for most teachers. Getting a reasonably full schedule of classes, typically over a number of schools and home tutoring arrangements, was a constant challenge. Usually, it would take many weeks to achieve such a schedule, and as often as not, as soon as you got such a

complicated chronological construction together, it would fall apart. One home study student would quit his studies for one reason while another student ceased theirs for another reason; one school would decide there were not enough students to justify continuing the classes after the upcoming public holiday (which were many and frequent), while another school would close the entire branch you worked at or merge it with another branch at an inconvenient location. In the space of a few weeks, your 40-hour-a-week schedule could be reduced to four hours a week. So, full-time, guaranteed work was something to be envied.

But there was something else about Brett's new school that made it different from ours. The school, named Teacher Hua (Hua Laoshi), included among it's clientele such heavyweight political figures as Lee Teng-hui, then ROC vice-president, Hau Pei-tsun (pronounced Hau Boh-tsun), then chief of the general staff in the Ministry of Defense, and Chiang Hsiao-yen. then vice-foreign minster, among others.

Of course, all these political figures were from the ruling KMT; this was the party's English school of choice. Although the DDP had been established without hindrance, there was still a world of difference between politicians of the two parties at this time. These English students were people who could pull strings, and very easily.

I didn't see Brett for many months thereafter. Then, on a day off, I took a trip to Tianmu, an upmarket neighbourhood in the north of the city. Whenever I had enough time available, I liked to hike a short hiking trail from there up to the Chinese Culture University on the edge of the Yangmingshan National Park. The university was the first to offer degree courses in the history of martial arts, and it had a martial arts hall. Sometimes, I would find students taking classes there and just drop in to take a look, and perhaps have a chat with other martial arts enthusiasts. If I took the hike with friends, we would often end up on a viewing platform which provided excellent views south over the Taipei basin. But on this occasion, I was taking the hike alone.

As I neared the trailhead, I noticed a man standing by the side of a car in the periphery of my vision, looking at me, but paid him no heed.

"Hey, Alix," came a call as I drew closer. "I thought it was you! How's it going, man?"

I turned to my right to take in the scene. There, on the other side of the road, a man of around my own age was standing by the side of a black sedan, waving in

my direction. I had seen identical cars belonging to ranking ROC government officials, sometimes driven by a chauffeur. Was he a government official? The man was dressed in a pale yellow and white open-necked shirt and the dark blue flared pants that - believe it or not - were still popular with male office workers in Taiwan in the late 1980s. Only two things didn't fit: the clumsily cropped blond hair that seemed to come out of the scalp in all directions, and the broad smile, which was certainly just as rare as blond hair in ranking government officials.

"Brett?" The question seemed to emerge from me without conscious volition. Perhaps because he was the only person I knew with hair like that.

"Yeh, the one and only!"

I was momentarily lost for words. "Well...I didn't expect to see you here!" I finally managed. What's all this?" I asked, gesturing at the car.

"That's the auto. Comes with the job!"

"Wow. The only thing you need now is diplomatic plates and a couple of stars and stripes flags flying on those things over the headlights," I said, referring to the miniature flagpole-like appendages on the front wings of the vehicle.

"I've thought about it! How's life back at the school?"

He was talking about our old English school. I explained that I wasn't there anymore. What about his own school, I asked, meaning Teacher Hua? Fantastic, great school, but now he was only teaching as a home tutor, once again.

"You mean, you've actually given up a steady, full-time job, for home study classes? You've got to be joking, Brett!"

Brett had barely begun to explain this choice when a neighbour passed us, greeting Brett in Mandarin. The two exchanged pleasantries. Brett's Chinese seemed a lot more fluent and natural than when I had last seen him, and I complimented him on his progress.

"Well, I may be an English teacher, but you've got to make some effort, haven't you? I mean, here we are right in the middle of China. Should at least learn some of the language, I think."

I had by that time heard Taiwan described as many things, but I had never heard a foreigner describing Taipei as 'right in the middle of China.'

Brett's car was parked just outside his apartment block. He insisted that I have a drink with him on his balcony before going on my way to the Chinese Culture University. I did, and found his place even more impressive than I would have assumed just looking at the apartment block from the outside. The balcony provided an unbroken view all the way across the Taipei basin.

I had to admit, it was a great view."Sometimes, I just sit here in the evenings, winding down with a drink," Brett said. "You know, I love the ROC. I don't know now if I can ever slip back into life in the States."

I had to admit, his apartment was impressive. And huge. At 56 pings, it was precisely twice the size of the one I lived in and sub-rented on Jienguo South Road. But the most impressive thing was the rent: a thousand NT dollars *less* than what I was paying.

"Well, it's a bit big for one person, Brett, at 56 pings. Must get a bit lonesome. You've got everything but the girl, as they say."

"Oh, I've got the girl, too, buddy" Brett assured me with a broad smile. "I just don't want her to become a fixture here, know what I mean? I should have put that in the plural. I love the people here, but I don't want it to get the point that I can't walk away if I really want to..."

I agreed that there was much to be said for staying free.

Brett admitted that he regularly attended various party-organised events and activities, and wondered aloud whether he could do something more constructive with his own good connections. There was a limit to what you could get out of teaching English in terms of job satisfaction. It would be a shame, he said, if he didn't capitalise on his connections, but he wasn't sure how. Going into the diplomatic service would mean years of hard study; they wouldn't care less that he had friends high up in the ROC government.

I left Brett with mixed feeling about his circumstances. Superficially, he seemed to be having a great life in Taiwan on account of having friends in high places. But with it came a responsibility to stay politically loyal to the party and never utter a word which may be construed as criticism.

The treatment Brett received due to his good party connections illustrates what I mean about connections trumping all other considerations. Of course, there were laws against foreign nationals participating in political activities in Taiwan

(Taiwan did not recognise dual nationality, so having foreign nationality meant not being an ROC citizen). And of course, Brett was able to participate in political events and activities in Taiwan. These laws were not written in stone. There was nothing wrong with inviting a 'foreign friend' to party-organised events; it was only a common courtesy, and the kind of hospitality Chinese people prided themselves on.

But that doesn't mean that the government in Taiwan was unduly lax in enforcing the law when appropriate. Madeline was an American, like Brett, of around the same age as Brett. She was a friend of Samantha, a girl I had known for a year or two in 1988, who had originally studied Chinese at the same language school I had. Both girls were New Yorkers, and they seemed to share the same wry humour, which may have provided Madeline with some protection for what was about to hit her.

I met Madeline only once. She came to Taiwan to work as an intern in a law firm, while also studying Mandarin at evening classes. However, she immediately fell in with some DDP activists at the law firm she was working at, and went with them to demonstrate in favour of Taiwan's re-admission to the United Nations. The police easily spotted her in the crowd of demonstrators, plainclothes officers picked her out, arrested her, and she was deported within 48 hours. According to Samantha, she was told she would not be able to re-apply for a Taiwan visa for a period of at least five years, and she was in tears throughout the time she spent repacking her belongings, that she had only unpacked a few weeks earlier!

I felt there was some inequity in the treatment of these two Americans at the hands of the KMT government, and couldn't help wondering if party affiliations had something to do with this discrepancy.

And Don't Come Back!

When it came to the matter of foreign residents in Taiwan or even visitors to the island, the one-party state liked to be unrestrained in its handling of such matters. The KMT did not want to be forced through some across-the-board, one-size-fits-all set of rules into allowing the bad apples into the country at the same time as the good. Even during the height of the White Terror era in the 1950s and 1960s, 'Friends of China' had always been welcome to visit 'free China' for a closely monitored tour of Taiwan. But even citizens of the ROC's most indispensable ally, the United States, were not necessarily all KMT-friendly, and

there were of course always those like Linda Arrigo who it was deemed needed to be deported.

Deportations were not a particularly common occurrence. The government was able to deal with the vast majority of undesirables by simply not letting them back in once they left the country for a new visa. This could be regarded as a kind of 'soft deportation' approach that attracted little attention from the governments of friendly states. The special 5-year visa offered only to US citizens was not quite what it seemed. It was a 5-year *multiple-entry* visa. It still had to be extended or renewed every two months, just like the visas provided to other foreign nationals.

Non-US citizens, such as myself, were able to apply for a two-month visa, which sounds a lot less attractive than a 5-year visa, but essentially was little different. After two months, I would have to either extend my visa locally, or leave the country and apply for a new one. In theory, a visa could be renewed twice, making a total of six months in the country. An American would face a similar set of circumstances after two months in Taiwan; he or she would have to either extend the visa locally or leave the country and return on the same multiple-entry visa which served the same purpose as extending it. If investigations revealed that the American was problematic, he or she could simply have their visa voided on exit, and only discover that fact when they tried to return. In those days, as the visa was such a big deal, all airlines would insist on seeing a valid visa before giving you a boarding pass. They did not want to take the blame for allowing people into CKS Airport who would not be allowed through customs.

That was precisely what happened to one American I met at the Chung Hwa Travel Service office (that served as a consulate) in Hong Kong in 1989. I myself dreaded my unavoidable visits to this visa-issuance office, which had now been relocated to the Bond Centre (later the Lippo Centre), a modern office block in Admiralty on Hong Kong Island. Usually, I would spend a few minutes in the atrium of the building, psyching myself up and trying to put myself into a positive frame of mind before applying for the visa, as well as mentally going through all the possible obstructions I may meet and what I would say in each case.

As often as not (and I mean as often as not; at least 50% of the time) there would be some reason or other for refusing or delaying my application. At various times over the years, the masters of three of the four martial arts schools I learnt martial arts at in Taiwan, the manager and owner of one language school, and

the father of my girlfriend all had to present themselves in person at the Immigration Bureau office in Taipei with a signed guarantee of assuming responsibility for my welfare in Taiwan. I hated to have to ask them to act as my guarantor and in principle there was no reason for this demand, but in practice, I would not get a visa without it.

In my opinion, I was not targeted specifically for this; it was just the government discouraging my extended stay, their way of saying that time was up and it was time to be on my way. For my first two visa extensions in Taiwan I encountered no problems whatsoever, nor did I ever meet any other foreign national who had run into any difficulties in that respect during their first six months in Taiwan. But the longer you stayed, the more you understood the reality of life in Taiwan, which inevitably showed the government in an unflattering light. Thus, the longer you stayed, the more forceful the Immigration Bureau would become in letting you know you were not welcome, so by the same token I knew of no foreign nationals in Taiwan at that time who had been resident for more than a year and *not* encountered some visa problems. At this time, as mentioned earlier, the previous approach of monitoring every individual visitor had become impractical, but the longer you stayed, the more likely you would attract very close attention, so there were times I could not be entirely sure I was not also being given the dreaded ‘soft deportation’.

How much communication went back and forth between the Hong Kong visa office and immigration authorities in Taipei it was impossible to know. Certainly, the guidelines for preventing undesirables coming into Taiwan came directly from Taipei, but Chung Hwa Travel was evidently also given a lot of decision-making authority in how to apply them. I discovered this fact in 1994 when I began making my Taiwan visa applications in Singapore, and encountered nothing like the degree of obstruction that I could almost guarantee with the Hong Kong office. In Hong Kong, even as late as 1998, having been married to a Taiwan national for over four years, this office would not issue a visa to me until I presented them with a return flight ticket to demonstrate that I was not intending to remain with my wife in Taiwan. Fortunately, my wife, who at that time was working for Singapore Airlines, was with me on this trip (since the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule, I had been living in Taiwan but was not permitted to work) and this was easy to arrange at minimal cost. It seems obvious that this would be a great inconvenience for most people, who would not assume it necessary, and it also seems obvious to me that this was what was hoped for; that is to say that most potential visitors who had been in Taiwan ‘too long’ would just give up trying to get back into Taiwan, cit their losses and go home, or go elsewhere, even if it meant taking your Taiwanese spouse with you.

Still, I was hardly prepared for the sight of the visa applicant in front of me waiting in the line on one of my visits to the Chung Hwa Travel Service offices in 1989. The line of waiting applicants grew longer as this ragged-looking, unshaven, blond American guy pleaded increasingly insistently at the window where visas were issued. At first, I didn't want to even let his words into my consciousness; I had just spent 20 minutes psyching myself up and trying to put myself into a positive frame of mind! But soon I couldn't close my mind to what he was saying:

"Please, please! Everything I have is in Taiwan. I came to Hong Kong for a one-day trip, I didn't bring the money to stay this long. Please give me at least a one-week visa to go back and sort things out. I promise I will leave by then. I thought I had a 5-year visa." Eventually, he had to be escorted out.

Fortunately, on that occasion, my new visa application went smoothly. I felt in an almost celebratory mood as I left Chung Hwa Travel Services, and did in fact 'celebrate' - in an 'economy class' fashion - with a couple of cans of beer on the Kowloon waterfront before returning to my shoestring-budget hostel in Kowloon's Mody Road. Now I could take my early afternoon flight back to Taipei the next day with no problem!

That left me with a couple of hours free the next morning. With very little surplus cash, but at least a little more than I had bargained for (having assumed some problems and delays with my visa). I set out to wonder around Tsimshatsui, the southern tip of the Kowloon peninsula and the location of most hotels and hostels. I began with a stroll through Kowloon Park, a small park only a few minutes walk from my hostel.

It was there that I met the American I had seen at the Taiwan visa office the previous day, still half-asleep on a park bench. I nodded to him in greeting: "Morning. I guess you didn't get your visa yesterday. I was in line behind you..."

He rose to a sitting position, heaved a huge sigh and shook his head. He explained that he had originally come out on a day-trip but that the airline wouldn't let him board his afternoon flight back after they saw his visa. His money had nearly run out completely and he had slept the previous night on the park bench. Did he have any idea why his visa had been canceled, I asked? None. None at all. He hadn't had any trouble with previous visa extensions or previous trips abroad. And then, suddenly, this. The only thing he could think of was that his girlfriend, whom he lived with, was an ardent DDP supporter and anti-KMT activist. Did I think the government would deliberately target him for this treatment on account of that?

“Who knows,” I said, not wanting to get into the topic. “Look, here’s a couple of hundred HK. Get yourself a bunk bed at the Mansions (referring to Chungking Mansions, the nearby mecca for backpackers more infamous than famous); you can get a 20 Hong Kong dollar deal if you look around. If I were you I wouldn’t bother with the Taiwan visa office; once they’ve decided to chuck you out, you’d be very lucky to get back in. I’ve had to fight for that so many times I don’t know why I bother. I didn’t expect to get a visa this time, but I did. I’d just go to American Embassy if I were you and ask them to help you get back to the US.”

And so I left this young American, not knowing whether he would take my advice or battle to get back to his beloved girlfriend in Taiwan.

Chapter Three: The Government Misinformation Office

It may seem to readers unfamiliar with this agency that dedicating an entire section of this book to a government body named the Government Information Office is going a little too deep into the intricacies of governmental administration, and a little too far away from the general theme of political and social change to be relevant. Nothing could be further from the truth. Which is why this agency features not only in this volume but in the next volume of The Taiwan Experience as well.

This office played a huge role in the administration of Taiwan between 1947 and 2004, both overtly and covertly molding public opinion (brainwashing). It was a long, long way from being simply a government agency responsible for providing information on the Republic of China and overseeing what information others were providing to the country's citizens. After martial law was lifted, the office assumed some additional censorship duties previously handled by the Taiwan Garrison Command, and then all such duties when the Garrison Command was disbanded completely in 1992.

This office was more akin to the office which Joseph Goebbels, the German Nazi politician headed between 1933 and 1945 than to an agency providing information about government; Nazi Germany's Ministry of Propaganda. It was set up in the same era, and modelled upon similar propaganda departments in totalitarian states like Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, its directors were, like Goebbels, close associates and devoted followers of the dictator, and very influential in their own rights well outside the sphere of mere 'government information'. Take James Soong, for example, who served as head of the agency from 1979 to 1984. Like Goebbels, he was known for his skills in public speaking, and was instrumental in stoking up public sentiment. This was exactly what he did after the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan. He was the man responsible for deporting and blacklisting Linda Arrigo (the wife of Shih Ming-teh) in December 1979. During his time as head of the agency, he also rallied against the use of Taiwanese in radio and television broadcasting. The Government Information Office went to phenomenal lengths to control and manipulate public opinion

throughout its existence from 1947 to 2004. As far as media censorship was concerned, this was particularly true from mid-1987 when the office assumed responsibility for published media censorship from the Taiwan Garrison Command, up until shortly after Lee Teng-hui was elected as president in 1996.

False Dawn

At first, I was only superficially aware of this. Even after learning to read Chinese, Chinese language newspapers were generally hard going for me and something I only attempted when in the mood for serious study. To get some rough idea of what was going on in Taiwan and in the world outside on a daily basis, I usually just picked up one or the other of the local English-language news sheets, the *China Post* or the *China News* (and this latter was actually established and run by another GIO director, James Wei).

Nevertheless, by mid-1988, after martial law had been lifted in July of the previous year, and Chiang Ching-kuo had kicked the bucket in January of the same year, there was definitely a sense of political reform being underway. That was without doubt. However, knowing people like Denny and having encountered many more of his ilk, I felt skeptical from the start as to the extent of this much-lauded reform. I just couldn't believe these people in power would be willing to relinquish the control they had over the thinking of the population, even to impress the United States. In that respect, I couldn't help thinking of the statement Chiang Kai-shek had once made that the party had to look into the possibility of setting up 'flower-pot parties' (huaping zhengdang; ie. political parties just there for show) for the Americans.

Pre-1987, the Taiwan Garrison Command had controlled publications in Taiwan through the Publication Control Act. After the Government Information Office took over the humble duties of printed publication censorship (actually, many of the post-July 1987 GIO personnel were the selfsame TGC employees, now working for a different agency of the same one-party state with zero change to their mindsets), much ado was made about imminent reforms coming to publishing censorship, following amendments to relevant laws made earlier in the year. Previously banned books, a report in one of the English-language newspapers excitedly proclaimed, could soon be expected to be seen for sale on the bookshelves.

I took all this with a pinch of salt. I didn't really believe it, because by this time, I had learnt to judge the authorities, and people in Taiwan in general, by their

actions, and not take the spoken word too seriously. All too often, the spoken word was spoken for ulterior motives, or merely because paying lip service to good causes sounded impressive. Also, I had found a number of excellent bookstores in Hong Kong where I could buy far more banned and/or controversial books on Taiwan than I could possibly afford to, or that I had the time to read.

But two that I felt I couldn't afford to *not* buy, were *The Soong Dynasty* by Sterling Seagrave, and *Formosa Betrayed* by George Kerr.

The *Soong Dynasty* described the inter-relationships of the wealthiest families in pre-Communist China, Chiang Kai-shek's skillful ingratiation with and manipulation of these people, and worst of all (from the KMT's point of view), Chiang Kai-shek's history as a Green Gang associate, his loyalty to this criminal organisation, and his ultimate dept to the gang for assisting his rise to power.

Seagrave was a near-legendary investigative reporter, who grew up on the China-Burma border, and was educated in Burma, India, and the United States. He worked as a reporter, writer, and assistant foreign news editor for respected publications like The Washington Post, and had spent ten years in Asia as a freelance journalist contributing to *Life, Time, Esquire, Atlantic, Smithsonian, Readers Digest*, and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Although The *Soong Dynasty* read like a racy novel (which was one reason I could hardly put it down after I started reading), Seagrave had a reputation for being meticulous in his research. In 1981, he had been the first to correctly identify a biological toxin causing deaths from internal bleeding thousands of miles apart in Laos and Afghanistan. His findings, published in *Yellow Rain* (1981), were confirmed by laboratories in Norway, Holland, France, Canada, and the United States.

Several years later, In 1985, *The Soong Dynasty* arrived. It quickly became an international bestseller. It provided the first behind-the-scenes accounts in English of how the family of Madame Chiang Kai-shek used its wealth and power to dominate China and American policy toward Asia in the 20th century. The book was a public relations disaster for the KMT in the United States, particularly as it provided so much information on Chiang Kai-shek's relationship with the Green Gang. The party had gone to great lengths for many years to quash claims that CKS even had any relationship with this criminal organisation at all. Naturally, the book was banned immediately in Taiwan.

Formosa Betrayed by George Kerr, was another book the government could not allow to be purchased in Taiwan. It was a detailed account of the February 28th Incident, which occurred while Kerr was working in Taiwan as a diplomatic

officer, and the corruption and killings committed by the KMT that followed. In 1988, the Taiwan government's official description of this 'incident' was still the same as it had been for the past nearly four decades; that this was a riot brought about by the mistreatment of a cigarette vendor by two Monopoly Bureau employees, which resulted in two deaths (those to the Monopoly Bureau employees). However, I had discovered a huge amount of far more detailed material on the 2-28 Incident in both Chinese and English on the bookshelves of book shops in Hong Kong.

Formosa Betrayed was one of the most influential books about Taiwan's transition from Japanese colonial rule. Kerr was working for the American Foreign Service at the time of the transition, and was present in Taiwan for the KMT's assumption of rule, the revolt, the massacre, and the aftermath. *Formosa Betrayed* sharply rebuked the Nationalist administration's description of events, and coming from an American official on location, it had to be taken seriously by the ROC government. After all, America was where the money was coming from.

Imagine my surprise, then, to see Chinese versions of both these books, along with many other controversial and previously banned books openly on sale at the large, recently-opened Hess bookstore on Xinyi Road, close to my flat on Jiengou South Road. They occupied an entire shelf. Even more eye-catching than the two aforementioned titles, however, was a book I didn't know about; *The Ugly Chinese*, by Bo Yang, which even had some promotional fliers placed next to it. I picked the book up, and couldn't stop reading.

Knowing only too well the sensitivities of the local population to criticism, I had to glance around myself every minute or two as I read *The Ugly Chinese* (a few years later, an English version of this book became available, named *The Ugly Chinaman*, which I didn't have time to read. However, I noticed that while it seemed genuine, it was rather slim, as if some parts of the original had not been translated), to be sure nobody had noticed me and felt offended by my reading of a book with a title like this one's. I almost expected to be accosted by some offended stranger, who would comment something along the lines of: "*The Ugly Chinese*, eh? I suppose you think you Americans are far from ugly, don't you? Why don't you take a look in the mirror before reading that and see what an ugly American looks like?"

Finally, I decided this was a book I could not afford to ignore. Plucking up courage, I took a copy to the cashier, and bought the other two aforementioned books while at it, mostly to deflect attention from Bo Yang's book, as I couldn't

rule out the possibility that even the cashier would feel offended.

The writer Bo Yang certainly had good anti-KMT credentials, and it was little wonder his books had previously been banned. In 1950, he had been imprisoned for six months for listening to a Communist Chinese radio broadcast. Later, he had been given a much heavier sentence - 12 years - for the much more serious crime of his translation of a Popeye cartoon.

The translation was interpreted as a criticism of Chiang Kai-shek. In the comic strip, Popeye and Swee' Pea have just landed on an uninhabited island. Popeye says: "You can be crown prince," to which Swee'Pea responds, "I want to be president." In the next panel, Popeye says, "Why, you little..." In the final panel, Popeye's words are too faint to be made out. Chiang was displeased because he saw this as a parody of his arrival with his defeated army in Taiwan and his strategy of seeing off opposition to the presidency and gradually paving the way for installing his son Chiang Ching-kuo as heir apparent. Bo Yang translated the word "fellows" in the comic strip as "my fellow soldiers and countrymen," a phrase often used by the dictator. According to the writer, after he was arrested, the KMT's military interrogators told him that he could be beaten to death at any time the authorities desired. Several interrogators alternated promises of immediate release with threats and torture. In order to make him confess to his crime, they broke one of his legs.

The prosecutor initially sought the death sentence for Bo Yang’s heinous cartoon crime, but due to US pressure this was reduced to 12 years in the Green Island holiday camp, and from 1969 Bo Yang was incarcerated there as a political prisoner. It’s interesting to note that his crime was ‘being a Communist agent and attacking national leaders'. ‘Being a Communist agent’, as mentioned previously, was a one-size-fits-all charge for anyone whose crime could not be made to appear more specific. The original 12-year sentence was commuted to eight years after the great despot kicked the bucket, to island-wide relief, in 1975.

On a side note about the passing of the two Chiangs, it would be unfair to imply that everybody in Taiwan was pleased to see them go, only the vast majority. I was in a taxi when the news of CCK's death was broadcast on the radio. The driver pulled over to the side of the road, and turned the volume up (it had been playing too quietly for me to even hear what was the news report was about) to hear the full report. Afterward a few moments, he apologised and began driving again. "Our president is dead," he explained in case I didn't know. He did not sound pleased, but I could see from the driver's mirror that he was smiling.

"Oh. I heard he was very sick. Do you think anything will change in Taiwan because of this?"

"Yes, things will be better now, much better. Finally, things can become better here with him gone!"

I didn't expect such a positive response, but it was clear many others felt the same and the atmosphere in the weeks following CCK's death was palpably optimistic.

On the other hand, when Chiang Kai-shek died, a well-known Chinese musician, Hwang Yau-tai, wrote the *CKS Memorial Song*, which featured the following lyrics: 'President General Chiang, you are the savior of mankind, you are the greatest person in the whole world. President General Chiang, you are the lighthouse of freedom, you are the Great Wall of democracy'.

After Chiang Ching-kuo died, the same man wrote a memorial song for him, with similarly fawning lyrics, apparently of his own volition. The extremes of opinion towards the Chiangs illustrated the vastness of the ethnic divide.

To return to the Bo Yang book, coming across *The Ugly Chinese* was not so much like a 'breath of fresh air' to me, rather, it was more like a typhoon of fresh air after months of stifling heat. I had never read anything like it about the Chinese people. Its frank, open, honest, and often amusing criticisms of the major failings of the Chinese national character were not only right on the mark, but coming from a local, proved that such things were not beyond them. At first I could hardly even believe the book had been written by a Chinese.

In the storm of debate the book's publication caused, Bo Yang received insults left, right, and centre from people writing for the local press, and from the general public. Many people expressed the opinion that they just couldn't comprehend why someone would want to pick holes in the culture of their own people; why couldn't Bo Yang write about the many 'beautiful aspects' of the Chinese people and their culture? For my own part, after several years of hearing little else but Chinese extolling their own virtues on a daily basis, it was just great to hear a dissenting voice for a change.

Of course, despots who surround themselves with sycophants and don't tolerate criticism are nothing new, and not unique to China or the Chinese. At the time of writing this book, a Saudi prince has been accused of ordering the murder of a prominent Saudi journalist living in Istanbul who had only negative criticisms of him, and we all know about the many critics of Russian president Vladimir Putin

who are now dead. But in the late 1980s, I was also aware that after several decades of having the virtues of the Chinese people instilled in them in order to foster nationalistic Chinese sentiment to counter regionalistic sentiment, many local people, even friends, would be very upset to see a non-Chinese reading a book entitled *The Ugly Chinese*.

Nevertheless, the book was now a famous one. I felt justified in reading it, and I didn't avoid letting the people I knew discover this fact. The reaction of many of my Taiwanese friends and associates upon discovering that I was reading this controversial book was often a sharp-tongued "Why don't you read *The Ugly American* instead? You may be able to learn something about yourself from it"! Many even suggested that I write such a book, and almost all were taken aback to learn that there was, in fact, already a book called *The Ugly American*, and that I had, in fact, already read it. (Of course, if these locals were people I knew well enough to remember that I wasn't American, they would tell me that I should read - or even write - The Ugly Briton, as my girlfriend did).

The lack of understanding of the world outside was probably never better illustrated to me than once when I told a friend of a friend who had asked why I didn't read The Ugly American that I already had, and he responded: "Better watch out then; maybe they won't let you back in when you return to your country!" In fact, *The Ugly American* was adopted for use in training diplomats by the US State Department, as it provided so many lessons in how American should *not* behave abroad.

After the lifting of martial law, censorship continued but in a less publicly visible manner. The blacked-out paragraphs in foreign publications disappeared, but the authorities continued to suppress printed discussion of Taiwan independence, political and military corruption, the involvement of the military and of criminal gangs in politics, and so on. And they continued to subject people who wrote about these topics to prison terms. The biggest difference was that now little of the task of censorship and public opinion-molding was still shared with the Garrison Command, mostly it was in the hands of the Government Information Office, which was better able to put on a sophisticatedly deceptive show of reform that had very little of substance to it. Nevertheless, it was enough to convince the vast majority of people, which is all that mattered.

I first began to get an idea of this situation when I had finished the Bo Yang book and turned to the Chinese versions of *The Soong Dynasty* and *Formosa Betrayed*. Initially, my main reason for reading these Chinese versions was to

improve my ability to talk about political issues in Mandarin.

Information Double-cross

It didn't take long for me to realise that the two aforementioned works were not all they seemed to be. To begin with, the extensive references provided in the back pages of the *Soong Dynasty's* English version were missing entirely.

As I worked through the Chinese version, I was struck by the way Seagrave's various assertions and allegations had been watered down and made less specific, with justifications suggested for the claims made by the author that Seagrave had in fact never made. Some were so ridiculous as to be laughable, and revealed much about the mindset of the real writer. To anyone who had read the English version, all of these were obvious and very unconvincing attempts to surreptitiously discredit Seagrave's work.

But, how many people in Taiwan could have had the opportunity to read the previously banned English version? After all, it had been banned, and had only even been published internationally a couple of years earlier. At this time, Taiwan had barely begun opening up to the outside world and allowing its citizens to travel overseas without extensive justifications. And how many of Taiwan's citizens would have had both the necessary high standard of English to read Seagrave's book, and then, further, the interest to read the newly-available Chinese version in order to make a comparison? The numbers must have been vanishingly small. Perhaps I was the only one!

There were only two possibilities that could account for this Chinese version of the book: either the publisher's book had been butchered by the GIO, or the book's real publisher was in fact the GIO (with an apparently genuine front-company). My feeling was that only the latter explanation was satisfactory; there would be no reason for an independent publisher to create the ridiculous justifications for Seagrave's claims that this book did.

As far as Kerr's book was concerned, the approach was different. Some sections of the original book were missing completely. Some of the details of what Kerr witnessed in the massacre following the 2-28 Incident were just not there. Many specific references to people, places, companies, government agencies and their employees had been made more general. But again, this was not a genuine translation of the original made with no ulterior motives. Just like the Chinese version Seagrave's book, it was either a GIO-butchered translation, or a GIO-

published book.

Knowing this, I quickly lost all interest in reading the other controversial books I had seen on the shelves at the Hess bookstore. I would stick with Hong Kong-published books; at least there I knew I was getting the genuine article.

Occasionally, the GIO would get a shock, and a reminder that the days of pulling the wool over the eyes of the naive Americans were over. One such nasty surprise came in 1989.

It should be said that at that time, if an English-language book was *not* controversial in Taiwan, then Taiwan was not a bad place to get hold of it, very cheaply. Although there were few bookstores specializing in English-language publications, they were generally stock-full of bootleg reprints of international best-sellers and often, surprisingly, less well-known but nevertheless interesting works. Naturally, the English-language books banned in the Peoples' Republic could also be bought in Taiwan. I don't know what international copyright agreements Taiwan was party to at the time, I suspect there were at least one or two with the United States, but in any case, none were enforced. By the end of the decade, Taipei was gradually building a reputation with travellers as a place for a stopover to pick up English-language books, videotapes and audiotapes at a fraction of their north American prices (most were American, but not all). A little out of the way, and much more difficult to get around than Hong Kong, but perhaps worth it just for the pirate publications.

Most of these bookstores were concentrated around the Taida campus area, but there was one well-known store, Caves, on Zhongshan North Road, a little south of the Fine Arts Museum that I dropped in on from time to time. This I did on one occasion in 1989 with a view to perusing their martial arts books. I also picked up a copy of *Newsweek* magazine, and noticed then that *Time* was missing.

When I asked about that, the manager, who happened to be on hand, explained that he had no idea why there was no issue of *Time* this week, the distributor had just said there was no *Time* magazine that week, and he didn't know why either. The following week, I happened to be in Hong Kong, and found out why: it carried a story entitled *Island of Greed*, which described Taiwan's so-called economic miracle in far from glowing terms. It ripped into the obsession with profits it claimed the government had promoted at the expense of all else, and coming from the usually staunchly pro-Chinese Nationalist *Time* magazine, it must have been a bombshell. The days of Garrison Command's redaction teams were gone and the magazine simply had to be prevented from falling into the

hands of Taiwan citizens in its entirety.

The Post and the News

In the late 1980s, as mentioned earlier, there were two local English-language newspapers, the *China Post* and the *China News* (neither of which were published in China). When I arrived at the beginning of 1986, these two news sheets were usually very sparse, just a few pages long, compared to the local Chinese-language newspapers, such as the (then) best-selling *China Times* (also not available in China) and the *United Daily News*.

A couple of years later, amendments to relevant publishing laws lifted restrictions on the lengths of newspapers, and local Chinese-language newspapers became progressively thicker. Why there were length restrictions in the first place is difficult to know; perhaps the authorities just felt that it would be impossible to have the same thick newspapers usually found in places like Hong Kong or Japan without saying *something* negative about the government somewhere in them! Or perhaps they just didn't have the manpower to cope with thoroughly censoring so much information.

This didn't affect the English-language newspapers, the Post and the News, as they had only just progressed from eight pages to 12 or 16. The English newspapers were different from their Chinese counterparts in that they didn't have much of a need for reporters. Even when I began working at the *China Post* in 1990, there was only one local news reporter employed. Most of the overseas news stories came directly from foreign news agencies, while local news was translated from Taiwan's Chinese-language papers.

As a native speaker of British English, I wasn't really qualified for an editing job at the *China Post*, only as a proofreader, along with a Filipino girl named Susan who boarded on the premises. I was replacing a Sikh Indian who had recently left the job.

At the same time I arrived, a government-appointed censor was in his last month at the Post, although at the time I didn't know exactly what this employee's actual job was. The people I spoke to in the editorial room were pleased to see the back of what they called the 'Government Misinformation Office'. After the censor left the job, it would appear that the government was no longer involved

in directing what could and what could not be published.

However, that was not the case. Whenever there was any significant local political news, the GIO would call in to instruct the chief editor on how to report it. Opposition party-organised demonstrations were now becoming a regular occurrence, and these were covered by the paper's sole photo-journalist. The GIO's rule was that photos of DDP-organised demonstrations or meetings, or any anti-KMT demonstrations or meetings could not include women, children, old people, or smiles. Evidently, the intention was to create the impression that the opposition was a bunch of dangerous, angry young men. This rule often rendered all the photos taken useless.

A disc jockey at the American-run ICRT radio station informed me that similar circumstances persisted there, with the GIO phoning in regularly to instruct the station on how to report political events and activities of the time.

For the bulk of local news articles at the *China Post*, which were merely translated from the Chinese papers, it was enough to follow the paper's 'Stylebook'.

The Stylebook covered all matters pertaining to Taiwan; for general editing rules, the Associated Press Stylebook was used. The *China Post*'s stylebook included instructions for editors and proofreaders, such as: "The term 'Taiwanese' is to be avoided, as this suggests Taiwan Independence." Sticking to this rule meant that a lawyer from Taiwan, for example, was to be referred to as a 'Taiwan lawyer', and not a 'Taiwanese lawyer'. The rule went on to explain that 'Taiwanese' was only to be used when it referred to local customs and traditions not found elsewhere.

The principle behind this re-writing of the definition of 'Taiwanese' was not applied elsewhere, only Taiwan. To say a 'Scottish lawyer' rather than a 'Scotland lawyer' did not suggest Scottish independence, nor would saying a 'Californian lawyer' instead of a 'California lawyer' suggest Californian independence.

Normally, Taiwan was to be described as either 'China', 'Free China', or the 'ROC'. The PRC, on the other hand, was not to be referred to by its official name, but rather, 'Communist China', 'Red China', or just 'the mainland'.

There were many other such rules. How many of these rules came from the government, and how many were created by the publication itself is difficult to say, but in any case, there was a great deal of consensus between the paper and

government policy. The publisher, a first-generation mainland Chinese woman, was a staunch KMT supporter whose office was above the editorial room.

The rival paper, the *China News*, was actually set up by a GIO head, James Wei, and had a similar stylebook. However, some of these rules were changed after the paper changed hands in 1988 and changed its name to *The Taiwan News*.

Chapter Four: The Ethnic Pecking Order

I was lucky enough to get a unique insight into inter-ethnic relations in Taiwan are they stood in 1986 within only a few days of my arrival in Taipei. These ‘inter-ethnic relations’ were nothing to do with ones you usually hear about: those between the ethnic Taiwanese majority and ‘mainlanders’ who came over after WWII, or those between Han Chinese and Aboriginals. This was more about skin colour in a general sense.

A German guy staying at the Happy Families guesthouse, who made a living as an extra in films, told some of the other guests excitedly that there was a local film director who needed foreign film extras for a film set in Africa due to start almost immediately. Were any of us interested? We all were. That was fine, he said. There was easily enough work for all of us (about a dozen young men and women, all white) if we were interested. Africans, black Americans or black Europeans, were needed for the same film too, the German told us...

A couple of days later, we extras were taken by minibus to a site in Danshui, just outside Taipei where filming was taking place.

The film, we were told, tentatively entitled Midnight in Geneva, was mostly set in east Africa during a revolution. An area of empty tarmaced space had been set up to look like a marketplace, ostensibly in some east African capital.

However, there was a slight problem. The film was desperately short of blacks to make up the local population. Only one black, an African-American who had originally planned only a two-day stopover had been found. The remaining several dozen 'blacks' to feature as extras in this film (in appearance, it should be said, they all seemed more black African than Chinese) were locals. These were children of relationships between African-American G.I.s deployed to Taiwan in the late 1950s, and Taiwanese mothers. Most spoke only the Taiwanese Min-nan dialect and none spoke any English at all, so everything we learnt about them came via a Dutch Mandarin student who also spoke the Taiwanese dialect. (The

above-mentioned 'blacks' played the roles of local merchants and others in the market. The director told us with obvious dissatisfaction that he didn't want to use these people, but hadn't been able to find any others. In the movie, the local military and the rebels that they fought throughout that market were played - believe it or not - by Chinese with dark face paint.

The moment filming finished for lunch, members of the public who had been watching with interest from nearby hurried over to ask questions - a tidal wave of them. We - that is, mostly, we residents of the guesthouse - were instantly surrounded by locals with a barrage of curious questions: where were we from, had we made films before, could any of us speak Chinese, how long would we stay in Taiwan, etc.. We were generally flattered, even overwhelmed by the interest of the local residents, and by their friendliness. There were also a few sighs of admiration as it was discovered that some of our number could indeed communicate well in Chinese. Then, one man, in his late 40s or early 50s and less shy than most of the young people turned to one of the black Taiwanese and asked: "And which state are you from?"

The black man smiled and replied in fluent Taiwanese, and the man's jaw dropped. The whole group of onlookers went deadly silent...staring with a mixture of revulsion and fascination at the blacks among us. Unlike the painfully cultivated and phoney-sounding 'Beijinghua' spoken by those of us who could speak some Mandarin Chinese, this was fluent Chinese of the local variety, the naturalness of which left nobody in any doubt that these people were in fact, from Taiwan.

Several of the other Taiwan-born blacks chimed in with comments, mostly delivered with friendly laughs, but they were greeted only by silent, open-mouthed stares. After quite some time of a very uncomfortable silence, some of us tried to get the conversations going again by actually firing a few questions back at our inquisitors of a few moments ago. Interest was eventually re-kindled, and we were once again surrounded by friendly people. This time, however, the locals made it abundantly clear that they were only interested in talking to us whites. They gathered around us and avoided even looking in the direction of the black Taiwanese from that point on. Afterward, the Dutchman apologised to the black Taiwanese for the way we seemed to have taken all the interest and attention. According to his translation of their reaction, the Taiwanese blacks hadn't minded at all. They were used to such unfriendliness, and often much worse.

Several years later, in 1989, I saw a newspaper report in one of the local

newspapers. It seemed the Taiwan government had scored a great success in finally solving 'the problem' of several dozen "black Americans with local mothers" who had been "exiled" in Taiwan for several decades (that is, all their lives). The US government had finally decided to allow these 'orphans' to go home, and would grant all of them nationality. To the newspaper's credit - all Taiwan's news media remained government-censored until well into the 1990s - the report had noted that efforts to trace the fathers of many of these so-called Americans had failed. It didn't mention, however, that most could not speak a word of English.

Please, Please; Don't Call Me Taiwanese

During the first few months I spent in Taiwan, I remained blissfully unaware of any kind of ethnic antagonism between the majority Taiwanese and the mainland immigrants and their children. Of course, I was aware that there were minor ethnic differences between the native Taiwanese population and the mainland Chinese population that had arrived in the late 1940s and early 1950s. But I took most of the government propaganda about the Japanese colonial rule era at face value. The brutality of the Japanese occupation of other countries in east Asia was well known; there was no reason for me to think that things could have been otherwise in Taiwan. I also did not realise that even the Nationalist Chinese reference to the era as the period of “Japanese occupation” was entirely inaccurate and a form of propaganda in itself. I believed that, at least for the most part, the ethnic Chinese population of Taiwan had welcomed the arrival of Chiang Kai-shek and his KMT government with open arms, glad to see the back of the brutal Japanese, and that while the two groups - native Taiwanese and mainland Chinese - still had their differences, for the most part they lived in harmony.

Perhaps there was a ‘harmony’ of sorts, but it was one enforced by martial law. When even the slightest hint of repudiation of the notion of everybody belonging to the same big, happy Chinese family could arouse suspicion of Taiwan independence advocacy and lead to investigation by the Garrison Command, there were few native Taiwanese willing to put themselves and their families at risk by speaking out against mainland Chinese on any grounds which may have appeared to be based on ethnicity. Another possible explanation for my slow uptake of the reality of life in Taiwan in 1986 was perhaps that my girlfriend, Michelle, as a Hakkanese, saw herself and her ethnic group as somewhat separate from the majority native Min-nan speaking Taiwanese of the

so-called ‘Hoklo’ ethnic group. The separation from the mainland immigrants and their children was even clearer, but there was perhaps less of a tendency to see ethnicity in Taiwan as a straightforward dichotomy between two ethnic groups. One of her friends, for example, was a second-generation mainland Chinese of Hakka ethnicity.

Still, I did get to finally receive an alert that all was not quite so harmonious as it seemed. Monica, a girl in her in her early 20s who had just completed university was my first home-study student. She lived only five minutes walk away, and took an intensive course of daily classes one hour every afternoon for two months in preparation for moving with her family to the United States. It was only during the penultimate class that I even knew she was not ’Taiwanese’.

I had referred to her as Taiwanese, or indirectly implied that she was Taiwanese a number of times by the time she brought my error to my attention: “Why do you keep calling me Taiwanese?” she asked testily. “Can’t you see that I’m not Taiwanese?”

“I’m sorry,” I apologised. “But...aren’t you Taiwanese?”

“No, of course not,” she laughed. “I’m from Foshan. It’s a town near Hong Kong. Do I seem like a Taiwanese?”

At first I thought she really was from Foshan, a town in Guandong Province within the PRC; which is to say that I thought she had grown up there. Perhaps her family had escaped to Hong Kong, then come to Taiwan.

“Really? Wow! So when did you come to Taiwan?”

Monica looked at me blankly. “What do you mean?” she finally asked.

“I mean, when did you come to Taiwan from Foshan. Did you live in Hong Kong first?”

“No. I grew up here in Taipei.”

I was momentarily completely lost and didn’t know what to say.

“Well,” I finally managed, wondering whether I had misunderstood her, or if she simply didn’t grasp what it meant to ‘be’ from a place, “how are you from Foshan if you grew up in Taipei?”

“My family is from Foshan,” she said slowly, as if I were a little dim, then

pointed to herself. “I grew up here, but I’m not from here.”

I was about to explain that, in English, we generally say we are ‘from’ the place where we grew up, when Monica pre-emptied my intention by making things absolutely clear, and thereby leaving me momentarily speechless.

“Me and my family are from Foshan. My parents came to Taipei after the war with the Communists; my uncle and aunt too. We are all Cantonese. Please don’t call me Taiwanese. I feel...” she stopped to look up the word in her dictionary. “I feel insulted!” she finally told me.

I apologised again, and explained that I was not very good at detecting the difference or differences between Taiwanese and other Chinese.

“I know,” Monica told me understandingly. “But I don’t like Taiwanese, so please, please, don’t call me Taiwanese.”

"OK. Sorry. But you grew up in Taiwan, didn't you? Don't you have any Taiwanese friends? What about friends from school or university?"

"No!" Monica seemed offended by the very idea. "All my friends are from the mainland, like me. Mostly Cantonese, but I have some friends from Shanghai, too. I don't like to talk to Taiwanese unless I have to. They're dirty and..." she seemed to be searching for an adequate word..."Strange!"

"Sorry”, I reiterated, “I’m not very good at telling the difference between Taiwanese and mainlanders. So I just think of everybody I see in Taiwan as being Taiwanese. How are mainlanders different?”

Monica leaned towards me as if about to reveal a secret: "If you see someone chewing beetle nut; that's a Taiwanese. We don't have that dirty habit. If you see someone wearing slippers in the street, and no socks; that's a Taiwanese. They don't know how to dress properly. But usually the easiest way is to listen."

"To listen?"

"Yes, listen to the way they talk." Monica then laughed as if she hardly expected me to believe her. "They can't pronounce simple Chinese properly. Really! They can't make a 'sh' sound. Instead they say 'sz'. She then gave me an example (the question ‘when’;*shi-ma-shi-ho*) and pronounced it with and without a Taiwanese accent, making the Taiwan-accented sound truly ridiculous. Then she did the same for a 'fu' sound which she claimed Taiwanese pronounced the same as the English word 'who'. Finally, she asked me if I could correctly pronounce the

same words she had said, and when I did, threw her arms up: "Good! Really, very good! You see? Even you can pronounce Chinese correctly, after only a few weeks. They can't, after all their lives! Now you know how stupid they are! Now you know why I don't like you to call me Taiwanese!"

She was beaming a broad smile, happy that everything was now clear. But I wasn't satisfied. I believed that she was being unfair, and that Taiwanese spoke with the accent she had illustrated because they were used to speaking their own dialect, which affected their Mandarin pronunciation. I pointed out that Cantonese speakers would have slightly different but similar problems speaking Mandarin, and suggested as delicately as I could that perhaps she or her Cantonese friends had Cantonese accents when speaking Mandarin.

Monica then looked at me fixedly, and asked a question which flummoxed me completely: “Why do you think I speak Cantonese?”

After a moment, I came back: “Well, I just thought, I mean, well, in Hong Kong most of the people are Cantonese, and they mostly speak Cantonese, so I just thought you would be the same…”

“No, of course not. I speak only Mandarin. Dialects are for old people. Young Chinese should speak Mandarin, not dialects.”

“I see.”

Monica’s rigorous and vigorous condemnation of the majority Taiwanese population truly dealt a blow to my logic. I could not conceive how it would be even possible for a student to go all the way through the education system, from the first day of primary school to finally getting a university degree only speaking to Taiwanese people 'when they had to'.

At first I thought this had to be freakish abnormality, but my girlfriend assured me that there were no lack of second-generation mainlanders like Monica. As I came to know some such people I realised that Monica’s attitude could probably even have been considered mainstream at that time, and certainly had been over the previous several decades. This attitude was only just beginning to change in 1986.

I should have been alerted to this situation by the behaviour of my own language teacher a couple of days previous to this conversation with Monica, but at the time I thought little of it. The two month Mandarin Chinese language class I had attended with five other foreign nationals had also just come to an end, and our

'Beijinghua' teacher - a middle-age woman - invited us all to take a light lunch at a nearby traditional tea house. I declined as I had already made arrangements to meet Michelle for lunch. My teacher insisted that I bring her with me. As I knew my teacher would be footing the bill, I really didn't want to increase the cost by adding another person, but my teacher was adamant. So it was that I met Michelle as planned, but walked with her to the nearby tea house that my teacher had already shown me the location off. Throughout the next hour of so of conversation in the exquisitely decorated tea house, my teacher acted as if Michelle were not even there, not exchanging so much as a single word with her. I thought she had initially assumed my girlfriend to be a European, and being conservatively-minded, disapproved of local girls getting involved with foreign males. After the conversation with Monica, I realised that that could have been at most only part of the reason for her unfriendly attitude. Michelle, though Hakkanese, also naturally spoke Mandarin with a Taiwan accent, not a Beijing accent.

I searched in my own travel history for comparable situations, but the only one I could think of was the relationship between Israeli Jews and Israeli Arabs. However, in that case, there were also religious differences as well as historical and cultural differences.

Fond Memories of Brutality

One other criticism of the local Taiwanese majority Monica made, and one I found hard to believe, was that the older ones "loved the Japanese", as she put it. This suggestion was made as if it were a criminal activity that the older Taiwanese were secretly engaged in.

I knew the government's description of the joyous welcome the liberated population of Taiwan gave to Taiwan's 'retrocession' (the reversal of its cession to Japan) was overplayed. But I was also aware of what harsh rulers the Japanese had been in the countries they occupied during WWII, so I found it hard to believe any Taiwanese would have fond memories of that era.

The first hint of how wrong I was came to me as I was walking down an alley somewhere in Da-an district, when a man of around 60 years of age stepped out of his back yard and spoke to me in Japanese.

At that time, I could not speak a word of Japanese. I could only recognise the language the man spoke as Japanese by its sound. So I shrugged, and told the

man in English that I didn't speak Japanese. He looked disappointed.

"But," he then began, in English, stepping forward in front of me, "do you have any friends who can speak Japanese?" I thought about the people I knew from the Happy Families hostel, from my Mandarin lessons, and teachers at IFC. Finally, I told him: "No, sorry, I don't think I know anyone who speaks Japanese. I'm not sure, but I don't think so."

"Oh. Well, please ask to make sure," the man told me, "and if they do, please give them my phone number." He jotted down his name and phone number on the back of a business card and handed it to me. I agreed, but was very curious as to what this could all be about. Was it a job opportunity, I wondered?

"But, er, why do you want to find people who can speak Japanese?" I asked.

"Just to speak Japanese with me," the man told me, opening both his hands palms up. "I will pay them!" he added with an air of decisiveness.

If I hadn't been earning money speaking English at places like the IFC and the other 'conversation schools', the English Speaking Club, and the English Language Lounge, I would have found the idea ridiculous. But still, those conversation schools demanded at the very least that the teachers be fluent, and preferably native English speakers. Here was a man prepared to pay non-native Japanese speakers just to speak Japanese with him. Was he mad, I wondered?

I left the man with a promise that I would ask all my friends and associates if any of them spoke Japanese, and went on my way. But I couldn't get the whole incident out of my mind. Why on Earth would anyone want to actually pay someone - not even a native speaker, and probably not a very fluent speaker - just to be able to speak the language of their erstwhile oppressors with them, the language that had been forced on them in their youth? It made no sense at all. So I mentioned the incident that had just occurred to Amy, the receptionist of the small language school I taught one-to-one afternoon classes at on Nanking East Road.

Oh, yes, she explained with a smile, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, many older people love to speak Japanese, but have no-one to speak to. Pity that I couldn't speak Japanese, she said, or I could have made some extra money, she added.

At first, this constituted only a strange, twisted logic to my mind. The memory came to mind of a film I had seen as a boy, in which a prisoner who had served a

life sentence refused to leave the prison when the day of his release came. I thought this phenomenon might be somewhat similar; a longing for a hard life that someone had become accustomed to. But, slowly, other similar examples contradicted the official government line that the Japanese 'occupation' had been an era in which the Taiwanese suffered unbelievable hardships at the hands of their colonial masters.

In the pre-dawn, I would often take a jog through the quiet streets to the south-east of where I lived in 1987, which in those days were not very developed (the area to the south-east of Hoping East Road and Keelung Road). More often than not, I passed a small neighbourhood park where there was usually a man, apparently in his 60s, singing in Japanese. This puzzled me. Speaking in Japanese was one thing, but actually singing in the language of the oppressors? Surely, this was going a bit far. I wondered what the other, mostly old folk, exercising in the park made of it? One morning, while on my jog, I ran over into the park, ostensibly to stretch my hamstrings on the metal fence that the man was standing by. He stopped singing when he noticed me, and smiled in my direction, greeting me.

"Singing a song," I commented. In Chinese, this is a comment or question in itself, even though it was obvious that he had been singing. He nodded.

"Japanese song?" I asked. He nodded again. "I love Japanese songs most of all. I can't sing in Mandarin or even in Taiwanese; it's not natural for me. So I sing the songs I learnt in my youth." With that, he began singing again.

The fondness for speaking, or even singing Japanese began to make sense to me. Although there had been considerable resistance to Japanese rule in the early years, by the 1930s a new generation was reaching adulthood who spoke Japanese as its first language, or at least its language of habitual use, just as many of the young Taiwanese I knew in the late 1980s spoke Mandarin as their language of habitual use, and couldn't even speak their own native language well. It was the result of several decades of strictly enforced language education.

But that still didn't prepare me for the end-of-year treat that the above-mentioned family-run language school on Nanking East Road arranged on the spur of the moment for its teachers. This was the day before Lunar New Year's eve 1988, and the school would not open the next day, so the manager and his wife (Amy, the receptionist) decided to take us all out to a local karaoke lounge.

Karaokes were at that time a new concept that was spreading quickly from Japan (they had been around there for some years but were only now becoming

popular outside Japan). I had seen them in Seoul on a milk run a couple of months before then (I still ran the occasional milk run as an interesting way to renew my stay in Taiwan) but I had never been inside one.

The manager, his wife, myself, two local female teachers and two other foreign teachers walked to the nearby karaoke, where the school manager, obviously pleased with the year's earnings assured us we could eat and drink as much as we liked: "Leave tomorrow morning if you like; the place is open till 4am!"

None of us had any intention of doing that, but the assurance put us in a good mood.

The two other foreign teachers were an American named Andy, and a Dutchman named Henk.

Andy was an ex-US serviceman, who had worked with the US navy as a translator. Henk was Dutch, but spoke English as fluently as myself. Both were a couple of years older than myself, pushing 30, and both were very amiable company. The atmosphere was very relaxed, at least until Andy, having discovered that one of the local teachers was half-Japanese made some very positive comments about Japan and its colonial era in Taiwan. I merely listened to the conversation, knowing by this time that there were some very conflicting opinions on this era in Taiwanese history.

But for Henk, the pro-Japanese comments, especially coming from an American, were too much. "Oh, come on, Andy!" he exclaimed all of a sudden. "Are you trying to tell me there are people in Taiwan who like to remember the Japanese occupation era? I don't believe that for a minute. Those bastards treated the Chinese here brutally, like animals. I'm surprised at you, an American, saying something like that!"

Henk's girlfriend was a second-generation mainlander, and I felt I could sense her views coming through him. Andy just shrugged, and gave some examples of how he felt Taiwan must have been better run over by the Japanese over four decades ago than the Nationalist Chinese government could even manage today. We walked into the karaoke lounge, took our seats and ordered drinks and snacks. Henk, Andy and myself sat at the same table. We exchanged some jokes about our singing abilities, and whether any of us would get inebriated enough to 'make a show of ourselves'! I went to check out the videos available, figuring that there must have been at least some English ones.

There were, a few. But more than half of the videos were Japanese. Most of the

remaining music videos available for playing were Taiwanese. A small number were in English, and a tiny number, about half-a-dozen, were in Mandarin. When I related this news to Henk and Andy, Henk looked at me in bewilderment, while Andy only laughed. We settled for listening to other people sing.

Most of the people who sang were older Taiwanese, at least in their late 50s. Every song sung was in Japanese. “Listen to those old girls sing!” Andy exclaimed at one point. “Do you think they feel they were treated like animals, Henk?”

Henk was a reasonable man and not about to insist on an untenable position. He admitted that he wouldn’t have believed what he was seeing if he had merely been told. Many of the songs were war-era songs and some were obvious propaganda. For one of them, Andy, being the only one of us three able to read Japanese, translated the subtitles for us. Though I can’t remember the exact wording, it was something along the lines of, “Together with our Asian cousins, we will flush the white colonialists out of Asia, and create a new era of Co-prosperity!” The footage of Japanese Zero aircraft bombarding an American warship seemed to fit the intensely nationalist lyrics.

Obviously, the discrepancy between the official version of Taiwan’s “Japanese occupation” era and the reality was greater than I thought. Though all this was eye-opening for me, and even more so for Henk, the two local teachers - both of whom taught Japanese - didn't bat an eyelid.

Life At The Top

At the top of the ethnic hierarchy in the 1980s were the wealthy mainland Chinese families who had fled China in the late 1940s. These included almost all the middle-ranking and higher-ranking KMT government officials. Their favoured choice of residence were Taipei city’s northern suburbs, Shilin and Beitou. This meant all points north of the Grand Hotel, which lies at the northern edge of the Taipei basin.

The Grand Hotel, or Yuanshan Hotel, lies on the boundary of the central area and the northern suburbs, and was opened, symbolically on ROC National Day (October 10th), in 1973. Even more symbolically, it was built on the site of the most important Japanese-era Shinto shrine in Taiwan, the Taiwan Grand Shrine.

In the 1950s and 1960s, as one country after another abandoned Taiwan, to set up diplomatic relations with the PRC, Chiang Kai-shek wanted to build an extravagant hotel that would make an unforgettable impression on visiting foreign dignitaries. It was built in a classical Chinese palace style of architecture, with the intention of promoting Chinese culture to the West through its extravagance. Each of the eight guest levels represents a different Chinese dynasty, as reflected through the murals and general decor.

Taipei is a city surrounded on three sides by mountains, but in those days there were few sufficiently upmarket residences available to the east or south of the city, whereas those to the north of the city's urban core had long been favoured by the city's wealthy elite. Even before the Nationalists arrived in Taiwan, the northern hills overlooking the city were the location of choice for the Japanese high command. Chiang Kai-shek himself waxed lyrical on the hot springs of Yangmingshan even before he had few other hot spring locations to choose to soak in. After escaping to Taiwan, he took up residence at a former Japanese government building which became known simply as the Shilin Official Residence. For this, the man at the very top and all his relatives and cronies, there was a secret tunnel to an air-raid shelter (originally rumoured to link the residence to the Presidential Offices in central Taipei), as indeed there was at the nearby Grand Hotel, to ensure that in the event of a Communist Chinese air attack, as many valuable lives as possible could be saved. For obvious reasons, the Official Residence was very heavily guarded and closed to the public.

Apart from Chiang Kai-shek, his family, relatives and cronies, the northern suburbs became home to dozens of other ranking officials from government, the military and law enforcement. The Shilin neighbourhood of Tianmu, at the foot of the Yangmingshan mountains, also became the location of choice for Americans resident in the city. And, unusually, many of those countries which still retained diplomatic relations with the ROC chose to locate their embassies or consulates in the northern suburbs rather than closer to the city's urban heart.

In the late 1980s, for anyone wanting to live near - but not in - Taipei's urban core who had the money, Shilin was certainly the location of choice. There was a distinct 'China flavour' to this district not so evident anywhere else in Taiwan.

For example, a little further to the north-east of the classical Chinese architectural gem of the Grand Hotel, within Shilin district, one would find the Chinese Culture and Movie Center, a film studio with sets built in imitation of classical Chinese architecture, based on genuine and fictional urban mainland Chinese scenes. It was used for the filming of numerous film and TV dramas set

in China (as nearly all historical dramas were), and was also opened to visitors in 1975.

Right next door one would find Soochow University, originally established in Suzhou, Jiangsu, China, now temporarily in Taiwan, with no change of name, of course (and run by Winston Chang, illegitimate son of Chiang Ching-kuo).

And just a little further yet to the north-east of the Chinese Culture and Movie Center, one would find the National Palace Museum, a museum of Chinese art and history to rival any in the PRC. Not least because the National Palace Museum shares its roots with the Palace Museum in Beijing's Forbidden City, whose extensive collection of artwork and artifacts were built upon the imperial collections of the Ming and Ching dynasties. The museum has a permanent collection of nearly 700,000 pieces of ancient Chinese imperial artifacts and artworks, making it one of the largest of its type in the world. Most of the collection are high quality pieces collected by China's long-dead emperors.

At the northern end of the (urban part of the) district on the edge of the Yangmingshan National Park, one would find the Chinese Culture University, again with buildings constructed in a classical Chinese style, and its own on-campus museum into the bargain, boasting a permanent collection consisting of Chinese ceramics over many centuries, modern Chinese paintings and calligraphic works, Chinese folk arts and woodblock prints.

The Other Waishenren

Not all the mainland Chinese flushed out of China by the Chinese Communists in the late 1940s were bound for Taipei's northern suburbs. A large portion of the immigrant population were mainland Chinese who had nothing going for them apart from belonging to the newly-dominant ethnic group in Taiwan. These were the rag-tag soldiers who had survived the Japanese occupation and war with the Communists, along with their dependents.

They set up shantytown-like communities at various locations in and around the capital (and in other urban centres), known as 'military dependents' villages'. There was one immediately to the east of the Happy Families hostel, between Zhongshan North Road and Linsen North Road, so I had a chance to see such residences at first hand almost immediately after arrival in Taiwan. Of course, I didn't then realise it was a military dependents village, and that all the buildings in it were illegal; I was only struck by the difference in quality of buildings

within the same area.

These poorly-constructed communities, like the ROC government's installation in Taiwan itself, were intended to be 'provisional'. However, decades after their construction, nearly all were still intact with the same families and their descendants living in them.

The residents of these communities were typically fiercely loyal Nationalist Chinese, so although illegal, no attempts were made to redevelop them in the 1950s..and 1960s...and 1970s..and 1980s. Few people moved out of these communities and no people moved in, so they were extremely insular, and their residents' anti-Japanese, Taiwanese-wary mindsets didn't change for decades.

It wasn't until well into the 1990s that the pressure Taipei city government was under to clear military dependents villages grew too much to delay any longer. In order to build the Taipei metro, and various other developments, such as the Da-an Forest Park, most of these communities had to be cleared, and the residents were offered the rights to live in newly-constructed apartment buildings. As many as not, the residents having become attached to their communities over the decades, would refuse to leave, and ugly scenes between the residents and police would ensue, with various political opportunists jumping on the chance to use these circumstances to their advantage.

The Silent Majority

Then there was the vast majority of the population, the native Han Chinese Taiwanese who were already living in Taiwan at the end of the Chinese Civil War, and their descendants, whether speakers of the Min-nan dialect, or speakers of Hakka. Together, they constituted more than 80% of the population.

These were also the people who made up the lower ranks of the civil service, those who handled the nuts and bolts of running the country, occupying essential jobs with very limited decision-making power, or none at all.

For the older generation, the sense of distrust of mainlanders ran just as deep as the mainlander's sense of distrust towards them. During the height of the White Terror era, in the 1950s and '60s, thousands of the wealthiest and most influential Taiwanese had disappeared, their commercial and private property requisitioned by the government. Many resurfaced in Hong Kong, Japan, or the United States, but many others were never seen again, which is why those who

could escape did so. Those who escaped abroad, however, were mostly those intellectuals who possessed the least in terms of wealth; writers, journalists and other intellectuals who knew they could be executed at any time if they continued to express their opinions in Taiwan. For most of the wealthy businessmen, flight was not an option.

By the 1980s, a new generation of native-born Taiwanese was coming to the fore who spoke Mandarin as their language of habitual use. Many didn't see themselves as separate from their second-generation mainland Chinese counterparts, and even had friends from among that ethnic group. Jenny, my second girlfriend, was a good example. Her best friend was a second-generation mainlander of Shandong province descent, who also didn't care for ethnic divisions.

But Jenny was also aware that there were good reasons for her parent's generation distrust of mainlanders. Her own uncle had been murdered by the Garrison Command before when she was born. Her parents had told her about it, but also told her she was not to talk about it with anyone else, especially mainlanders.

The economic boom of the 1980s took attention away from ethnic grievances and provided new hope for the silent majority of Taiwanese that the unhappy memories of the past few decades could be consigned to the past along with lack and impoverishment. Now that Taiwan was opening up to the outside world and money was pouring in through international trade, future prospects were potentially unlimited.

Life At The Bottom

On the bottom rung of Taiwan’s ethnic hierarchy in the late 1980s was (and still is) the aboriginal population. During the first few years of my stay in Taiwan, there were 11 tribes recognised by government, constituting a population of just shy of 2% of the total. At the time of writing, there are 17 tribes recognised, including Plains Aboriginals and the proportion of the population they account for has climbed back a little, to 2.4% (excluding Plains Aboriginals). But essentially they are still by far the most disadvantaged ethnic group in Taiwan and its outlying islands.

For my first couple of years in Taiwan, I knew almost nothing at all of Taiwan’s indigenous population, and had never even had a single opportunity to talk to

anyone belonging to this ethnic group. The only time I had even seen a Taiwan aboriginal at close quarters (though I may have seen aboriginal labourers working on the roads and so on without knowing for certain that they were aboriginals) was on a day trip to Taipei County's Wulai, which I took with Michelle and one of her friends. There, some aboriginals put on traditional dances for local tourists (and, in principle, foreign tourists, although at that time these were still a rarity), and various gaudy knickknacks were on sale.

This lack of contact didn't particularly concern me, as most of the local people I knew, such as my students, had apparently experienced no more interaction with indigenous Taiwanese than I had, even after decades of living in Taiwan! Nobody I knew had an aboriginal friend or acquaintance, and few people could tell me anything at all about Taiwan's aboriginal people apart from the Wu Feng legend.

This was the story of a Han Chinese man of the same name who befriended aborigines and persuaded a head-hunting tribe to give up the practice of head-hunting. It was a fine example of Chinese civilising barbarians and as such had already been incorporated into school history books (for the very small part of the curriculum dealing with Taiwan). This was also the only reason any of my students knew even this about the island's aborigines.

For most of the local people I knew, the closest they had even come to aboriginal people was to notice them working in various labour-intensive jobs in Taipei, such as construction. Everybody I knew referred to them by the mildly derogatory term of 'Mountain People' (*Shandiren*). Not a single person I was acquainted with could tell me the name of more than a couple of their tribes (at most), or even a single word of any one of their languages, which in itself says much about their status in society. What's more, I'm sure if anyone had tried to persuade any of the Han Chinese I knew, whether native-born Taiwanese or 'mainlanders' to learn even a single word of any of these indigenous languages, they would not have been willing to spend even the few seconds or minutes necessary to do something so pointless.

In the winter of 1987, along with my Swiss friend, Daniel, his local girlfriend, an American friend also studying Mandarin, one of my students and one of Daniel's, I took a trip to Orchid Island, the most remote piece of inhabited territory under Taiwan's control. It lies nearly 60 kilometres off Taiwan's south-east coast.

The island is home to the Yami people (now better known as the Tao people), an Austronesian ethnic group. Racially, the Yami are not related to the Han

Chinese, but in its magnanimity, the Chinese government of the ROC welcomed them into the big, happy Chinese family. They are presumed to be more closely related to the indigenous people of the Batan Islands north of Luzon in the Philippines than to the other indigenous peoples of Taiwan.

Generally speaking, even today, Taiwan's aboriginal people are regarded by their Han Chinese brothers and sisters as 'innocent and naive'. That must certainly have been a factor in the decision of the state power company, Taipower, to begin dumping nuclear waste on the island in 1982 and offer alternative explanations for what they were actually doing. During the construction of the nuclear storage plant facility, workers told the islanders that they were building a food cannery that would help the local economy. Some months before we arrived for our visit, local people had finally discovered the truth, and in the best Chinese tradition, had politely declined the gift from their Han brothers and sisters at Taipower, who nevertheless insisted that they were the best people to take care of it.

Over the subsequent several decades, the Yami would battle continuously to close the nuclear waste facility, as tens of thousands of barrels of waste were progressively dumped on the island, and the incidences of cancer increased, as well as the rates of mutated fish due to the increased radiation levels. But at the time of our visit, the only local people we talked to about it just regarded it as a very unfriendly action, and left it at that.

We were all travelling on the cheap, and rather than staying at the island's only hotel, Daniel and his girlfriend Heidi camped outside the local junior high school, while the other four of us were provided with free accommodation within it, in rooms provided for guests of the school headmaster, a friendly Chinese mainlander with a mission to educate these simple people.

You Are Here!

The basic foundation upon which all education in the ROC was constructed in those days was revealed by three intriguing maps that had been painted on the side of one of the school walls at Orchid Island Junior High School. They were obviously intended to let the children know their place in the world, and in particular their place in China, which the island was now officially a part of.

The three large maps could be viewed left to right or right to left. At one end was a map of Orchid Island, with the location of the school marked on it. In the

middle was a map of Taiwan, with the small island of Orchid Island also visible and marked, off Taiwan's south-east coast. At the other end was a map of China, with the small island of Taiwan also visible and marked, off China's south-east coast. (This China, the territory claimed by the government of the Republic of China on Taiwan, also included the Republic of Mongolia).

Now, in the late 1980s, the younger generation of Orchid Islanders were well on their way to being fully Sinicised. Among themselves, the children of this school spoke Mandarin, unlike adult Orchid Islanders, but with a unique accent which featured hard or 'rolling' 'r' sounds not found in standard Mandarin or in Taiwanese-accented Mandarin.

It would be an understatement to say that the Taiwanese dialect was not encouraged on Orchid Island. In fact, the junior high school children had apparently not even been alerted to its existence!

By this time, the several decades of hard work by Taiwan's Ministry of Education, as well as agencies like the Government Information Office, was finally beginning to bear fruit. Mandarin had become the first language for an entire generation of native-born Taiwanese. Officially, their 'native language' was still Taiwanese, but in reality many could barely speak the dialect, and some could not speak it at all. Children who could not speak Taiwanese, conversing in Mandarin with parents, who still preferred speaking their local dialect, were now a common sight (and sound). Taiwanese was on the fast track out of common use. What would be the point of teaching an archaic local dialect to Orchid Islanders, most of whom would spend their entire lives on Orchid Island?

One evening, when we were enjoying a beach barbeque by Daniel's tent, a local boy, 11 or 12 year old, came by. We invited him to eat with us. Curiosity overcame his shyness, and he sat with us by the open fire, full of questions. Naturally, Mandarin was our common language of communication. But I asked him if he also spoke Taiwanese (using the term '*Taiwanhua*', literally 'Taiwan's spoken language'). He looked puzzled by the question, and answered that, yes, he was speaking the language of Taiwan now! I thought he had misunderstood and pressed the point; did he speak the Taiwanese dialect. He looked momentarily bewildered. Finally, he replied: "Of course. It's the same! Taiwanese is Mandarin!" Daniel's girlfriend, Heidi, herself a second-generation mainlander, asked some simple questions in Taiwanese; what was his name, how old was he, and so on. The boy stared at her, completely flummoxed, asking her to repeat each question. Heidi translated the sentences in Mandarin. I selected words from the sentences and translated them back and forth between

the two dialects. The boy was finally convinced that another, completely separate, dialect existed in Taiwan. “But who in Taiwan speaks this language?” he asked, with some doubt. When we assured him that most of the population could speak it, he laughed at the incredible notion: “I can’t wait to tell my friends about all this!”

The fact that his friends apparently didn’t know anything at all about Taiwanese provided a clue to the effectiveness of China-centric education on Orchid Island.

There was a huge generation gap between these children and the older generation at the time of our visit. The older generation had been taught that they were part of the Japanese empire and many spoke far better Japanese than they did Mandarin. While many also seemed to know of the Taiwanese dialect, they didn't speak more than a few words of it.

Of course, in both cases, young and old, no Orchid Islander had been consulted as to whether they wanted to belong to this empire or that. When the Nationalist Chinese government took over Taiwan after Japan's WWII defeat, Orchid Island came with it. The new rulers didn't waste their time trying to re-educate the adult population, but concentrated on inculcating notions of Chinese-ness among the children, regarding the older generation as a lost cause.

The children, and most of the adults on the island at the time of our visit, wore the same modern, 'western-style' clothing we did. However, outside the main settlement, some of the older people still wore traditional garb, which for men was just a loincloth. Over the following couple of decades, this would become relegated to clothing for special occasions, as jeans, shorts, t-shirts and the like took over for everyday clothing.

I failed to build on this contact with the aboriginals of Taiwan and its outlying islands by exploring other aboriginal regions. But nevertheless, I felt lucky to have been given a unique insight into the demise of an ethnic group in the process of assimilation into the Chinese nation, and their lowly place within that nation.

The discovery that their island was being used as a dumping ground for nuclear waste led to decades of protests by the islanders. There are several reasons that these were tolerated in a way that protests on mainland Taiwan were not in the 1980s. First, although the island's Yami people constitute only a tiny fraction of a percent of the total population of the ROC, on the island itself, Han Chinese were in a similarly tiny minority. There was only a very small military contingent. (In those days, the PRC had zero power projection capabilities, so

only the islands to the west of Taiwan needed to be fortified; the idea of a mainland Chinese sampan flotilla sailing all the way around the island of Taiwan to attack from the south-east seemed very unlikely). Secondly, Orchid Island's geographical isolation also meant social isolation; there was little chance of a 'domino effect' with these demonstrations. And thirdly, there may even have been some in government who felt some sympathy for the plight of the islanders. Holding demonstrations against having nuclear waste dumped on your doorstep was not to be equated with the anti-KMT demonstrations held by the rogues and villains of the political opposition in Taiwan.

On the face of it, the decision to dump nuclear waste on Orchid Island, nearly 60 kilometres from the coast of Taiwan, must have seemed a puzzling one to anyone with faith in the wisdom of the party. Logistically, it would have made a lot more sense to dump the waste somewhere similarly sparsely populated on Taiwan itself. A part of the Yangmingshan National Park, for example, could have been sectioned off specifically for this purpose. This approach would have had the advantage of the dumping ground being just upwind from the homes of many leading government officials and would thus have provided those officials with a unique opportunity to demonstrate their belief in the harmlessness of the waste and their commitment to energy policy at the same time. Could it be - and this is only pure speculation on my part - that government claims as to the safety of the waste were not to be accepted in every detail without question?

Since fleeing mainland China, the ROC government had quickly discovered how to put Taiwan's remote outlying islands to good use. Green Island, an island 60 km to the north of Orchid Island was utilised to provide free board and food to anyone wishing to holiday there. The only thing a person needed to do to qualify for a long-term stay at this attractive location was to publicly state anything at all damaging to the party. Among the island's distinguished guests were the aforementioned Bo Yang, and Shih Ming-teh.

Green Island first served as an isolated spot and place of exile for political prisoners during the martial law period of Taiwanese history under the Kuomintang, and especially in the White Terror era. After their release, many of the prisoners jailed between the late 1940s and the late 1980s went on to establish the Democratic Progressive Party, most notably Shih Ming-teh.

The place where most of the political prisoners (such as Shih) were held was the comfortable-sounding ’Green Island Lodge’. ‘Oasis Village’ was the main penal colony. The prison was later closed, though its interior is now open to the public. ‘Green Island Prison’, also on the island, housed prisoners considered to be

among Taiwan's most dangerous criminals and gangsters

To return to the Orchid Islanders, these were probably the least assimilated of all the indigenous people of Taiwan and its outlying islands at the time of our visit. Some aboriginal groups were already assimilated to the point that an outsider would have been hard pressed to identify any difference between them and the majority Han Chinese.

As mentioned earlier, the Japanese road and rail networks accelerated the Sinicisation of Taiwan's aboriginal peoples. After the Nationalists arrived, in 1951, a major political socialization campaign was launched to change the lifestyle of many aborigines, to make them adopt Han Chinese customs. A 1953 government report on mountain areas stated that its aims were chiefly to promote Mandarin to reinforce a national outlook and create good customs (the obvious implication being that the Mountain People didn't have any yet). The policy of the time was known as *Shandi Pingdihua*; to 'make the mountains like the plains'.

The pattern of intermarriage continued, as Han Chinese married aboriginal women who were from poorer areas and could be easily bought as wives.

Although recent studies have shown a high degree of genetic intermixing, with as much as 70% of the population having some aboriginal heritage, due to their continued lowly status in society, many Taiwanese are unwilling to accept this notion of having aboriginal heritage as a reality. In a 1994 study, it was found that 71% of the families surveyed would object to their daughter marrying an aboriginal man.

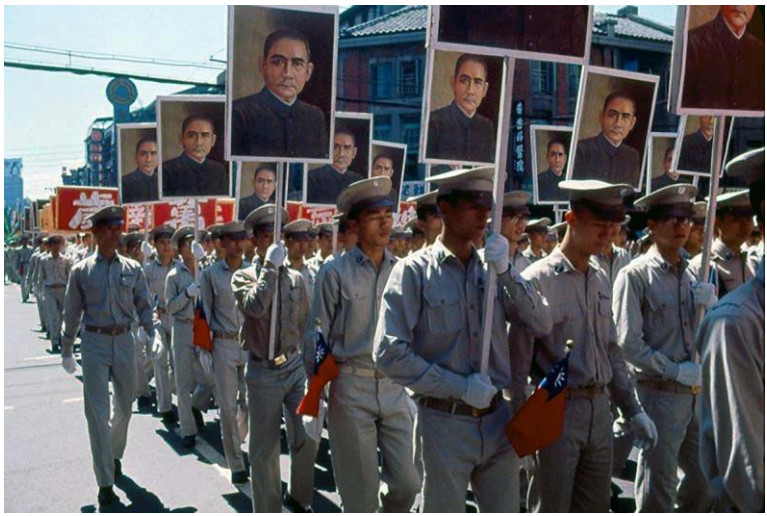

Illustration 7: March to celebrate the ‘Double-tenth’ (October 10th; the national day of the Republic of China), in around 1965.

Illustration 8: Taipei's Grand Hotel, or Yuanshan Hotel, on the northern edge of central Taipei. Built symbolically on the site of Taiwan's most important Shinto shrine, it was opened on ROC National Day, 1973, with the intention of making an unforgettable impression on visiting foreign dignitaries.

Illustration 9: The Chiang Kai-shek Memorial, built in 1976, was intended to be an imposing construction, and built, symbolically, to a height in excess of the then-tallest construction, the nearby Japanese-built Presidential Office building. In the 1980s, the entire area of what is now known as Liberty Square was called the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Gardens. At the time of writing, even this central construction is being re-named.

Illustration 10: Sharp contrast between the architectural magnificence of Liberty Square's National Theatre and a typical commercial and residential building nearby.

Illustration 11: A typical delapidated Taipei backstreet in the late 1980s. A far cry from the opulent architecture of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial or the city's northern suburbs.

Illustration 12: On the beach in the late 1980s. Taiwan was just beginning to open up, not only politically and economically, but also socially. In those days, for girls so adventurous as to be on a beach in the first place, the main activity would be 'wan shui' (literally 'playing in the water', that is, paddling ankle-deep, usually fully-dressed in clothes much the same as their mothers, or even grandmothers would have worn). In the picture, the style of dress of the girls on the right differs hardly at all from what young women would have worn 40 years previously. The girl on the left, much more modern, has just expressed her admiration for the girl in the middle for being so bold as to wear a swimsuit.

PART THREE: SOCIAL CHANGE

Chapter One: The Formosan Tiger

The 'Economic Miracle'

Industrialisation is the process of transformation that a country or region's economy goes through, from being a primarily agricultural economy to being a primarily industrial one. It is typified by urbanisation and higher GDP levels, as well as all the social changes which come with that.

The first countries in the world to industrialise were those of western Europe, beginning with Britain, and followed by Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and France. This process, the Industrial Revolution, took many decades. By the time Japan industrialised, the process was considerably faster, as the country had the benefit of the past experiences of many other countries to draw on, as well as help from some of those countries. Japan was the first country in Asia to industrialise, and its economy soon became bigger than that of the all the rest of the east Asian states put together. In the post-WWII years, Japan's booming economy during and after rebuilding from the destruction of the war years had a knock-on effect as it became one of the main driving forces helping the four Asian Tiger economies to industrialise.

The four Asian Tiger economies - South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, were the next in line to industrialise, and for them, the process was faster still. In the 1980s, Taiwan was riding the wave of that industrialisation process.

The Asian Tiger economies have been followed more recently by the the 'Tiger Cub' economies, meaning the five dominant ASEAN economies; Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines (in that order).

Of course, there is a little more to it than that, as any economist would be able to tell you, but that’s it in a nutshell, which will suffice for this book.

The social and political changes Taiwan began going through in the mid-1980s were underpinned by a long period of economic growth. It's arguable that many of the social and political changes would have never happened, or would have happened much later without the consistent economic growth.

Of the four Asian Tigers, Taiwan was the least influenced by foreign states and their economies. Foreign investment never represented a significant component in the Taiwanese economy. At the beginning of the 1980s, in 1981, direct foreign investment was only 2% of GDP. Foreign companies employed less than 5% of the total workforce, and their production was less than 14% of the country's total production. However, in 1980, Taiwan’s exports and imports already totaled US$19.8 billion and US$19.7 billion, respectively, as compared with US$110 million and US$180 million in 1952; the economy was expanding rapidly. By 1980, income per head amounted to US$2,102. Access to global markets was facilitated by major Japanese companies and by American importers, who wanted direct relationships with Taiwanese brands.

Growth was also reflected by the increase in the volume of trading on the Taipei Stock Market, the TaiEx. This really took off in the last few years of the decade. At the end of 1987, the Taipei Stock Market's weighted index stood at only 2,298 points. By August of the next year, it was up to 8,000 points, and by the beginning of 1990, 12,495 points. Taiwan's GDP growth rate reached an all-time high of 15.0% in 1987.

The biggest difference between Taiwan and the other three 'Asian Tigers' was that Taiwan's rapid economic growth depended primarily on small to medium-sized enterprises. No big multinational corporations were created in Taiwan as was the case in Singapore, and there were no huge national conglomerates like the South Korean chaebols. Prior to the 1989 Tiananmen Massacre in Beijing and the government crackdown that followed, many large international corporations had also set up regional offices in the British territory of Hong Kong and were looking to the opening up of China’s economy with great expectations (that was put back a few years by the massacre and its aftermath). Taiwan, being more isolated geographically, had never succeeded in attracting major international companies to use the island as their regional east Asian base, and so the main driving force behind Taiwan's economic growth was its relatively small, local companies.

There were, of course, other differences between the Asian Tiger called Taiwan and the other three. One was that the one-party state had never felt any need to cater to the 'little people' who made up the workforce driving economic growth. It was always enough to be on good terms with people running enterprises, and let them handle relations with the workforce. During the martial law period, the one-party state prohibited any kind of collective action, including strikes.

Political developments - that is, the establishment of a legal political opposition - is what changed that. Initially, workers began asserting their opposition to management and to the government without much involvement of opposition political figures, but opposition to the government apparently gave them a common cause with the political opposition, which was something threatening that the government could not afford to ignore.

As the labor movement progressed in the last couple of years of the 1980s, there was also an increase in disputes between workers and their employers, and an increase in union membership. By the end of the decade, labor unions began to demand that the KMT withdraw its force and influence from unions. They did so by revealing the widespread party corruption, and worked with the opposition to uncover the KMT's illegal activities in industry. Many corporations had close ties with the party, but with the growth of the labor movement, the party lost its privileges within these enterprises. Nevertheless, the party's ties with big business remained close, and it would always be seen as the party favouring business leaders over the workers.

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, economic growth was very robust, and Taiwan's export-oriented economy gained a reputation worldwide for cheap products which often left something to be desired.

Going Digital

The only area in which there was significant foreign investment in Taiwan in the 1980s was electronics. This was because it was unavoidable; without it Taiwan would have lagged many years behind the world's advanced countries in the digital technology revolution. Instead, it was able to get to the fore in a relatively short time.

Hsinchu Science Park, the island's first, was set up in December, 1980. One of the aims of park's founders was to convince talented locals who had gone to work in places like Silicon Valley, to return to Taiwan, for without them there

was little chance of the development of digital technology in Taiwan catching up with that of first-world countries within any reasonable time-frame. It would not be until the last year of the decade, 1989, that more than 50% of the Taiwan students who had gone abroad to pursue further studies actually returned in the same year their studies finished; many never came back. In this, the founders were successful, and a number of people who would play leading roles in Taiwan's fast-growing hi-tech industry were persuaded to return.

As for the digitilisation of the office work environment generally, in 1986 this was a still a long way behind western Europe in my impression. I first encountered a local area network in an office while working as ticketing staff at the Virgin Airlines (then Virgin Atlantic) Oxford Street office in London as early as June 1984. But I didn't see one in Taiwan until 1990, while working at the *China Post*. Even then, most of the Post's work was not digitalised. Each individual news article was printed out and pasted up manually by a layout artist before the finished news sheet went to the print room.

All the translation agencies I began working for in 1989 depended on manual or electronic typewriters and word processors for most of the work, with isolated, standalone PCs making their debuts in some of them towards the end of the year. As a translator, to ensure sufficient work, it was necessary to register with as many agencies as possible, so I did get to see the inner workings of many of them. Like most small companies, their office digitilisation began with unnetworked personal computers running the first versions of Microsoft Windows.

Setting up local area networks was complicated in those days and as most international trading companies like the one owned by my girlfriend's family were small in scale, they didn't really need them. And of course, many companies large enough to benefit from having LANs, didn’t want to pay a professional to set such a network up, and preferred to simply wait until one of their own employees felt inspired to do so.

However, the digitalisation process was generally fast once it took hold, and certainly a lot less complicated than in large conglomerates. For small companies employing between a few and a couple of dozen office workers, all it involved was purchasing a few personal computers and getting the employees to spend some time learning to operate a PC running Windows 3.0 or 3.1, usually a digital printer, and sometimes a digital scanner. For this, as with learning English to improve one's career opportunities, it was generally up to the employee to take the initiative and put aside some time and money for study;

rarely would the manager of a small or medium-sized company consider it the company's responsibility to pay for staff training. The philosophy was more one of 'you better learn, or we might not have a job for you soon!'

With new students at the English classes I taught, I always started off by asking them why they wanted to learn English. Usually the answer was to improve their chances for promotion, but very often it was "Because my boss wants me to!" Learning new technology was very much the same in principle.

Was It Made in Taiwan?

In the 1987 box-office hit movie Fatal Attraction, the male lead, a publishing company executive played by Michael Douglas leaves a meeting held in a New York office building. It's raining outside, so he reaches for his umbrella, which after a few moments of struggle to make it open it all, opens, but fails to open properly, the joints on the inner frame opening in the wrong direction, so that the umbrella is inverted into a bowl-like form taking in the rain. The female lead is played by Glenn Close, who is about to make her first moves to seduce Douglas, and she is standing nearby. She asks Douglas with a laugh: "Is it made in Taiwan?" before offering a place under her own umbrella.

I don't know how many scores of times I had the same experience with cheap local umbrellas in Taiwan in the late 1980s and early 1990s (minus the subsequent seduction, of course). It rains a lot in northern Taiwan. However, one thing could be virtually guaranteed: Taiwan-made umbrellas would rarely fail to open properly when new. You could at least get a few uses out of them. How many precisely varied dramatically, but certainly, in all cases, far less uses than the owner would have hoped for.

That description could be applied to almost anything made in Taiwan in that era. Taiwan had established itself by the late 1980s as a place where cheap, poor-quality goods were made (and exported overseas from).

As mentioned previously, most were exported by small, family-run businesses like the one managed by my (third) girlfriend Vicky's father, in which she also worked for a time. That company specialised in electrical home appliances, such as the fan that Vicky's father kindly gave me. It lasted the whole of one summer and half of the next.

Although this description of Taiwan-made goods makes them sound pretty

shoddy, they were at least good enough for export. At that time, there was not yet any real threat from the PRC or India, where labour costs were much lower, because there were still few products in those countries that could be mass produced even to Taiwan-quality standards.

India, in particular, was a long, long way from being able to mass-produce to Taiwan standards.

Just over a year prior to my arrival in Taiwan, I had worked and travelled in India and come to see the country's unique economy firsthand. The most unusual aspect of the economy was the abundance of repair shops. There were repair shops for just about any product that could be used, including the simple rubber sandals we called 'flip-flops' in the UK, and of course, the invaluable government-sponsored bank note repair shops, which taped your shoddy notes back into a state of legal tender.

As for product quality, apart from products with a long history of local production, everything else was...well, something else. An illustration is in order...

After a few days in Delhi, I was beginning to find my feet, and having a conversation with a couple of other travellers in a restaurant close to the hostel, to learn more about Kashmir, where I planned to visit.

The three of us were heavy smokers. As such things would happen, none of us had a 'light'. I slipped out to a street hawker for matches. I should have bought at least a few packs, but I bought just one. Every match in the box was a dud; some exploded, some broke, some had insufficient combustible material to light up, some had insufficient stick to strike a light without burning your hand. Still a slow learner, I slipped out of the restaurant and brought back a second box of matches. We were literally on the last match of the second box by the time we got a successful light. "That's why I'm a chain-smoker", the first guy to get a light quipped as he took a long drag and invited us to get a light from his cigarette.

Even for the quality of such simple everyday products, India could be a true eye-opener, that often left me wondering how it was even possible to make products so poorly; it seemed like something you would have to work hard at to achieve!

So, Taiwan was a good few rungs up the ladder from India as far as quality was concerned. It was able to produce cheap, unattractive cigarette lighters that could be relied upon not to shoot a one-foot long flame to singe the hair of the

person who had asked for a ‘light’, at least for the first few uses; and cheap ballpoint pens that would at least initially write without any problem, and probably continue to do so until you met some situation in which you absolutely had to write something down because you could not possibly just memorise it. And, of course, fans that would work fine until the hottest day of summer, and umbrellas that would open properly until you were stuck in torrential rain with no other way to shelter yourself from the rain. In all cases, you would probably end up pleading with the product, “please, please, don’t give up the ghost now. Look, if you want to quit tomorrow, that’s fine, I promise you, I’ll give you the most elaborate funeral, but don’t die now, please…”

Due to their cost and availability, I also used Taiwan-made products for all my home appliances, such as the tinny Tobishi (no typo; made under license from Toshiba) audio cassette player I listened to everyday. As mentioned at the beginning of this book, import taxes were high on everything, and for luxury and non-essential goods could be well over 300%, so for anything where we really needed quality, all the foreign residents I knew would wait until they had the chance to visit low-tax Hong Kong or elsewhere.

And then of course there were - and still are, though not so many - the products made in Taiwan for export to Taiwan from abroad. These included a Scotch whisky I drank on several occasions. It has a Scottish-sounding name and was a good deal cheaper than those claiming to be ‘distilled in Scotland’, as this one was only ‘made by Scotland’.

One rather amusing (to myself, not to the man who bought them) example of the quality of these products claiming to be imported from abroad came from a male friend, who will remain nameless, who purchased a packet of condoms from a pharmacy, only to find none of them able to fulfill the purpose for which they were intended. He had not been a proper frame of mind before using them to first check the all-English packaging, where he would have discovered the words: Made By Switzerland. He was worried about the possibility that his girlfriend had become pregnant. But I still couldn’t help joking that if that was the case, he should at least feel absolved of guilt: the entire Swiss nation had done its best to prevent the pregnancy, what more could you ask for?

At this time, pursuing product quality was still almost an alien concept that didn't make a lot of sense to many people, including some of my English students from a trading company, who argued against it. The idea of making products of such a high quality that they could be used for years on end sounded to many people to be self-defeating. If that happened, the buyers would not

come back soon enough to buy more. What these people failed to realise was that buyers would only come to buy more junk when it was only junk that was available, which was rarely the case in their target countries for export. If better quality products with longer lives were available, few would want to buy another instance of the same cheap product that had let them down two days after the warranty expired.

In the long-term, as China, India, and the ASEAN states became better able to compete with Taiwan in terms of mass production of cheap goods, this reluctance to pursue quality worked against Taiwan, because it simply could not compete in terms of labour costs. Unlike South Korea's conglomerates, most of Taiwan's small and medium-sized enterprizes didn't have much capital available to invest in diversifying their product lines and researching possibilities in new fields, and so many became locked in price battles they were inevitably doomed to lose. But, back in the late 1980s, the economy was still on the up and up, and people were not willing to waste valuable work time considering this looming problem.

Throw that Contract Away!

As for the role of foreign nationals in Taiwan's fast-expanding export-oriented economy of the late 1980s, there was a seemingly unquenchable thirst for native English speakers, especially English teachers, to fuel this growth. The government recognised this and did all it could to see that this demand was met, without compromising on any of its own principles.

As mentioned earlier, the government liked to be unfettered with respect to foreign nationals living in Taiwan and maintain the ability to easily deport any who happened to get too interested in the island's politics. For that reason, professional English teachers with legal work permits and contracts were not desired and few professionals would have been interested in taking up posts lasting less than a year anyway. From the government's point of view, that was the maximum time it wanted foreign nationals in the country. The ideal English teacher was the reasonably well-educated native English speaker who spends a few months to a year teaching English to pay for his stay in Taiwan and study of Mandarin; one who had enough time to learn something of the beauty and superiority of Chinese culture, but not enough time to develop an unhealthy interest in the island's recent history or its abysmal inter-ethnic relations.

It was possible for a foreign national to live and work legally in Taiwan in the

late 1980s, but the restrictions on eligibility for that were so tight that few people qualified. Of the hundreds of foreign nationals I knew personally, met, or knew of, in the last years of the decade, I knew of only a handful who actually had work permits.

Generally, employers wanted a freer hand in employing foreign nationals and were constantly making that clear, but government was very reluctant to loosen the rules, realising the possible political and social consequences.

An example of how this worked, and didn't work was a new language school I worked at in 1989, called Great Time English. The school's organisation was well-planned and it grew rapidly to become one of Taiwan's biggest language schools within the space of half a year, opening up branches all over the capital.

Each branch had a native English-speaking 'director' who co-ordinated with other native English-speaking teachers at his or her branch. I was one, at the Keelung Road branch. The head office had a 'chief director' of native English-speaking teachers who co-ordinated with all the branch directors. This was Andy, the previously-mentioned American ex-serviceman.

Andy drew up a contract offering all the branch directors work permits and guaranteed minimum salaries. The chairman of the company was only too glad to offer this, and put his seal on each of the contracts. This was early summer, the beginning of the school holidays (when many children would take daytime English classes), and he couldn't risk not having enough of the native English-speaking teachers that the school’s promotional material boasted of. Unbeknownst to us, however, the company had no way to provide these work permits to us as it didn't meet the relevant government requirements.

Andy continued to push for our work permits throughout the busy summer period, becoming increasingly disgruntled with the lack of progress. Finally, September arrived, and the chairman decided that Andy and the various branch directors could know the truth: that he couldn't provide work permits for them anyway. Another employee at the head office took responsibility to draw up a new contract, that didn't promise a work permit, and he phoned me to ask me to throw my original contract away. Andy also phoned me on the same day to tell me the company was planning to renege on its work permit promise, and ask me not to throw my contract away.

The chairman told Andy he had hoped that the government would loosen the restrictions on employing foreigners, but that hadn't happened. Andy was not happy with this, but left it as it was until there was a meeting of the board of

directors, all of whom were also foreign nationals, who had travelled to Taipei principally for this meeting.

According to Andy's description of events, the chairman of the company had given a dishonest spiel at the opening of this meeting, boasting that the company arranged work permits for all its branch directors. When Andy's time came to address the company's investors, he set the record straight, explaining all the difficulties that had been created for individual branch directors by the broken promise that had been made with respect to work permits, and he produced his copy of the original contract to prove this promise.

The staff member who had drawn up the replacement contract, had also been invited to sit in on the meeting, and he reacted angrily, banging the table and telling Andy: "I told you to throw that contract away!" and then explaining to the shareholders that Andy's contract had been made by mistake and since been replaced with a better one.

The shareholders were shocked at all this. Most subsequently pulled out of the company, which collapsed a few months later and closed all its branches.

Still, I remained un-blissfully unaware of why exactly the company had not been able to fulfil its promises. I assumed it was just because cram schools or other private educational institutes that were not eligible to arrange work permits. Early the next year, 1990, I decided to try for a legitimate job with a work permit elsewhere, and the *China Post* newspaper was one of the first places I tried.

At the Post, I was interviewed by the proprietor, a first-generation mainland Chinese immigrant named Nancy Yu Huang. She seemed a little surprised that there even were foreign nationals living locally who could read Chinese well enough to translate and tested me by asking me to read an article from a local paper she had on her desk at the time. She seemed pleased with the result and suggested I start as a proofreader, as a position had just become vacant. Later, I may be able progress to the position of assistant editor. She also asked why I had left my previous job. I explained the work permit problem and made it clear that I was really looking for a job that could provide one. That shouldn't be a problem, she told me, but I had to complete a trial month first.

So, I did. Then another month, and another month. Again, I had been forced to travel to Hong Kong to apply for a new visa, and still there was no sign of any work permit. I asked the chief editor, a middle-aged local man with the English name of Paul, and he told me he had mentioned the matter twice to the

manageress. A characteristic of work in the editorial room was that it got busier and busier closer to the time the paper went to print, typically shortly after midnight. By that time, everyone was overwhelmed with work. But Paul always seemed to be overwhelmed with work, even when I arrived for work in the late afternoon. I didn't like to keep bothering him, but after several more months, there was still no sign of a work permit.

Finally, while in conversation with one of the two assistant editors, an American of around my own age, he revealed that I wasn't the only one waiting. At least four others in the editorial room were waiting, including himself. What was holding things up then, I asked? It transpired that a legal requirement was that a company had to hire a minimum of 20 ROC nationals for every foreign national hired. With a total workforce just shy of 100, the company was only able to provide work permits for four foreign nationals. Needless to say, it already had, and there were at least four more, including myself, waiting for them to leave.

All four of those waiting held higher positions than myself. I gave up any illusions that I would be chosen to receive the next work permit to be applied for, and after the time-honoured practice of waiting until the Lunar New Year holidays had passed, began looking for another job.

It goes without saying that all this money earned by foreign nationals in the 1980s was paid cash-in-hand. Even those few people with work permits and ostensibly paying income tax were paid cash in those days, as were all local employees. Even several years later, in 1991, when working as an illegally employed legal secretary in a law firm, my salary was paid in cash, and tax-free.

Today, getting paid tax-free, cash-in-hand is often made to sound like a serious crime, but in fact that's only because the Taiwan government was forced to adopt the same system of tax revenue as most first-world countries. In the 1980s, the most significant form of tax revenue was that which came from goods, particularly luxury and imported goods. In those days, when salaries were paid in cash rather than through bank transfers, it would have been very difficult to enforce the level of controls on income tax payment that are in place today. On the other hand, it was easy to ensure that luxury goods imported from abroad were properly taxed. This mode of tax revenue had to be abandoned when Taiwan committed itself to joining the World Trade Organisation in the late 1990s (it was actually made a member in late 2001), because that meant also committing Taiwan to reducing import tariffs. According to a news report I read in 1986, the National Taxation Bureau estimated that only about 8% of the working population were paying the full income tax they were supposed to!

One bizarre aspect of earning money as a foreigner in Taiwan in the 1980s was that whatever cash you earned could become virtually worthless if you weren't careful! Apart from in Hong Kong, and in the ever-smaller number of countries that maintained full diplomatic relations with the ROC, the New Taiwan Dollar was not convertible. I heard stories of people who worked as English teachers in Taiwan, then returned to their home countries only to find no bank would exchange their currency! Their money could only be used by either returning, or visiting a country that recognised the ROC. By that time, there were already no such countries in Europe, and even in east Asia there was only South Korea and Singapore. Living on a tourist visa, you were not supposed to have a lot of the local currency in cash or questions would arise as to why you did, so buying US dollars (most local banks with foreign currency exchanges only had US dollars and Japanese Yen) was not an option. Many people exchanged their NT dollars for Hong Kong dollars in Hong Kong before going elsewhere. A legally-resident American Christian pastor, who was allowed to exchange NT dollars locally provided a free exchange service to foreigners living in Taiwan, and this is what I used when I visited the UK in 1987. Still, using either this option or flying first to Hong Kong, meant changing money twice and losing a little on the exchange twice.

Lazy Sunday Afternoon

From the point of view of the average working western European, it would probably be safe to say that most of the working-age population in Taiwan in the 1980s and early 1990s had no leisure life to speak of. In reality, there was some leisure, but by first-world country standards it would seem negligible.

This was especially the case for married men with children. Working long hours six days a week, for many middle-aged males ‘leisure’ would account for no more than a few hours with the wife and kids on a Sunday afternoon, perhaps visiting relatives, or perhaps relaxing in the park, weather permitting.

In theory, Taiwanese office workers of the era worked a five-and-a-half day week, finishing work at Saturday lunch time. But that was only the theory. In reality, many would have to work all day Saturday, and some, especially in smaller companies, would work overtime everyday and even work Sunday mornings. One thing that stayed in my memory from the year before I arrived in Taiwan (1985), working at a factory in Rotterdam, was the factory’s promise to the workers (advertised proudly at various locations around the plant) of "’36

in ’86”, by which was meant a 36-hour working week in 1986 (down from 38). In Taipei, I hardly ever encountered anyone who worked less than 46 hours a week!

Overtime was rarely paid, unless the boss felt you deserved it and had made sufficient profits to justify it. Although laws existed on the number of hours that could be demanded of an employee and what constituted overtime, there was little that employees could do to express their dissatisfaction with this mistreatment, other than leave the company, typically after receiving their Lunar New Year's bonus. To take legal action against an employer while still at the company would mean missing out on the (possible) year’s end bonus. This was, and still is, a custom.

The ruling party never had the interests of the ordinary working man or woman at heart. Even as Taiwan slowly democratised, the KMT continued to curry favour only with the magnates of industry (and of course, gangsters); the little people’s votes could always be bought on election day if necessary. As mentioned earlier, what unions existed were owned or controlled by the government anyway, and they were certainly not interested in protecting the rights of workers where they conflicted with management.

At the time, although Taiwan’s economy was booming, salaries were still a long way from first-world levels. And yet, Taiwan managed to produce more than its fair share of the super-rich. For example, in 1988, Y.C. Wang, owner of Formosa Plastics, the largest corporation in Taiwan at the time, had an estimated fortune that made him the 11th-richest person in the world, according to Forbes magazine, up there with many far more well-known personages, such as Queen Elizabeth of Britain and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, not to mention well ahead of Hong Kong's best-known tycoon, Li Ka-shing.

But for those who still hadn’t ‘entered society’, meaning those still in schooling, whether at high school, vocational college, or university, there was a thirst for more leisure and more interesting leisure, but little to satisfy this thirst. Hence an increase in petty crime and in illegal activities like ‘street racing’; racing motorcycles on city streets, usually very late at night, often with fatal results.

One interesting leisure phenomenon of the era, and one which I spent a lot of time engaged with was the ‘MTV’.

MTVs took their inspiration from ‘Music Television’, an American pay television channel that began broadcasting in the early ‘80s. They started out as music television cafés, with music TV playing constantly in the seating areas of

the café. But they also offered videos that could be rented and viewed in private on the premises. This is what 'MTV' meant for most people in Taiwan at that time.

At an MTV, a customer would choose a video from a selection of videotapes (or, later, laser discs), take it to a small room or cubicle, and watch it. At least that's what I did with most of mine, but it can be safely assumed a very high percentage of films were never really watched. For me, the MTV was more often than not a place I could kill a couple of idle hours between English classes, without having to go anywhere (there were MTV parlours all over the place). But for many, especially young lovers, MTV's were primarily a place where they could be alone, together. Even married couples, if they lived in the traditional 'three generations under one roof' household (that is, in the same house or apartment as their parents, as well as their children), needed to be alone sometimes!

MTVs began to lose their popularity as personal computers became capable of handling more than tasks such as word-processing, e-mail, and simple games like the set provided free with every version of MS Windows. As PCs became capable of downloading videos within reasonable amounts of time in the late 1990s, and displaying them at visually pleasing resolutions, MTVs fell out of favour. Some converted to KTV, a home theatre-style karaoke.

The Cost of Wealth

The relatively rapid growth in wealth did not come without a cost. Apart from the cost on morals, there was also a very obvious cost on the environment. The most obvious of which was air pollution.

Due to the smog in the spring of 1986, along with generally wet weather, it wasn't until after I had been in Taiwan for well over a month that I became aware of Taipei's geographical characteristics. On that day, there had just been a heavy March rainfall, which had cleared, leaving blue skies that the air pollution had not yet risen to obscure. I was not far from the Shida campus area, on the corner of Hoping East Road and Xinsheng South Road, where there was a pedestrian overpass. Looking directly north up Xinsheng South Road as I crossed the overpass, I was stunned to see the mountains of the Yangmingshan National Park in all their sparkling clean beauty, looking like they were no more than a dozen kilometres or so away, which in fact they were! I had never suspected it.

Initially, the government's attitude to air pollution was not a lot different than that of the shopkeeper mentioned a little later in this chapter. As pollution worsened, however, various proposals were made to counter it, such as establishing a rapid transit rail system, or metro.

The Taipei Metro was Taiwan's first such system. Approved for construction as early as 1986, work on the system didn't actually commence until two years later, as the government hummed and hawed about whether it really was necessary. Building a metro system presented local and central government with an unprecedented, and unwanted dilemma. No local company had the necessary know-how. A French company named Matra was eventually commissioned to handle the construction of the first line. By this time, I was living only a short walk from one of the planned stations, close to the corner of Fuxing South Road and Hoping East Road. My imagination ran riot; perhaps soon I would be hopping on the metro to travel to my various work destinations, escaping the ever-worsening air pollution for at least a good deal of my travel time. I was overly-optimistic.

There was a problem. Matra expected a free hand in who it hired to carry out the work. From their point of view, anyone with experience in metro construction was preferable to people without relevant experience, included many semi-skilled and even unskilled workers. Taiwan expected to give work permits only to those Matra employees whose expertise absolutely could not be done without, as with any other foreign nationals, and wanted everyone else employed to be a local. For this reason, long delays ensued while this tug-of-war went on, with Matra having to justify every single foreign national it deemed necessary to 'import'. By the time the first line actually opened in 1996, a full six years after I was forced to move out of the flat near the metro station I had imagined using, the system was already the most expensive rapid transit system ever constructed.

7-11 stores, and other convenience stores proliferated to the point where you could expect to see one at least on every corner in urban areas, while environmental awareness didn't spread anything like as quickly, and the result was serious litter problems. Fines for littering have always been high in Taiwan, but I never heard of a case where anyone actually was fined. Rubbish bins were woefully lacking on the streets; expecting people to carry home all the packaging that came with meals, drinks and snacks was obviously too much.

Stray dogs were a problem too, as they still are today, but in those days they were dealt with simply by throwing them down a deep well which every unit responsible for capturing strays had. The weight of the dogs on top slowly

crushed those below. Government was not willing to spend anything more on the problem than that approach entailed. Slowly, more humane methods were introduced, beginning with lethal injections for those that remained unclaimed after several weeks, and progressing to neutering all strays and keeping as many as can be kept, indefinitely, while neutered cats now more often than not - due to their numbers - remain strays.

At the root of all these problem, again, was a central government which didn't consider itself in Taiwan permanently. If central government saw Taipei only as a 'provisional' capital, how could local government expect it to allocate sufficient funds to look after the environment properly?

Chapter Two: A Foreigner's Lot

This chapter deals with daily life back in the days of the late 1980s as Taiwan was finally beginning to open up to the outside world. Of course, that means principally daily life for a foreign national in the country, as that was what I was, but it should also provide some insight into how things were and how things were seen to be by the population as a whole

Tongue-tied in Taitung

One of the items top on the list of things needing attention for any traveller going to a foreign country where his or her own language is not widely spoken, is how to communicate with the population at large. That could include consideration of whether or not it would be worthwhile to take formal language classes in the official language of the country in question.

After arriving in Taiwan, my original intention was to take the same approach to the local languages as I had taken with Thai: I would learn the basic conversation necessary to help me get around and make myself understood, without even attempting to learn the written language. The Thai written language seemed formidable enough to decide me against even considering learning it; learning Chinese characters seemed like an even more daunting prospect. Nevertheless, I was confident that learning to speak the language reasonably well would be a straightforward affair, and I had a phrasebook without a single Chinese character in it to help me with this.

However, I encountered some language problems from day one. These stemmed from a bizarre system of transliteration in place in Taiwan at the time (and, to a much lesser degree, even today in 2019). This system of romanisation was (and is) known as the Wade-Giles system.

Thomas Wade and Herbert Giles were a couple of apparently hearing-impaired British diplomats and Sinologist (both were both) who heard all 'b' sounds as 'p' sounds, 'd' sounds as 't' sounds, and 'j' sounds as 'k' sounds. In 1867, Wade

established this bizarre phonetic system and it was further 'refined' by Giles in 1892. If their system were applied to English, it would result in English students pronouncing 'bumble bee' as 'pumple pee', 'deaf and dumb' as 'teaf and tumb', and 'jump for joy' as 'kump for koy'. Speaking English like this, who could seriously expect to be understood? Little wonder then that many people in Taiwan developed the notion that correct pronunciation of Chinese was something foreigners were congenitally incapable of.

In this system, the 'b' sound of English (and other European languages) is represented by a letter 'p'. All readers will be familiar with the word ‘Taipei’, which is actually pronounced ‘Taibei’. But that’s nothing. An English 'j' sound is represented with a letter 'k', an 'o' sound is rendered with a letter 'u', an 'r' sound with a letter 'j', and so on. In short, the end result is a bunch of names for places and things, many of which bear little of no similarity to the actual sound in Chinese. Only after being in Taiwan for several weeks did I begin to realise that the place I had heard being called 'Jilong' was in fact the same place written on my map as 'Keelung'; the place I had heard being called Taidong was the place written on my map as 'Taitung', and so on. The university my first English student had just graduated from was called 'Danjiang University'. But when this student asked me to edit letters of recommendation she had written to be signed by her teachers there, I discovered that the place was written in English as 'Tamkang University'! Who would even guess they were the same place?

The best of all is the 'sh' sound, which is written in the Wade-Giles system as 'hs'! Thus, in my Mandarin phrasebook for travellers, 'Thank you' was written as 'Hsieh-hsieh'. As no word in English (or German, or French) begins with 'hs', I had no idea how this word was to be pronounced. 'Thank you' must be one of the most basic components of simple conversation for any traveller anywhere, but after nearly a week in Taiwan, all my attempts to say this had been met with looks of incomprehension. I had never encountered any difficulty in saying such a simple thing in other languages, and found it embarrassing even to ask anyone at the hostel how to say something so simple as 'Thank you'. Then, just as I was about to make another of my ridiculously aspirated 'Hsieh-hsiehs', I happened to hear another customer at the shop I was at thank the shopkeeper. I imitated that woman and had no problems being understood. I decided there and then that going by my phrasebook was a complete waste of time, and vowed to learn Chinese in a school, where I could get a better grasp of pronunciation regardless of the system of romanisation the school used.

Fortunately, the first thing I did learn in my Mandarin language course was a simple phonetic system called 'bo-po-mo-fo', or more formally, zhuyin fuhao.

This system required a week or two of very hard work memorising the phonetic symbols, but once that was done, the Mandarin pronunciation of any Chinese character could be made accurately and with little effort. This phonetic system seemed like a separate language at first, and I was initially very reluctant to try learning it. But I knew there was no alternative; I didn't want to waste any more time trying to learn to speak the language with the aid of the Wade-Giles system. Zhuyin fuhao turned out to be relatively easy to master and having done so I could appreciate why it is taught to children at primary school.

Then I started actually getting to grips with the language itself. Imagine my relief at learning the simplicity of Chinese grammar. There are no genders assigned to nouns, unlike in French or German. There is also very little tense, usually just a 'le' (pronounced as the French 'le') to indicate past tense, or the insertion of the word 'already' into a sentence. Unlike English, but like many other languages, there is a polite 'you' ('nin') and a familiar 'you' ('ni') in Mandarin, but in practice there was never any need to use the polite 'you'. In over 30 years in Taiwan, I have never used it to anybody and nobody has ever used it to me (except in writing, where it is common). In short, by being in Taiwan and having to learn Chinese in order to communicate, I discovered that far from being one of the most difficult languages in the world to learn, Chinese (particularly Mandarin Chinese) turned out to be one of the easiest, for me at least.

The only difficulty (from the point of view of speakers of non-tonal languages) is in the tones, but the tones can be easily learnt by rote. After hearing and/or speaking a character according to the correct tone a few hundred times it becomes hard to pronounce the character any other way. This is by far the most difficult aspect of learning Chinese, and it does take some time to master, but in terms of difficulty, is in no way comparable to the complexity of tense in most European languages.

I Know You're British. But, Which State are You From?

In the previously mentioned Formosa Betrayed, by George Kerr, the author pointed out a strange phenomenon in which local Taiwanese insisted on referring to Spanish UN peacekeepers as "American", even after having been told they were Spanish. In this respect, things had not changed at all in the four decades since Kerr was posted to the island.

Often I would have to remind people, even friends, again and again, that I wasn't

American, and hadn't even been to the United States, so in many respects I could tell them little more about life in the US than they already knew.

The assumption among the overwhelming majority of Taiwan's population, native-born Taiwanese or otherwise, was that all white people were American, and all white people spoke (American) English as their native language. There may have been a few exceptions, and there were certainly American blacks too, but for the most part it was considered safe to assume that any Caucasian encountered could be spoken to English, often asking as an introduction: "Which state are you from?"

This is what happened to me at a general store close to where I was living in 1987. Of course, it also happened on too many other occasions to mention, but this interaction also highlights some other aspects of the Chinese 'national character', and some other aspects of the Taiwan worldview during this era, so it stays in my mind.

As I placed the items I wanted to buy on the counter, the shopkeeper, a man in his 40s who seemed very amiable, asked me various questions, having discovered I could speak Mandarin: "Which state are you from?" was the first.

"I'm from England. The old one, not New England state in America".

"Oh. So, is there a difference?"

"I guess so", I replied, then added jokingly: "Different continents for a start!"

"Oh. And do you like living in Taiwan??

"Yes, I like the climate, and I love the food. Don't like the air pollution in Taipei, though."

Air pollution was of course a serious and growing problem in Taipei. Anyone who failed to notice that would have to have had major problems with their senses of sight and smell. But many people bristled at the suggestion coming from a foreigner that there was an air pollution problem, and on several occasions when I mentioned this, I was even told angrily that there was no air pollution in Taipei!

The shopkeeper stiffened and shoved my things towards me, having calculated their cost. "I suppose you don't have air pollution in New York, then? Don't you have cars? Never mind, you'll get them there eventually."

"Well, I don't really know about New York," I retorted, "I've never been there."

"Ha! You've never been there!" The shopkeeper took my money, handed me the change, then looked at me squarely, setting his hands widely on the counter as he re-assessed me. I slight look of disdain crossed his face. "You're a real bumpkin, aren't you? You've never even been to your own capital! How did you ever get a passport? Did you steal it?"

I didn't point out to this sophisticated fellow that New York wasn't the capital of the United States, but merely reiterated that I wasn't from America, and added that even bumkins were allowed to apply for passports in the UK.

It may seem strange that I would go back to this shop after an exchange like that. But by this time, I had been in Taiwan over two years and had become quite thick-skinned. I knew some locals could be incredibly sensitive to criticism, especially coming from a foreigner. But I saw no reason to shy away from commenting on obvious problems like the air pollution and would have felt ridiculous pretending not to notice it. So I went back to this conveniently located shop many times over the subsequent year.

The next time I went there, the shopkeeper, back in an amiable mood as if the previous exchange had never occurred, told me that there had been another American living in the neighbourhood the previous year, named Bob. Did I know him? I told him I didn't, but couldn't help noticing he had reverted to assuming I was American again. With many people, it was close to a complete waste of time to keep reiterating that I wasn't American. And many others considered any assumed differences between Americans and Europeans to be negligible anyway and hardly worth making a claim to, so often I just let people assume I was American if I found they couldn't or wouldn't take it in that I wasn't American.

The term 'foreigner' was also a synonym for 'American', and for most people it meant, not so much a person with a foreign nationality, as a white, black, or other non-Asian person. East Asians, especially Koreans and Vietnamese, whose countries had both once been part of Chinese empires, were not regarded as foreigners at all by most people in the Taiwan of the time. Today, in 2019, there are large populations of South-east Asians living in Taiwan (particularly Indonesians and Vietnamese), but for the first four years I spent in Taiwan, I didn't meet, see, or know of any, save for one (ethnic Chinese) Singaporean I knew who was studying at Taida.

Europe's English Dialects

Most white people in Taiwan at that time probably were indeed American, but there were certainly many who were not. Three Italian girls I knew shared a flat with a Canadian IFC teacher and his Chinese girlfriend. None of them spoke any English at all. All of them were studying at Shida's Mandarin Training Center, so they were able to communicate in Chinese. One day, I ran into two of them, waiting alone at a bus stop near National Taiwan University. I exchanged greetings with them, and at the same time a man in office attire in his early 30s also walked up to the bus stop.

The man began speaking to one of the girls, asking where she was from, how long she had been in Taiwan an so on. The girl shrugged apologetically, and told him in Mandarin that she didn't understand. The man began again, repeating the same questions, still in English. I told him in both Mandarin and English that the girls didn't speak English.

"Ha! Foreigners who don't speak English! You're very funny." He then asked me the same questions he had just asked the Italian girl. Having got his answers, he turned to the other Italian girl, and asked her if she was also from the UK? She answered again, in Mandarin, that she didn't speak English.

I added that both girls were Italian, here to learn Chinese, and neither spoke English. The man laughed again, as if it were a joke. "Italians who don't speak English! You think you can fool me! So, what is the language of Italy, then, if not English?"

"It's Italian, of course. Not everybody in Italy can speak English," I explained.

The man looked at me, arms folded, without speaking, as if assessing what was going on. Was I having a laugh at him at his expense? Did I really believe Italians didn't speak English? What was going on, he must have been asking himself?

Finally, he told me: "Friend, I'm not so easy to fool! I know Italians speak English. I've seen Italian wines and their labels are all in English characters." This he told me in Chinese, causing some confused looks with the Italian girls. "Italian is just a dialect," he continued, "like Taiwanese is a Chinese dialect. Are you trying to tell me that young people, from a modern Western country can only speak dialect and can't speak standard English?"

The idea that Italian was an English dialect caused immediate disagreement with

the two girls, who tried to set the man straight. I knew the problem though, as I had encountered it before. Comparing English to Chinese, the man firmly believed Italian (and other European languages) to be dialects of English like Taiwanese or Cantonese were dialects of Chinese, that all shared the same written characters. For us, that was the Roman alphabet, which he referred to as "English characters". Only a small percentage of the population of Taiwan could not speak Mandarin, usually old people in remote areas. Thus, he found it inconceivable that young people from a modern Western country could not speak the standard dialect.

I told the man that although he was basically correct (there was no point in continuing to try to correct him), just as many Cantonese speakers would not understand him if he spoke to them in Taiwanese, many speakers of Europe's other English dialects didn't understand the standard, official dialect. The girls found my explanation amusing, and while it didn't help the man understand the reality, he did at least stop trying to communicate with them in English. Incidents like this were common in the late 1980s.

Putting On a Show

One thing I never understood, and still don't fully understand is a strange phenomenon by which local people, who evidently don't speak English among themselves during their daily lives in Taiwan, do so whenever some foreign-looking fellow is within earshot. This kind of situation still exists today, in 2018.

It seems obvious to me that anybody who had stayed in Taiwan for any significant period of time would know that the normal languages of communication for the vast majority of people are Mandarin and Taiwanese. And almost equally obvious that local people would be aware of the fact that foreigners knew that most local people spoke Mandarin or Taiwan among themselves and not English. Yet, upon becoming aware that a foreigner - probably English-speaking - is in their midst, some local people will suddenly switch to English. Why they feel compelled to do this I have no idea.

One occasion when this happened to me in the late 1980s stays in my mind. Along with several friends, I was hitch-hiking the Southern Cross-Island Highway from Taitung to Kaohsiung. Most of the time, hitching meant walking, as hitch-hiking was very uncommon in Taiwan, and getting a lift was rare indeed. However, some of us had, and I had been separated from them and left a little way behind, walking alone. Coming to a small village, really just a

collection of about a dozen roadside houses, I stopped at a breakfast restaurant for a bite to eat. It was still cold at that elevation, and though I had been walking for over an hour, I still felt so, so I took the *xiaobing* with egg and the hot soybean milk drink I had ordered as a takeaway and consumed them sitting on a large rock on the other side of the road, thawing out in the morning sunshine while reading a local newspaper I had also just picked up. After a couple of minutes, a tour bus from Taitung arrived and about a dozen people left the bus to buy something to eat.

Three men in their late 20s or early 30s bought a can of Taiwan Beer each (there are no time restrictions on the sale and consumption of alcohol in Taiwan), and began drinking, also standing in the early morning sunshine. Their conversation was initially in Taiwanese, but then one noticed me and they turned to English: "Good beer!" he said.

"Yes, good beer," one of the other two agreed. They both looked at the third, who didn't seem to have anything to add but a smile. Finally, the second man asked the third: "You feel? Is beer good?"

"Yes," he finally agreed, "good beer!"

A silence set in. The first man, once again, got the conversation rolling. "Today, mountains area is very good."

"What is good?" asked the second man.

"Mountains area is good."

"Yes, I know. But what is good about mountains area?"

"Ah, I know you mean. Weather. Weather is good in mountains area."

The third man could hardly keep a straight face. He knew he was expected to say something, but couldn't think of anything. Finally, he just said, "Yes!"

Then, the bus driver called the passengers back to the bus and got in it. The first man, once again took the initiative, with "Let's go!", throwing his empty beer can over his shoulder (as mentioned earlier, there was virtually no 'environmental awareness' in Taiwan in that era). The other two copied his speech and actions precisely!

Chapter Three: Learning From Local Life

Much can be learnt from immersing oneself in any society, anywhere. But I would say that much more could be learnt, and in fact would be learnt whether one liked it or not, by living in a society like Taiwan's in the 1980s.

In those days, the option of burying one's face in the screen of a smartphone, and the American-oriented Internet culture provided by commercial organisations like Google, Apple, Facebook, Microsoft, Yahoo and so on, did not exist.

The world outside Taiwan was really only there when we purposely went out to it, especially in 1986 and '87, before political reform really began to take hold. Some of the English teachers and Mandarin students I knew would refer to our enforced visa trips to Hong Kong as 'returning to the civilised world', and in many ways that term, though not intended to be taken seriously, did seem fitting. By comparison to Taiwan, Hong Kong was far, far more internationised. For news of the 'outside world' in Hong Kong, instead of a couple of closely-censored English news sheets, there were magazines and newspapers from all over the world, and even the territory's own local newspapers, the South China Morning Post and the Hongkong Standard were many times more substantial than Taiwan's counterparts. Hong Kong's media industry was obviously, just like the economy in general, far more freewheeling and free from government interference than Taiwan's and you could read about virtually anything you wanted.

There were other ways the British colony seemed more civilised than Taiwan too. One memory that stays in my mind was when I arrived in the territory to renew my visa a couple of days after my Swiss friend, Daniel, had gone there from Taiwan for the same purpose, and I met up with him on Hong Kong Island.

While walking across a zebra crossing, with the lights changing against us, Daniel gestured at the vehicles to his right: "Look at this! Nobody is even sounding their horn, let alone trying to run us down! These people are civilised!" He had then decided he was going to do everything he could to delay his return to Taiwan, even if it meant making up stories to convince his girlfriend in Taipei that he had no choice but to linger in Hong Kong.

It was certainly true that back in Taipei you only had to step out onto the road to get your first lesson in the cultural differences from first-world countries. Even then, your experience would be limited by your mode of transport. It didn't take long, for example, for me to realise the dangers posed to pedestrians by vehicle drivers who took traffic lights as a 'reference' rather than a rule (I even had one English student who insisted that in Taiwan, traffic lights are only intended as such). I could see - from a pedestrian's view - that drivers didn't understand, or didn't want to understand the concept of'giving way' to the traffic that had priority. The predominant way of thinking was: 'I'm driving a two-ton truck, and you're riding a scooter: who do you think has priority?' But I was only able to see all this from a pedestrian's point of view at first.

I didn't see it from the point of view of someone else actually driving on the road, until I borrowed my landlord's scooter in late summer 1986, to ride to the north-east coast. I set out at first light on a Sunday morning, and slowed down as I saw the first set of traffic lights turn to red, as I had been taught to do while learning to drive in the UK. A taxi driver behind me - the only other person on the road - held his hand flat down on the horn as he swerved passed me to run the red light. At the time, I was furious! I had been riding in accordance with traffic regulations, and the driver had had the gall to sound his horn for about five seconds at me while he blatantly ran the red light! I soon got used to that, however, as the normal modus operandi on the road in Taiwan. In Taiwan, most drivers would take a traffic light changing to red as an indication that they had go flat out in order to make it to the other side before the traffic on the road at right angles to their road began moving. The only problem was, the traffic on that road usually couldn't wait for the lights to actually change, and would have to start moving 'in anticipation' of their lights changing to green! Of course, it doesn't take a genius to realise that this kind of behaviour will lead to problems. It still does, but in the 1980s, before the advent of traffic cameras, it was much worse.

All in all, I would say that the standard of driving in Taiwan in the 1980s was the worst I had seen anywhere, and that's a good few countries. The only comparable city I had encountered was Athens, Greece, where I lived in 1982, and where my cousin had been killed in a traffic accident several years earlier. During the 30+ years I've been in Taiwan, I've known four people killed in traffic accidents, and seen countless accidents. The highest number I counted within a one-hour journey on my scooter was four accidents, one of which looked serious.

But my point is this: Little things, such as the way people drive, can teach you

much about the culture and lifestyle of the people in any given place.

Of course, the way most foreigners in Taiwan learnt about the culture was from language lessons, and this was initially the same for me. I enrolled in classes at the well-known Mandarin Training Center at Shida (National Taiwan Normal University). This reputable language school had been running for many years and a number of well-known public figures are included in the list of past students, such as the Australian politician Kevin Rudd.

As everywhere else in Taipei at the time (I later discovered) classes were conducted in a fake Beijing accent, which I wasn't keen on as it was evidently not the way most people talked. But the worst thing was the teaching material, a musty old hardback book entitled *Speak Chinese*, that had been in print, without revision, for several decades. After a couple of weeks, I decided to take a look around for somewhere a bit more progressive, and found a small place on Xinyi Road (a kilometre or more away to the north). It turned out to be even worse, and used the same book (probably without permission)!

I was walking away from classes from this new school when I ran into my former teacher from Shida, a slim fellow of around my own age with a very energetic and enthusiastic manner, at least when not teaching. “Hi, Alix! How are you? I haven’t seen you in class for a while!”

“Oh, I’m OK, thanks. No, I’ve been busy teaching…”

“Lobo is coming, Alix. Lobo!”

“Lobo?” I asked. I didn’t want admit that I had no idea what he was talking about. My mind turned to the spread of herpes a few years previously, and then the far more terrible, and at that time incurable, AIDS (pronounced ‘A-I-D-S’ in Taiwan), which had recently spread from central Africa to north America and elsewhere.

“Yes, Lobo is coming to Taiwan today!”

“Can it be avoided?”

“What?”

“Well, I mean…OK, I have to admit, I don’t know: what is Lobo?”

He laughed. “What is Lobo? Are you joking? Lobo, the famous singer, from America! Do you want to see if we can still buy tickets? Maybe we can see

tomorrow's concert!"

I had never even heard of Lobo, but I didn't want to dampen his enthusiasm. "I'm not really that familiar with Lobo's music, I'm afraid. I've heard of him, of course, but he's not so popular in the UK....

"Oh," the young teacher said with a deflated tone, "I thought he was famous worldwide." Then, he suggested with a smile: "Maybe you just don't keep up with the pop music scene…?"

When I asked my girlfriend, Michelle, about this, she confirmed that Lobo was indeed very popular in Taiwan. And everyone else I mentioned the name to had also heard of this "famous American singer." In the closed society that Taiwan still was in the 1970s and early 1080s, it was possible for a moderately talented foreign artist to easily become established as a big fish in a little pool just by taking the effort to go there. There wasn't any competition. The first genuinely internationally well-known singer performing in Taipei as far as I am aware, was Tina Turner, about two years later in 1988.

So, you didn't really have to go out of your way to learn cultural differences in the 1980s, by taking any course in anything; things like this would just jump out at you every so often!

But my unchosen mode of cultural learning in the late 1980s was martial arts. Which is to say that I was learning martial arts in order to learn martial arts, not to learn about the culture, lifestyle, values, worldview, or whatever of the general population. But, inevitably, I learnt those too.

To begin with, I knew almost nothing about martial arts, apart from having previously known a karate practitioner and having seen some Bruce Lee movies.

So, when I began learning taekwondo, I didn't even know it was a Korean martial art, not a Chinese one. In Chinese martial arts, there is a saying that 'all martial arts originate from Shaolin', and Japan's various schools of karate are regarded (rightfully) as having originated in China. The same is not true of taekwondo, which developed separately, but this was glossed over by most practitioners, included my own school's master.

Master Jang was 'from' Shandong province (meaning that, of course, he was born and bred in Taiwan, but his parents were from Shandong province), and Master Jang preferred to think that taekwondo was related to northern Shaolin, although this is not in fact the case.

Another indication of culture gap at Master Jang's school came when one of the foreign students, a Canadian named Paul, noticed that there were two different fee levels; one for 'foreigners' and one for 'Chinese'. As Paul had been discussing taekwondo standards in Korea, as compared to Taiwan, with Master Jang (by that time I was aware that taekwondo was a Korean art), he asked the teacher: "So, I guess that includes Koreans? I mean, if we had a Korean student, he would pay the same fee as all us other foreigners, right?"

"No, no, of course not!" Master Jang replied.

"Well, Koreans are foreigners, aren't they? Why shouldn't a Korean pay to same fee as other foreigners, like us?"

The gulf in understanding of what a 'foreigner' was then became apparent. "Of course Koreans are not foreigners," Jang insisted.

"Well, they're not Chinese, are they?" Paul asked.

Master Jang thought about this for a moment. Then he gave a deep sigh. Koreans are Koreans, he said. Maybe, he suggested, he should have written his tuition fee levels as one level (the higher fee) for 'foreigners' and one level for 'Asians', but that was not exact either. Eventually, he decided to do away with this two-tier system completely, and simply charge all students the same fees regardless of nationality.

Two-tier fees were common in those days, although I have to say that my Shotokan karate teacher charged all students the same price. He told me he had considered the two fee levels model initially but the first non-ROC students he had had were the Iraqi national team for the Olympics. Or course, Iraqis were not locals, but then they weren't really foreigners either, he mused. So how should he have charged them? He decided not to make things complicated, and just charged all the same. The aikido school I trained at, which was probably one of the oldest in Taipei, charged a flat rate regardless of nationality.

The Shaolin kung-fu school I trained at, however, had government connections and so had to follow government guidelines in pricing, meaning one fee for ROC nationals and one for non-ROC nationals. This practice hall, located on the rooftop of a building in the city's Bade Road, was rented from the Republic of China Martial Arts Association. On the floor immediately below were other government-owned culture-related associations such as the Republic of China Acupuncture Association, the Republic of China Calligraphy Association, and - the one that caught my eye - the Republic of China Chigung Association. Master

Chen, who taught at this martial arts school, didn't like the government association's way of doing this, and eventually decided to pull out and rent his own premises.

This school gave me the most cultural insights.

As someone who had already trained in two Japanese martial arts and one Korean martial art, there were many differences in approach immediately obvious between those arts and the traditional Chinese martial arts - two varieties of Shaolin kung fu and one variety of Taiji - that were taught at this school.

The first and most obvious difference between the various schools and styles of Chinese martial arts and their Japanese and Korean counterparts is in grading. The Japanese and Korean arts I had trained in - and as far as I can tell, all other martial arts in those countries - use a coloured belt system to grade proficiency, starting with white belt and leading up to first-level black belt, and finally advanced black belts. All the Japanese and Korean arts belong to large, well-organised federations that decide rules, hold tests and issue internationally-recognised certification. Sub-black belt testing can be held in-house at the individual practice hall, but black belt testing is strictly controlled by the federations, which generally hold tests collectively for a number of schools in any given city or region. This way, standards are fairly much guaranteed.

On the other hand, grading methods can vary considerably from one Chinese martial arts school to the next, and some schools don't have any. A Chinese martial arts school may adopt the coloured belt system typical of Japanese and Korean arts, or it may not. Or it may use some variation on that, such as otherwise graded belts or uniforms, or it may use nothing at all. It may issue certificates for every test, or only for major ones. Or it may issue no certificates at all. It's entirely up to the person or people running the school. In a lot of small dojos (the better-known Japanese term for practice hall; the Chinese term is daoguan), all the student may receive in the way of recognition for years of practice is the master's verbal acknowledgment of this.

In the school I learnt Shaolin kung fu, no system of grading existed at first. Then, as the school's success grew rapidly, grading, certification and uniforms were introduced, but not insisted upon. Finally, as the school became the largest traditional Chinese martial arts school in Taiwan, uniforms were insisted on, although at the time I left, grading was only encouraged, not insisted upon.

A Lone Dragon or Team Pig

In The Ugly Chinese, Bo Yang compares Chinese and Japanese in their facility for teamwork. A single Chinese, he says, may be a 'dragon'. That is, an exceptional person; a person of outstanding ability and great achievements. However, a team of Chinese dragons does not add up to one big, collective dragon. A team of individual Chinese dragons is collectively nothing more than a pig. A single Japanese, however, taken individually, may be no more than a pig. Put him in a team of other pigs, though, and the result is not a big, collective pig, but a dragon.

When I was learning martial arts in the 1980s and 1990s, I took to watching martial arts films for inspiration, nearly all of which were made in Hong Kong. Some were, frankly, pretty awful. One of the most common features of the plots of these productions was inter-dojo rivalry. This usually escalated from members of one school using some underhand tricks or techniques to defeat members of another in some competition or other, into something approaching open warfare. Or perhaps one school would be involved in some kind of disreputable or criminal activities, led by a master who had chosen to walk the 'dark path'. Though a bit tiresome, I also sometimes found these excuses for displays of martial arts prowess mildly amusing. But as for stories of inter-dojo rivalry, I just found them had to believe, as everybody I knew involved in martial always demonstrated polite interest in other schools and styles.

Yet I had to admit, when it came to east Asian Chinese martial arts, Bo Yang's observation seemed to be right on the nail. A Chinese martial arts teacher could be a lone dragon, an exceptionally skilled practitioner and instructor. (Or he - she was very rare - may have been little more than a pig; without a strict grading system there was no way to know until you saw his skills first-hand). But try getting a bunch of these dragons together, and what do you have? Complete chaos, more often than not, with every individual convinced he is the one who should be running the show.

In Chinese martial arts, a teacher sets up his own school, within which he is the law. Students wishing to follow in his footsteps depend upon receiving his blessing. When they set up their own schools, teaching the same skills they learnt from him, they benefit from his good reputation, if he has one, and may take with them many of his students (if, for example, the new master's school is

more conveniently located for those students), usually with the grandmaster's tacit approval. The school's founder doesn't really lose much; he gains in reputation by having a second practice hall somewhere teaching the same system - his system.

As far as this works, it depends on the very feeble abilities of Chinese to co-operate among themselves, and not let their own egos get in the way. For this reason, while there are various (very various) Chinese martial arts 'federations' and 'associations' - in fact, a huge number of them, mostly mutually unrelated - they quickly tend towards less integrity as they grow, rather than more. It doesn't take long before some member/s of the federation realise they are wasting their time in this federation when they can do things much better themselves. And so they set up their own federation with a totally different way of doing things.

As Master Chen's school went from strength to strength, the time came when several of the first batch of students, who had been with the school from the beginning, were approaching fourth-level black belt standard, according to the system Master Chen had himself devised. Fourth-level black belt was good enough, the master had decided, to qualify to set up their own schools teaching his system. There were three students at or approaching this level. Master Chen suggested an association might be the next step, with a shared commitment by all to teach the same system. Each practice hall would be recognised by the others and students could switch between them if desired. Master Chen's dojo - the head dojo - could help in the setting up of the other dojos. All three students seemed very interested; their ambitions were the same - they were in it for life.

Then, suitable premises became available close to the home of one of the prospective new teachers, and he was selected to be the first of the three to open a dojo. The other two dropped out of the plan immediately. Apparently (according to Master Chen), one was incensed that he hadn't been chosen as the first one to set up the second practice hall, and the other despondent that the master had chosen to first back the student he did - and in preference to them. This was an arrangement neither of these two would-be instructors could accept. The angrier of the two students told the master he couldn't understand why he hadn't been chosen to run the first of the new practice halls, when he was obviously first in line in terms of skills and years spent learning.

The other potential candidate who had not been selected decided there and then to give up all his long-standing martial arts ambitions. Putting it all down to experience, he took a philosophical approach: he had wasted his time through no fault of his own. He had been misled...but that was life. According to a fellow

student who met him by chance a couple of years later, he hadn't practiced martial arts at all since.

The angrier, unselected former student was not taking it lying down, however. Within a few weeks of his dropping out of Chen's school, a new Shaolin kung fu school appeared a couple of hundred metres down the road from Master Chen's own. Reports were that the system taught was virtually the same as Chen's, but the name of the system was that of the former student himself, and the tuition fees were barely half of Chen's. Promotional material advertised the school as a place to learn genuine Chinese martial arts at a reasonable price, rather than risk being taken for a ride by one of the many bogus over-charging instructors around.

You Get What You Pay For

But the biggest cultural lesson learnt, albeit indirectly, from this martial arts school came to me only shortly after enrolling for classes.

I had always been interested in learning Chigung (written in pinyin a Qigong). This meant not only ‘martial arts chigung’ which was only one kind of chigung, and I could learn this at Master Chen's school, but chigung for general health and for spiritual development, too.

The practice hall was on the 11th floor, and the various other cultural associations on the 10th. I knew that all I had to do was step out of the elevator on the 10th floor, ask the counter staff at the ROC Chigung Association, and they would certainly be able to tell me how and where to go about learning chigung. However, I was always pretty exhausted after class, and kept making excuses to myself not to do so.

What pushed me into action was a seemingly insignificant thing that happened when I left the martial arts practice hall one day and the lift stopped on the floor below. A man in this thirties stepped in, with two of the staff from the ROC Acupuncture Association, who seemed to be on their lunch break. The man was in a very good mood, holding a large, impressive-looking certificate that he unrolled and looked at for a moment, making some comment to the staff about it. Being stood behind them, I noticed the certificate was for acupuncture (and was partly in English) and asked the man if he had been studying acupuncture? He confirmed that he had and told me he was going to go the United States (literally, 'your America') to open an acupuncture clinic. It seemed like a nice little success

story. I rather envied him, and thought it would be nice to have similar certification if ever I found myself living back in the UK.

The next class, I arrived 10 minutes early and went into the ROC Chigung Association's office first to ask about taking classes. The girl at the counter told me they didn't hold classes. I told her I understood that, but could she tell me of a reputable school where I could? I knew there were many bogus chigung schools, and some schools were very expensive; I figured the government-approved ones would have to meet certain reasonable criteria.

The girl smiled and explained that the office was a certificate-issuance office and didn't have information on schools. But surely they had a list of the schools in the association, I asked. No, she told me, they only issued certificates.

After class, I went to ask Master Chen about this matter, which I felt was a very strange one. He sat at his desk sipping tea, his smile growing ever-broader as I told him what had happened. Finally, he told me: "Yes, its a certificate-issuance office all right: you pay them, and they'll issue you a certificate. That simple."

I was staggered. "What, you mean, they just sell certificates?"

Master Chen nodded.

"To anyone?"

"To anyone. You go in there, tell them you learnt chigung at some imaginary school and you want a certificate. Give them 10,000 NT dollars; they print you a nice-looking certificate with your name on it!"

A thought crossed my mind. What about the other associations, were they the same, I asked?

"All the same," Master Chen laughed. "You can get certified in acupuncture too, if you like!"

Suddenly I remembered the meeting in the lift the previous day, now thinking of the fellow with the acupuncture certificate going to set up a clinic in the United States, and I had to look at it now in a completely different light.

Chapter Four: Love, Sex, and Marriage

As Taiwan opened up to the outside world after nearly four decades of isolation, there were a variety of views among local people towards local people - particularly local females - who took up with foreigners (especially Caucasians, which at that time is what the word 'foreigner' meant to most people). A few wealthy mainland Chinese families had overseas family connections and looked upon such relationships positively. But the vast majority took a very dim view of local women who had foreign boyfriends, and some would openly scold or insult them. Often, for a female Taiwanese to just be in the company of a foreigner outside, on the street, was enough to elicit comments from complete strangers like "Why are you with a foreigner? Are Chinese men not good enough for you?" and sometimes even just "Slut!"

This even happened to me once when I was walking with the secretary of an Engish school to a restaurant a hundred metres or so from the school, where the manager of the school was already waiting to treat us and several other teachers to a year's end meal. It was very rare in those days for couples to hold hands or stand very close to each other in public places, so people often assumed wrongly that a young man and woman just walking together on the street were lovers, and based their insults on that. The secretary was naturally very upset, unable to get the insult and the insulter from her mind at all during the subsequent meal.

As for my actual relationships with local females, I was quite content with my relationship with my first girlfriend, Michelle, until some of my male students began offering me their advice.

The 'Three Jays' as I called them, were three of my English students, James, Jackson and Jonathon. The three mutual friends were all residents of the upmarket northern suburb of Tianmu, and were all patriotic second-generation mainland Chinese with wealthy family backgrounds, who had recently evaded national service through their family connections.

We developed a routine of going to beer houses after class, usually without female company, but on one occasion Michelle met me after class and the four of us went together for a drink or two. The Three Jays were as polite as ever, although Jonathan keep making strange, furtive glances at me, as if to check I was still there.

After the next evening class, we decided to give the beer house a miss. But as we emerged from the building the English school was located in and were - I thought - about to go our separate ways, the three of them suddenly cornered me. James, the tallest and heaviest, put his arm round my shoulder, and led me, with some force, towards a roadside snack stall. "There's something we have to talk to you about," he smiled.

I was intrigued. "Go ahead," I urged him, as the four of us took seats, and Jonathan ordered - for us.

"It's your girlfriend," James began. "I know you like her, so don't get angry. But when we met her last week, we were shocked. She's so *dark!*"

"Yes," Jackson put in quickly. "Jonathan thought she was a mountain person, or a Filipino."

"Someone like you can do much better than that," James added with finality. “Leave the farm girl on the farm!”.

The Three Jays insisted on introducing me to a series of girls with what they felt were more suitably pale complexions, all of whom had impressed me as having little else going for them *except* their complexions. Then I met Jenny...

Jenny was still at school when I first met her. Given the 10 year age difference, I was reluctant to get involved with her at first. However, we found that we liked each others' company and so spent more and more time together. Apart from that, the Three Jays all approved of her fair complexion and commended me on my "choice" of her.

No Sex Please, We're Taiwanese

Our relationship, I should point out, though close, was not sexual. Like Vicky, my subsequent girlfriend, Jenny told me her parents would never approve of her marrying a foreigner, and that they would "kill her" if they found she had ruined her chances of marriage by losing her virginity to a foreigner. A non-virgin bride was regarded by most local men at the time as 'secondhand' and virtually worthless. A non-virgin single woman was regarded as useful only for an extra-marital relationship, not as a wife (men could have affairs outside marriage, but women were expected to remain faithful to one man all their life; Taiwan in the 1980s was still very much a 'man's world' as one male Taiwanese friend - who

seemed to like it that way - put it). At the time, a very popular minor operation available at private clinics was the 'hymen reconstruction surgery' or 'hymen restoration surgery,' which restored the apparent virginity of brides-to-be.

Being on good terms with my policeman landlord at the place I rented in 1986, I asked him what he would do if he discovered his wife - his own marriage had been arranged for him for the next year - were not a virgin?

"Are you joking?" he replied. "I'd throw her out of the house there and then! Who wants a secondhand woman? It's not the same as a secondhand car; you can't sell a secondhand woman!"

His views were typical for Taiwanese men of the era, but he was not typical in having an arranged marriage. That custom was already going out of fashion, and I met only three people who were going to have arranged marriages, all in my first year in Taiwan. This custom was being quickly superceded by a less inflexible model whereby parents made suggestions of suitable matches, rather than forced them upon their children.

As for my relationship of co-habitation with my first girlfriend, Michelle (after our relationship deepened over several weeks, I moved out of the Happy Families hostel, and into her flat), though now common, this was then rare, and usually termed a 'trial marriage', as marriage was expected to come of it. Trial marriages were bad enough from most older peoples' point of view, but a trial marriage to a foreigner was even worse. One weekend, unexpectedly, Michelle's brother dropped by at her flat as he happened to be in Taipei. He called her from a public phone only a couple of minutes walk away before doing so, so Michelle decided she would not pretend, but simply introduce me and admit I was living there, with her. He completely ignored me throughout this short meeting, not exchanging a single word with me, and after that, he ignored her for the next year, too!

However, I soon became affected by the Three Jays' views of women and Michelle's dark complexion in particular, and one of the things that had originally attracted me to her began to look like a disadvantage. Especially after one of my foreign friends boasted to me of his local (second-generation mainland Chinese) girlfriend's pale skin. I moved out of Michelle's flat in late 1986, and found a room in a flat shared with several other foreigners. After which, I started meeting Jenny regularly.

To any outside observer from Europe or North America, the relationship between Jenny and I was one of two close friends, who happened to be male and

female. Typically, we would meet up in the afternoons on days when I had no English classes, and we would ride on my motorcycle out into the eastern suburbs, or outskirts of the city, usually taking a meal at some remote Taipei County town or village. In those days, places like Pingxi were completely untouristed; there was no tourist industry in Taiwan at all outside a few places, such as Alishan in the central mountain range, and Kenting beach in the far south of the island, and of course Taipei city. With Jenny riding pillion, this was as intimate as we ever got.

But in Taiwan, at that time at least, there were few such relationships; there was always the implication that more would come of our non-sexual relationship. But I couldn't understand what more? After all, Jenny had already made it clear to me that her parents would not approve of her marrying a foreigner. Would our relationship develop into a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship over time? It seemed unlikely. Jenny had told me her parents had already introduced her to a nice boy who was the son of one of her father's friends. Although her relationship with this boy was also non-sexual, she referred to him as her "real boyfriend."

But the longer we knew each other and the more mutually attached we became, the more I insisted on knowing where our relationship was going. I insisted that Jenny tell her "real boyfriend" about me, so that there would at least be no pretense, and we could decide on whether to go on meeting each other based on his reaction. She promised to do this, but never did.

Our relationship came to an abrupt end when I called her one lunchtime, and asked if she wanted to go out for a joy-ride, as usual. She sounded very unhappy. "Why don't you take Vicky Wang with you, instead?" she asked. "I'm sure she'll be happy to go with you!"

"Who?" I asked, genuinely at a loss.

"Don't pretend - you know who!" And Jenny slammed down the phone.

I didn't, but after giving it some thought, I thought I knew who it may be. At the next IFC class where there was a girl named Vicky, I asked her family name: Wang, it transpired. A week previously, when leaving the school, I had given her a ride on my scooter to her next destination, as it happened to be in the same direction I was going.

Now it made sense to me: Jenny had by chance seen Vicky on the back of my bike. To her, that meant she had been usurped by a new girl, although in reality,

Vicky had been riding pillion no more than five minutes before I dropped her off and went on my way.

Although I missed Jenny and our afternoons together, I thought it was as good a way as any to terminate our relationship. I didn't want to wait until her "real boyfriend" became her "real husband", with me still there in the wings in some kind of separate intimate or semi-intimate relationship with her, that some would consider grounds for divorce! I assume I was never mentioned to her real boyfriend or to anyone in her family.

After about six months of dedicating my free time to learning martial arts, however, I began to feel that my life consisted of nothing other than work and workouts. I had made progress in martial arts and was on my way to earning the first of four black belts. But the friends and fellow travellers I had known from the Happy Families hostel, and even the IFC - where I was no longer teaching - had mostly gone their own separate ways. For a long time I thought about what another male teacher from the IFC had told me with a laugh when I explained that Jenny was no longer with me: "Well, now you're free! She thinks you're with Vicky Wang anyway, so you may as well try to be! Go for her! I would."

I could understand that he would. Vicky was slim and sexy, usually dressed in a casual and attractive style, and had large eyes for a Chinese. I noticed that her face was virtually symmetrical and only became slightly less so when she smiled, which was often. She had a very open, easy-going manner and could talk about anything in class without reservation or embarrassment, which was unusual.

At first, I thought Vicky was 'too good' for me. But eventually, after an entire Saturday evening at home doing nothing else but vacillating between making the fateful call and not making it, I eventually plucked up enough courage to phone her, with a number I had obtained from one of her fellow ex-IFC students. After talking quite a lot of nonsense about unrelated things, I asked if she would like to go to the beach with me the next morning. She agreed, and to cut a long story short, she became my girlfriend.

However, after I became involved with Vicky, and I felt, too involved to walk away, she finally told me that he father had made it very clear she could marry anyone she wanted to, with one proviso: she could not marry a foreigner. If she did, he assured her, she would no longer be a member of the family; she could go her own way with her foreign husband, and never come back.

Vicky's idea to counter this was that I should ingratiate myself with her father slowly over time, and then he would gradually lose his steadfast opposition to

her marrying a foreigner, and come to accept me.

To do this, I had to give the impression that I was Vicky's English teacher, and nothing more. So, on occasions, after I had in fact been with Vicky all day long, I would drop by at her home with her, ostensibly having just walked home with her after class from a nearby cram school where she was studying English to pass some exams that were necessary for her to apply to study on a degree course in the United States. Occasionally, she would invite other teachers and students from that nearby school to drop in for a tea or coffee and a chat, so this behaviour elicited no suspicion.

But after the first such meeting, I would 'insist' - at Vicky's actual insistence - on buying fruit, flowers, or some other little present I had noticed 'on the way' from the school (which in fact she spent very little time at, on account of being with me most of the time). After a few weeks, Vicky, her father, mother, elder sister, and of course, her English teacher, all took a trip to the same beach on the north-east coast that I had gone to with Vicky alone some months earlier, which was a nice day out. So, gradually, I managed to bring myself into favour with Vicky's father, as planned, or at least I felt I had. However, from the beginning to the end of my relationship with Vicky, I was only her English teacher as far as her father was concerned. Whenever I asked Vicky if the time had come to let her father know our true relationship, she told me, no, he wasn't ready for that yet.

In 1989, Vicky applied successfully to study for a degree in business management at Eugene University, Oregon. I would not go to live there with her, but I would go with her to help her settle in.

So it was that Vicky's family learnt of the happy coincidence that her English teacher, Alix, would be on the same flight with her to San Francisco. Alix was on his way back to the UK to visit his parents, Vicky explained, as I stood there smiling and letting her do the talking as she always instructed me to. I would be stopping off in San Francisco and New York on the way to London, Vicky told her parents, and may even have time to see San Francisco with her, she suggested with a questioning smile in my direction, before she took the Greyhound Bus to Eugene. I nodded and confirmed that I would probably be able to arrange that. There was a sense of elation in Vicky's home upon hearing this; what a fortuitous development, her mother enthused. That's just great, Mr. Wang put in, offering to drive me to the airport with Vicky before telling his daughter how lucky she was to have such a helpful English teacher.

After Vicky and her teacher had looked around the city of San Francisco for a couple of days, her teacher and native English-speaking guide accompanied her

to Eugene and kindly offered to stay in the same rented room with her while she settled in, in case any further linguistic assistance was needed.

But there was trouble brewing for me back in Taiwan.

Hit the Road, Jack!

By 1988, I had lived in a series of places, all of which had turned out to be less than ideal.

The flat I had rented as a 'second landlord' on Jienguo South Road had turned out, as mentioned a little later, to be very problematic. I didn't want to always be cleaning up after other people who refused to clean. And then to top everything, my landlord, Frank, told me that his family wanted to put the rent up from 7,500 New Taiwan dollars, to 16,000, over twice the original price. When I complained that I couldn't manage such a massive increase, he claimed that it wasn't his idea. His parents, who were the true owners of the apartment, had wanted to put the price up to 24,000 NT dollars; he had worked the price down for me. Property prices in the area, close to Jenai Road, were rocketing, and this is also what triggered a general demographic move away from central Taipei to the suburbs.

But in any case, I could not afford such an increase, and was thus forced to move out. At this time, Paul, my Canadian friend, told me that he was leaving Taiwan. I had seen his studio flat, an illegal construction on a rooftop (there were many thousands of such illegal rooftop constructions in Taipei at the time), and I jumped at the chance to move in, even though it would mean paying rent for two places for the first two months, to give my flatmates time to move out and to give my old landlord the necessary notice. I had already met the new landlord, He Yao-wen ('He' is pronounced as the English 'her'), on several occasions, and got along well with him. It seemed perfect, and for a period of over a year, which coincided with the time I was with Vicky, it was.

He Yao-wen was a very colourful character. He worked as an action scene choreographer at Taiwan Television and once he discovered that Paul and I were both martial arts students like himself, he was only too glad to rent the illegal flat to, first Paul, then me, both people he could talk about martial arts with

This one-room, en suite flat featured a balcony the length of the room, which I liked to wind down on whenever I was home. Unfortunately, that made me privy

to some details of my landlord's private life when I overheard furious accusations of infidelity from two different women on two different occasions. I tried to shut these things out of my mind, but it was impossible not to hear them.

Yao-wen drank like a fish, which was one reason I avoided his invitations to go out for a meal or a drink whenever I could. The other reason was that once he had a few drinks inside him, he often got into fights. Real fights, not just arguments. As a martial artist, he had some advantages of most of his opponents, and some of these turned out to be a little too lively for my liking.

But anyway, if the decision had been his, I would probably have been able to rent the studio flat indefinitely. The problem with this illegal rooftop flat was that, as with my previous flat, Yao-wen wasn't the real landlord. He was, like myself at the previous property, or perhaps more accurately like Frank, a 'second landlord'. His own apartment, directly below my flat, was actually owned by his brother, who lived one floor further down still. And his brother was much more representative of the typically conservative Taiwanese male of the era.

One day, as I walked into a local grocery store, I noticed that my real landlord, Yao-wen's brother, was heading for the same store, but I didn't notice him closing in on me as I selected the things I wanted to buy from the shelves. When I turned around to make my way to the counter, I found him standing at my side, glowering at me. Before I could greet him, he demanded: "Why you still here?!"

I was so taken aback that momentarily I didn't know how to react. I wasn't sure if perhaps it was some kind of joke. He had never even spoken to me in English before, which made my reaction even slower. By "here" I assumed he meant the shop and was mentally preparing my response when he demanded once more, again in English: "Why you still here? You have the girl. Now, you can go home!"

"What?"

"You have the girl, Vicky. Why you still here? You can go home now!"

"I don't understand you", I told him and added the same in Mandarin, thinking perhaps the meaning would become clearer when he spoke in Chinese. But, perhaps in order to not be understood by the shopkeeper, who was now looking directly at us down the aisle we stood in, he continued in English: "You have the girl, Vicky, but you still here! You can go home now. Go home! Go home!"

Suddenly I realised that for whatever reason, he thought I had come to Taiwan

'wife hunting'! Now that I had the girl, as he said, I could leave. Before I could explain that this was not the case, he turned on his heels and left. The fact that he bought nothing at the shop told me that he had followed me there for the specific purpose of this 'showdown'; it was a rehearsed speech he didn't want his brother - Yao-wen - to hear.

I pondered over this event for a week or two, considering how best to get the message to Yao-wen's brother that I was in Taiwan long-term and not looking for a wife to take 'back home' with me. When Vicky returned from her studies, I would in fact still be here in Taiwan, waiting for her.

Perhaps, I thought, I could tell him through my immediate landlord, Yao-wen, or perhaps just by ringing on his bell and explaining directly. However, it was only when I thought of mentioning this event to Yao-wen, which his brother obviously didn't want, that I noticed Yao-wen had recently actually already made a number of indirect suggestions that Vicky would be a nice girl for me to 'settle down' with!

I was still pondering this question, uncertain exactly how to approach it, but too busy with work to really pay too much attention to it, when I returned home from the English school I taught at one evening feeling unusually tired. I decided to take a nap before going out to get something to eat. Lying on my bed I drifted off to sleep for a while.

I was awakened by a repetitive drumming and chanting noise which for a few moments I thought belonged to my dream. I walked out onto the balcony, realising as I did so that the noise was not from my dream, nor was it from a Daoist temple - there were plenty of them around, though none within earshot - but from the apartment directly below me; He Yao-wen's! As I listened more carefully, I realised that the drumming and chanting was recorded, but at the same time there was a human voice speaking in Taiwanese in there too, sometimes sounding pleading, sometimes tortured, sometimes demanding.

What on Earth was going on, I asked myself? It seemed that some bizarre kind of Daoist ritual was taking place at Yao-wen's flat, right on his balcony. Out of curiousity, I leaned over the railings of my own balcony to get a look at it, if I could.

I didn't see the Daoist sorcerer, or Yao-wen. But I did see a table on the balcony below, with a large wedding cake on it, with a Chinese 'happiness' symbol in the middle. I leaned over as far as I could. There were two cardboard-cutout figures, one on each side of the Chinese 'happiness' symbol. With a jolt in the pit of my

stomach, I realised that one of them was me! I recognised the cardboard figure's yellow-striped T-shirt as being the one I had worn more days than not that summer. The other figure was Vicky, wearing the same black shorts she had worn more days than not that summer. A red band joined the two figures at the navel.

I didn't need to ask myself the significance of the red band. It was, as in all 'sympathetic magic' intended to be obvious. After seeing this, I needed to take a walk, to think things over.

Upon reflection, it didn't seem so surprising to me that Yao-wen would go to such bizarre lengths as commissioning a Daoist sorcerer to help get me married and out of the way; I was used to people having stubbornly stereotyped ideas of what I was and why I was in Taiwan. Yet I felt somehow threatened that they would even attempt to employ supernatural means to ensure that I fit their stereotype, in this case the owner of the property I rented, who was disturbed by my continued presence, even after I had already "got the girl", as he put it.

A couple of months later, whether feeling the supernatural affects of this ritual or not, I felt I had to see Vicky. I wanted her to know that although I couldn't be there with her in Eugene, I was going to take every chance I could to see her while she was in the US, and would still be waiting for her in Taiwan when she got back. It was the Lunar New Year holiday, and almost impossible to book a ticket anywhere. The best I could get was flying into Vancouver on the way in and out of Seattle on the way out, arriving back in Hong Kong rather than Taiwan, from where I would have to take a connecting flight to Taiwan. When all the travel time was taken into account, this left barely three days out of what would actually be seven days of holiday.

I had forgotten anywhere could get so cold! Eugene was blanketed with snow, and very cold indeed. But Vicky was the same Vicky, in the same warm one-room rented accommodation close to the university, which was all that mattered to me.

She had bad news for me, although she didn't put it across as such. She had met a Chinese-Singaporean in her class. They had travelled to the Grand Canyon together, Vicky explained, showing me some photos of the two of them from the trip. She wanted to introduce him to her parents, but was afraid her father would take him for a foreigner, and refuse to let her marry him. What did I think?

I told her he was a foreigner; what was the difference, except for ethnicity? He wasn't an ROC national. Why couldn't she tell her father she wanted to marry

me first, and see first whether he would accept it? But she was adamant her father had not changed his views on her marrying a foreigner; he had even warned her in a recent letter not to get involved with any foreign men while in America.

The Singaporean had the advantage that he also spoke fluent Fujianese (Hokkien), basically the same dialect as Taiwanese, Vicky told me. That should put him instantly in her father's good books, she thought.

I felt depressed, and somewhat jilted. "So, where does that leave us?" I asked.

"Nothing's changed with us!" Vicky insisted, hugging me tightly on the couch we sat on. "I could never leave you! But you have to understand, my father will never let me marry you. We will still be together all our lives, every chance we get!"

"How?"

"We'll be secret lovers..."

I wasn't impressed with the idea. "It sounds like the plot of a Hollywood movie, Vicky. The kind in which someone gets killed!"

"Who cares what it sounds like? The only thing that matters is that we stay together!"

This didn't seem like a practical idea to me, and I didn't like it very much. But I had to admit, I couldn't bear the idea of not being able to see Vicky again, so I decided to give the idea some further thought.

When the English teacher returned to Taiwan from his second trip to the UK via north America, and dropped by at Vicky's family house, it was with a letter from Vicky to her father seeking approval, and the photos from the Grand Canyon trip.

It was the last day of the New Year holidays; Vicky's parents and sister were all at home, where they perused the Grand Canyon photos with approving smiles, her parents sitting on the couch and her sister leaning over to view them from behind the couch. "How *could* she?" Vicky's sister exclaimed when she realised what this was all about. "How could she ask Alix, of all people, to deliver these photos?"

Evidently, Vicky's sister was aware that there was something more to our relationship than the teacher-student one. Her mother looked at her without

speaking, perhaps finally also realising I was more than a teacher to Vicky. But Mr. Wang apparently didn't: "Why shouldn't she? Alix was passing by Vicky's place anyway, and he's a good friend of hers - I'm sure he's glad to see she's found a boyfriend!"

Whether Vicky's father genuinely did not catch on that I was his daughter's boyfriend, or he simply did not want to know about it, I'll never know. But in any case, his approval of the Singaporean match was obvious. Under these circumstances I decided to neither contest it nor spend a lifetime as Vicky's secret lover. Whatever supernatural forces had been harnessed by the Daoist sorceror at He Yao-wen's apartment had evidently been outflanked by the far more prosaic parental powers of her father. Vicky married the Singaporean and moved to Singapore, where her husband became a successful businessman.

A couple of months later, with no news of impending weddings, my landlord, He Yao-wen finally told me I had to leave "for a couple of months" while the illegal rooftop flat was renovated. The renovation would involve taking up and replacing the entire floor of my flat and the other rooftop flat next to it that he also rented out. Of course, I understood that I was being turfed out. I moved out to a place much less to my liking, because I couldn't find anything better. A few weeks later, by chance, I happened to ride down the alley of my old place on my scooter. Looking up at my old flat, I saw a white male of around my own age, hanging clothes out to dry on the balcony! Obviously, not long after I moved out, another foreign national had moved in, hopefully one who fit the required stereotype and would 'go home' quickly when and if he found his marriage match!

A Woman’s Place

Finally, I should add a few words about the differences between a woman’s status in Taiwanese society in the 1980s and today, as it has some relevance to their relationships with men.

Taking a university degree course was already quite popular among Taiwan girls in the 1980s. So Vicky had been following what had already become established as an acceptable course of action for female high school or vocational college graduates. Degrees thus obtained may also have been useful for looking of work after graduating from university, if you were still single by then and with no

marriage plans. But for many, perhaps most female students, universities were viewed as being primarily 'husband-hunting' grounds.

Similarly, the work taken up after university, though perhaps just as legitimate as the work taken up by male university graduates, was rarely looked upon by employer or employee - or anyone else - in the same way. This was also a husband-hunting ground for those women who still hadn't met their match after completing university studies. This situation was a contributory factor to unequal salaries. After all, as it was widely understood that jobs taken up by female university graduates were not done so with the intention of furthering careers, both employee and employer could expect there to be a lower rate of pay. Just as, when the primary purpose of taking up a job for a male employee is just to get some work experience, it may be assumed that the job applicant is less concerned about having a competitive salary.

As for male notions of suitable work for women, I can think of nothing which illustrates this better than a dispute I had with a male Taiwanese by the English name of Jack who rented a room in my sub-let apartment on Jiengou South Road in 1987.

Jack, a former English language student of mine, moved in to share the flat with myself and Martin, an Englishman who rented the other room. When I explained that the cleaning of the flat would be shared on a rota, with Martin responsible one week, myself the following week, Jack the next, then back to Martin, Jack was all smiles and agreement. The only trouble was he didn't do any cleaning, and I ended up having to do his share for him, every time. I kept pushing him on this as I didn't like to have to make up for his lack of commitment to keep the common areas of the flat clean. Finally, he exploded in anger. "I don't do women's work!" he exclaimed, asking me whether I thought he looked like a woman or something? This is something that hasn't changed a great deal, and the idea that cleaning is only done by women persists in 2018. Many employers will only employ women to clean, even though on paper it's illegal to make this discrimination in work.

There were in the 1980s also a number of modes of behaviour much less acceptable in females than they are today. Smoking was one.

At that time, smoking in general was far more widely accepted than it is today. When I arrived in Taiwan, for example, it was on a plane whose smoking area, if seen today, would lead aircraft crew to sound the alarm, thinking a fire had broken out. And, as a regular smoker of a pack and a half a day, I would have been in the thick of that smoke on the plane, and subsequently would have also

smoked in Taipei taxis, on buses, in restaurants, and in the hostel I was staying in, whose dorm rooms were often thick with smoke. The females staying at the Happy Families hostel - Americans, French and so on - also smoked often and just as freely as the males. But I soon noticed that local girls didn't seem to smoke, even though many local men often did.

Both my first girlfriends, Michelle and then Jenny, were heavy smokers. But at first, I had no idea of this, because they never dared to 'light up' in public, or at least in public places where they didn't know the clientele. Older people often took a very dim view of females smoking, and they didn't want to risk a scolding from some complete stranger who thought it inappropriate for females to smoke.

Drinking among females was also far less acceptable behaviour than today, especially drinking 'man drinks' like beer. But because drinking, unlike smoking, took place within the premises of bars and restaurants, the atmosphere would often allow for it, and what went on inside a bar was not the concern of busybodies on the street. Of course, there was no problem with girls drinking in bars where the customers were mostly non-locals, like AC-DC, Tops, or Roxy, that was a special case.

Another unacceptable kind of behaviour - perhaps inconceivable for some people today - was walking in the sunshine without a parasol. Completely acceptable for males, this was viewed by some older, more conservative females as appalling behaviour in a lady. On two separate occasions, complete strangers scolded my already dark-skinned girlfriend with the words: "Where is your sun umbrella?!" On the first occasion, Michelle was completely taken aback and didn't know how to react. On the second, a couple of months later, we both spontaneously broke into laughter, remembering the first occasion, and it must have been the scolder who was taken aback.

In my first couple of years in Taiwan, I did a lot of travelling around the island, which usually meant visiting the coast at some time or other, and I also became a regular visitor to several beaches. I liked swimming and sunbathing of the beach, as did most of the friends I went there with, locals and foreigners. But, usually, for the girls among us, visiting the beach - even those popular among young people like Kenting in the south of the island, and Fulong, on the north-east coast, was a completely different experience for the girls than it was for the guys.

While the males stripped off to their trunks, dived in the water, swam and sunbathed openly, the girls kept themselves as covered as possible, timidly

‘playing in the water’ (paddling), usually fully-clothed. Swimming costumes were far from the norm, and bikinis unheard of. In those days, there were not so many water sport activities available as there are today; but the idea of females taking part such activities as parasailing would have been truly outlandish.

There were of course many other minor differences; things that were regarded as perfectly acceptable for men, but not for women. Generally speaking, a girl with an interest in any kind of activity regarded as masculine (such as learning martial arts) would have to carefully weigh whether it was truly in her own interests to participate in such an activity, as it could ruin her marriage chances; many eligible males, upon discovering that a female had mannish interests would quickly lose their interest in such a girl.

END OF BOOK ONE